

TASK 1: PLANNING COMMENTARY

Respond to the prompts below (**no more than 9 single-spaced pages, including prompts**) by typing your responses within the brackets. Do not delete or alter the prompts. Pages exceeding the maximum will not be scored.

1. Central Focus

- a. Describe the central focus and purpose of the content you will teach in the learning segment.

[I will be teaching a three-day portion of a unit on bias, stereotyping, and racism. This unit is intended to be fairly short and follows a unit on tone, word choice, and central ideas. The purpose of these three lessons is to provide students with a foundational understanding of the definitions and presence of bias and stereotyping in various texts. I will provide students with written and visual texts which demonstrate both stereotyping and bias, allowing them to apply their own biases and stereotypes and then demonstrating how authors and photographers take advantage of that automatic response in order to elicit a reaction from their readers and viewers. This will set students up to do research about biased elements of American society and prepare them to learn about racism, both past and present throughout the remainder of this unit.]

- b. Provide the title, author (or, if a film, the director), and a short description (about a paragraph in length) of salient features of the text(s) that a reviewer of your evidence, who is unfamiliar with the text(s), needs to know in order to understand your instruction. If there is more than one text, indicate the lesson(s) where each text will be the focus.

Consider including the following in your description: genre, text structure, theme, plot, imagery, or linguistic features, depending on the central focus of your learning segment.

[The first text (from lesson two) is a set of two biased accounts of a fictional robbery, written by my co-student teacher and me. Half of the students will receive a testimony from “Levi Kinsey” and the other half will receive a testimony of the same event from “Kaitlyn Howard.” Both fictional witnesses are providing an account of the guests they saw enter the lobby of the hotel where they work following the burglary of a car sitting in the parking garage. Each account is a page in length and includes a scene set-up followed by the witness’s memories of two hotel guests, a mother of two and a nicely dressed businessman. Each witness is partial toward a different suspect. Although the two witness the same people and their actions, the way they speak about the two different guests is radically different, intended to sway the reader toward suspecting one guest over the other.

The other text, also found in lesson two, is a picture from the Crimean War, taken in 1855 and the TIME article which accompanies it. The picture depicts what initially appears to be a barren valley, but upon further inspection, is covered in cannon balls from the battle which occurred just prior to the photo being taken. The sky appears bleak and the road on which the photo is centered is well-worn. No people are present in the photo. The article which goes along with the photo, briefly tells the story of the Crimean War and the photographer, Robert Fenton, who captured the scene. The piece describes how Fenton was one of the first to photograph war and present the public with realistic depictions of battle, as opposed to the “glamorous” paintings of battle coming before photography.]

- c. Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address students’ abilities to use the textual references to
- construct meaning from, interpret, or respond to complex text
 - create a written product, interpreting or responding to complex features of a text

[The standards within this learning segment ask that students identify biases that are present in text, constructing their own understanding of how an author shapes a reader's thoughts and feelings using words. They have the opportunity to analyze lists of characteristics, photos which have had an impact on the United States and the world, the articles which accompany those photos, biased accounts of a fictional event, and a film clip which demonstrates personal bias against a societal group throughout this learning segment.

Each episode of analysis requires that students provide either verbal or written proof of their understanding of the biases and stereotypes present in both the text and in their own thinking. For the written portion, students will provide two different short written responses, as well as a paragraph, including evidence which demonstrates understanding of the concepts presented. First, students will explain how stereotypes informed and influenced their thinking in the first lesson where they fill out a profile of three different individuals after being given only three facts about each one. The second written response asks that students watch a short video clip from the film "Zootopia" and write who the speaker is biased against, what words indicate that bias, and how one of those words biases the listener. The final written response asks that students write a paragraph which follows a RACECE pattern. They are to write a sentence which does each of the following (about nine sentences total): restate the question, answer the question, cite something from their text, explain (two sentences), provide another citation, and explain with another two sentences. This paragraph asks students to combine their knowledge of bias with a photo and accompanying article which they have chosen in order to produce a coherent argument regarding their paired texts.]

- d. Explain how your plans build on each other to help students **make connections** between textual references, constructions of meaning from, interpretations of, and responses to a text to deepen their learning of English Language Arts.

[The first day allows students to engage in an activity wherein they use their already-present stereotypes in order to profile unknown persons. Once I reveal that all of the facts given to them describe me, students will have had an experience with the influential nature of stereotypes and the intentional use of the English language. After we briefly talk about how their stereotypes have influenced their thinking, students will learn the definitions of "bias," "stereotype," and "racism." Once the definitions have been learned and now that students have experience with stereotyping, I will move on to present them with an example of bias and biased language with the "Zootopia" clip.

The second day aims to extend their knowledge and understanding of bias and biased language, as this concept requires that students critically look at texts beyond what is immediately apparent. A lot of this class will be spent looking at biased accounts of a fictional scene. This takes students' knowledge of the definition and their experience with the short "Zootopia" clip and gives them a longer and more complex text to analyze. While the response to the "Zootopia" clip was fairly formulaic and simply required that students "fill in the blanks," this activity requires that students identify biased language in a group, on their own, and then as a class, extending their already-present knowledge of bias and asking them to think on their own about the concept. The second part of this lesson asks that students work together to examine the details of a photograph, as well as the presence of possible bias in both the picture and in the article. The activity on this day will be done all together as a class and a lot of the identification of bias will be modeled by me, but this will set students up to do this activity on their own in the next lesson.

The third day allows students to take the information they have learned about bias in the last two lessons and apply that knowledge to a picture which they have selected on their own. No other student will have the same picture as them, so they must form their own individual opinions of the picture and independently find the ways in which the photo biases the viewer toward one side of an issue or event in history. Now that students have been presented with the

definition, responded to a prompt about bias, underlined and talked about biased language in a text, and seen me model the connection between intentional details and the biases present in a picture, students can do this work independently, providing me with a coherent argument of how a selected photo may be used to bias a reader.]

2. Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching

For each of the prompts below (2a–b), describe what you know about **your** students **with respect to the central focus** of the learning segment.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

- a. Prior academic learning and prerequisite skills related to the central focus—**Cite evidence of what students know, what they can do, and what they are still learning to do.**

[Students have been learning the skill of choosing relevant citations and explaining the connection between those citations and an argument throughout the year. Since students came back from school in December, our class has focused on explaining evidence using two sentences, the first starting with “this says,” and the second starting with “this means.”

The last assessment, a two paragraph extended response, gave students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of this concept. Students were graded on their ability to provide evidence, explain evidence, address the prompt, and use the proper conventions. 40% of students in seventh grade scored “proficient” (3) or higher (with the maximum possible score a “4”). In the class receiving focus for edTPA, one of the eighteen students scored a “3.5,” or 19/20, five scored a “3,” or 18/20, five scored a “2.5,” or 16/20, and seven scored a “2,” or 14/20. Students missed points in the area of explaining their evidence by forgetting one of or both the “this says” and “this means” statements which are to follow their evidence. Students could also miss points for not tying their explanation back to their argument about identity in America. Students who scored proficient has both sentences following each of their outside sources and tied their explanations back to the topic, instead of making general statements about the content of their quotations. The goal is that students are able to proficiently explain their evidence every time they are asked before the end of the year. Students will have the chance to continue work on this skill throughout this learning segment.

“Caleb” scored a “2,” but received extra guidance and continuous redirection throughout the assessment. “Samantha” scored a “2.5,” but required consistent repetition of directions and one-on-one aid in understanding the next step.

Another skill receiving focus during this three lesson period is distinguishing between the connotations of words which have similar denotations (Common Core State Standards Listening 7.5.C). Within the month preceding this learning segment, students have shown their understanding of the concept through their analysis of the tone of several pieces. After a lesson which asked students to independently determine the tone of a piece, choose the words which signal the tone, and explain how those words change the tone of the piece, students turned in a formative formal assessment. 69% of seventh graders scored “proficient” (3) on this tone assessment. In the class receiving focus for edTPA, 72% of students (13 total) scored proficient on the assessment. A second assessment which tracked students’ understanding of tone and the connotations of the words which created that tone yielded “proficient” scores for 83% of the seventh graders and the same percentage of the focus class receiving a “proficient” score. The scores for these two assessments show a growing understanding of tone and the students’ abilities to explain how the connotations of words create the tone of a text. A significant

percentage of students are demonstrating understanding of this concept and can now add the concept of “bias” to their already-present understanding of the connotations and denotations of words in a text.

“Caleb” scored a “2.5” on the former tone assessment and a “2.5” on the latter. “Samantha” scored a “3” on the former assessment and a “3” on the latter. “Samantha” received help with this assessment, needing clarified directions and pointed question in order to receive the proficient score on both assessments. “Caleb” did these assessments on his own, but required re-direction throughout class to keep him on task. “Caleb’s” scores on this assessment are in alignment with his scores on other reading assessments. “Samantha” shows a deeper understanding of this concept than she does others, often receiving a “2” or “2.5” on other assessments.]

- b. Personal, cultural, and community assets related to the central focus—**What do you know about your students’ everyday experiences, cultural and language backgrounds and practices, and interests?**

[Because of the lack of diversity at Dean Morgan Middle School and in the city of Casper in general, many students rely upon stereotypes to inform their thinking about people who are different from them. Students also demonstrate a lack of understanding of the difference between racism and stereotyping, often using the former word when the latter is occurring. This misuse of vocabulary has occurred multiple times as I have listened to students converse throughout my time at Dean Morgan. Only once have I heard a student correct their peers and correctly differentiate between “racism” and “stereotyping.” Students are, however, knowledgeable about social issues and international events, as many hold an opinion on major social issues of today and their history classes discuss the present-day and past atrocities which are occurring or have occurred in other nations. Students are currently learning about the modern history of Africa in their history classes and will have just finished a brief learning segment focused on gun control in America. While students demonstrate a knowledge of the world around them, they often do not use the correct language when expressing their thoughts. This learning segment will allow them to use the appropriate language to speak about events which affect them and their peers.

In addition, very few students have left the United States, and some have never left the Midwest region. The pictures from which they will be choosing to do the graphic organizer and RACECE paragraph on come from all over the world and will allow students to explore a world outside of their own. In addition, many of the pictures depict events which students will not have learned about in their history classes or in modern national news.

The students which require some additional instruction and re-direction in this class have experiences similar to those listed above. “Caleb” and “Samantha” are both minority students. I heard “Caleb” misuse a racial descriptor in a recent class, claiming that two completely different cultures were the “same thing,” one of those cultures being his own. “Samantha” has also demonstrated a surface level understanding of major issues and their impacts on individuals. When speaking about bullying in her last assessment, she wrote “There are some kids that are bullied in school and it makes them feel hurt inside. This can affect their identity negatively, because they don’t feel what everyone else is feeling.” “Samantha” works very hard to meet the requirements, but her written products often lack depth of thought. When discussing major issues affecting society, “Samantha” struggles to understand the significance of events for the individuals impacted. With each written assignment given to her so far this semester, she has had to talk about the prompt with a teacher in order to arrive at the point that she intends on arguing. “Samantha” will have to develop her own opinion about an independently chosen text (the picture and accompanying article), pushing her to move beyond repetition of someone else’s ideas and articulate her own beliefs about the text.]

3. Supporting Students' English Language Arts Learning

Respond to prompts 3a–c below. To support your justifications, refer to the instructional materials and lesson plans you have included as part of Planning Task 1. **In addition, use principles from research and/or theory to support your justifications.**

- a. Justify how your understanding of your students' prior academic learning and personal, cultural, and community assets (from prompts 2a–b above) guided your choice or adaptation of learning tasks and materials. Be explicit about the connections between the learning tasks and students' prior academic learning, their assets, and research/theory.

[The ability to choose whichever picture interests them to write a detailed analysis about allows them to continue to widen their field of knowledge to events and concepts they have not yet been introduced to. Many came into class with a strong opinion about gun control, the topic of the previous learning segment, many students deriving their opinions from those of family members and “Wyoming culture.” When asked why they think Wyoming has not had a mass shooting, every student who was asked attributed it to the fact that “everyone has guns” and “no one dares to do something like that.” Although students already held opinions on the issue of gun control, students will recognize very few of the images provided them for the final assessment, as I myself did not know the story or origins behind 9/10 of the pictures. I have chosen to take advantage of their lack of experience outside of the United States or even this region of the United States and give them an opportunity to choose a photo based only on their immediate and personal responses. Their lack of experience with other cultures gives them a fresh perspective on the photos and stories which accompany them.

In addition, the RACECE paragraph assignment requires that students take their understanding of connotations and explaining evidence and move on to the next “level” of Bloom’s taxonomy. Because about three out of four students demonstrated understanding of the basic elements of the explanation of a citation, they can now move on to applying their knowledge to a new text. When in the application stage, students should be able to *demonstrate*, *construct*, and *produce*, all of which students are being asked to do as they write their RACECE paragraphs. They are demonstrating how the photo’s elements work together to bias the reader and then constructing a response, producing a coherent argument. They have shown understanding of the concept through guided assessments, but they must now translate that knowledge to an individually chosen piece.

Finally, students are being asked to take their basic knowledge of the connotations of words and identify uses of words with different connotative meanings when looking at a biased text. Again, three out of four students have demonstrated a basic knowledge of “connotation,” “denotation” and “tone,” but they must now detect the ways in which words with different connotations and similar denotations work together to create the concept which this learning segment is based around: bias. In both of the aforementioned cases, students are moving their knowledge from their current stage of Bloom’s taxonomy on to the next, demonstrating growth and progress toward higher order thinking.]

- b. Describe and justify why your instructional strategies and planned supports are appropriate for **the whole class, individuals, and/or groups of students with specific learning needs.**

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

[The instructional strategies are designed for this group of kids in the way that there are several opportunities for accommodations to be made (indicated by an “ * “ in the lesson plans), as well as time for me to work with struggling students one-on-one as other students work independently. The whole-class modifications are included for times when the majority of the class demonstrates a need for more specific and step-by-step instruction. The class receiving focus for edTPA often appears on-task, but rushes through work without fully understanding the concept. The constant direction from both myself and visual aids up on the board forces students to slow down and complete the work one step at a time.

The guided group conversations in lesson one, for example, give students like “Caleb” a chance to both speak his own thoughts and hear the thoughts of students who would not otherwise speak. “Caleb” needs to be given short and simple instructions so that he does not lose interest in the activity before it is completed or so that he does not get frustrated and rush through the activity before he loses attention. “Samantha” also needs multiple inputs for instructions. If given verbal instructions for an independent activity, she will lose track of where she is in the process. However, these plans are written to give “Samantha” one step at a time and give her the chance to speak with her classmates and ask them for clarification before she goes on to do the work independently. The portion of lesson 3 where I will guide students through the graphic organizer step-by-step give students instructions as they go and kindly forces them to do the activity at a slower pace with me. The guided practice also gives “Caleb” the chance to move from one step to the next without a lot of time in between to get distracted and “Samantha” can receive the directions in little chunks, allowing her to focus on one element of the instructions at a time.]

- c. Describe common student errors or misunderstandings within your central focus and how you will address them.

[A common mistake students have made when explaining evidence is focusing on the content of the quotation, instead of the quotation’s connection to their overall argument. I will address this common error through direct instruction during lesson three, when I go over the example RACECE paragraph that I have written. Directly before students begin writing their analysis of the ways in which the photo biases and influences viewers, I will provide them with an example paragraph based on the photo “Surfing Hippos.” When I am explaining how to explain evidence, I will instruct students to ask themselves the following: Could my “this means” sentence answer the prompt question by itself? I will model how the example “this means” sentences directly address the prompt, not just the citation I am explaining. I will also identify when students are not connecting their “explain” portion back to the argument they are making as I walk around while they write their final RACECE paragraphs and use the above question to re-direct their thinking and writing.

In addition, a misconception which students hold is that stereotyping is the same as speaking from a racism standpoint. As stated in question 2b, I have heard students refer to a comment which demonstrates stereotyping as “racist,” when the original comment was not negative at all. I have heard comments like these on at least five occasions, all from different students, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the concept and its use. I will address this misconception in lesson one when we go over the definitions of both “stereotyping” and “racism,” highlighting the weight of a term like “racism” and the contexts in which the word should be applied. I will also emphasize that the instances where the term “racism” should be used are situations in which students should take action, not make light of the occurrence. I hope to create an environment in which students will respectfully listen when introducing these terms by prefacing this portion of the lesson with a comment about its seriousness and by holding students to very high behavior expectations as I talk, only speaking when all attention is being given to me and, more importantly, the content being introduced.]

4. Supporting English Language Arts Development Through Language

As you respond to prompts 4a–d, consider the range of students’ language assets and needs—what do students already know, what are they struggling with, and/or what is new to them?

- a. **Language Function.** Using information about your students’ language assets and needs, identify **one** language function essential for your students to construct meaning from, respond to, or interpret text. Listed below are some sample language functions. You may choose one of these or another more appropriate for your learning segment.

Analyze	Argue	Describe	Evaluate
Explain	Interpret	Justify	Synthesize

[The language function essential for student learning within my central focus is arguing.]

- b. Identify a key learning task from your plans that provides students with opportunities to practice using the language function identified above. Identify the lesson in which the learning task occurs. (Give lesson day/number.)

[The key learning task that give students the opportunity to practice using the language function is the production of a completed RACECE paragraph. This task occurs in lesson three at the end of the class period.]

- c. **Additional Language Demands.** Given the language function and learning task identified above, describe the following associated language demands (written or oral) students need to understand and/or use:
- Vocabulary
 - **Plus** at least one of the following:
 - Syntax
 - Discourse

[In order to write an argument piece centered around a picture which demonstrates bias, students need to understand the meaning of “bias,” “society,” and “explain.” Students already know what “society” means, as they just recently wrote an extended response centered on societal factors which influence Americans’ identities. Students are, however, still struggling to understand all that the “explain” portion of a paragraph entails. When myself or my mentor teacher ask them to “explain” their evidence, many write a generalized summary of what the quotation means, not an explanation of why they used that quotation in their argument. Finally, the idea of “bias,” the central focus of this learning segment, will be new to them. Students will have learned the definition in lesson one and analyzed a biased piece of text in lesson two, but they will have to take this new vocabulary and write an argument centered on the concept for this the formal assessment in lesson three.

Additionally, in order to produce a coherent written argument of the ways in which bias are present in a selected picture, students must demonstrate proficiency in the following elements of written discourse: paragraph structure, quotation introductions, and a smooth set of introductory sentences for the paragraph which answer the question and provide context for the reader. Now that we have done several RACECE paragraphs, the majority of students demonstrate an understanding of proper paragraph structure, as they naturally provide some kind of an introduction, have their citations and explanations in the middle, and wrap their pieces up with a concluding statement. However, students are still struggling with introducing their quotations.

Over the last six weeks, students have begun to learn to introduce quotations, instead of “dropping” a quotation into their writing. However, about half of students still naturally just “drop” their quotations into the middle of the paragraph, as they move from one point to the next. Students need to continue to look at various ways in which they can, and should, introduce their quotations. The other skill of written discourse which students struggle with is the “answer” portion of the paragraph, which they have been taught to write following their restating of the prompt in statement form. Although students know what the term “answer” means, they still do not understand how to translate their already-present knowledge into writing. Students often jump right into their first quotation or they stare at their computer screens until myself, my mentor, or our special education co-teacher comes and explains the concept of “answering” the question, or providing context and background for their reader.]

- d. **Language Supports.** Refer to your lesson plans and instructional materials as needed in your response to the prompt.
- Identify and describe the planned instructional supports (during and/or prior to the learning task) to help students understand, develop, and use the identified language demands (language function, vocabulary, discourse, or syntax).

[In order to help students understand the old, challenging, and new vocabulary for this learning segment, I will use their already-developed knowledge of society and the factors which impact society which we talked about in the previous unit centered on identity in order to help students understand how bias plays a role in the identity shift they have just studied. The list from which I can draw includes dress code, adoption, immigration, and bullying. I will use these topics to deepen students’ new knowledge of the concept of bias by asking students about the bias present in the issues they discussed in the identity unit in lesson one as we go over the academic definitions for “bias,” “stereotyping,” and “racism.” I will also refer back to the extended responses that they wrote at the end of the last unit in order to strengthen their understanding of the necessity of explaining evidence. I will use the aforementioned tactic of asking students if their “explain” portion could stand as an answer to the initial prompt question in order to get them to understand all of the implications of the concept of explaining a quotation and to provide connections to the term that they have been using all year.

With regard to written discourse, students must take their knowledge of paragraph structure and combine that with improved sentence structure and the presentation of context. In order to further students’ understanding of what the “answer” part of the RACECE paragraph entails, I will provide further explanation when going over the example paragraph before they write their own. I will explicitly ask that students include a piece of background information from the article that accompanies their photograph when writing the “answer” portion, giving students a specific element to include as a part of their “answer.” This specific instruction will allow students to apply a piece of the text in front of them to the often too-vague definition of the “answer” section as a place to “provide context and background.” In order to address students’ consistent lack of an introduction to their quotations, I will have them write two quotation introductions on their graphic organizers and go over my own examples with them. This way, students already have their sentence starters written down, easily added to their writing when they get to the “cite” portion of the RACECE paragraph. Both of these focuses will receive attention in lesson 3.]

5. Monitoring Student Learning

In response to the prompts below, refer to the assessments you will submit as part of the materials for Planning Task 1.

- a. Describe how your planned formal and informal assessments, including a written product, will provide direct evidence of students’ abilities to construct meaning from, interpret, **OR** respond to a complex text **throughout** the learning segment.

[In lesson one, students will respond to a short clip from the film “Zootopia.” The question prompt asks students to identify who the society is biased against, what words indicate that bias, and how one of the chosen words operates in order to show bias. This assessment asks that students interpret a text. Because this is the first lesson of the entire unit and of the learning unit, this assessment has been kept relatively simple, while still asking students to analyze a text and provide their evaluation, not just a summary. Students will get full points on this assignment only if they correctly identify who the society depicted is biased against, provide at least two words which indicate this bias (possibilities include “savage,” “biological component,” “predator,” “aggressive,” and “primitive”), and explain their reasoning for choosing at least one of those words.

In lesson two, students will outline their responses to a biased text. After reading a text and engaging in a class discussion about the text, students will write 2-3 sentence reflecting on why and how they were biased toward one suspect as opposed to another based on the language used in the text. Students will receive full points for referencing the text at least once and for providing a metacognitive reflection of their automatic responses to the text they were initially presented with.

Finally, the formal assessment that they will complete in lesson three asks students to take their lower order skills of remembering the definition of bias and looking at and noticing details of a text and translate their observations and knowledge into an coherent argument about the text. Here, students will negotiate the meaning of the picture, when presented with an article which provides the story behind the picture. Students will have to write down their simple observations on the graphic organizer (graded for completion) and then make an argument about how the small details of the photograph and the story behind the photo combine to bias a viewer toward or against a person, group, or idea. Because each student will be writing about a different photograph than anyone else in their class, they will have to form their own independent thoughts about the piece and find a way to present their thoughts on paper in an organized paragraph. Students will not be graded on their opinion, but rather their ability to make their opinion into an argument supported by both the photo and the article which accompanies the photo.]

- b. Explain how the design or adaptation of your planned assessments allows students with specific needs to demonstrate their learning.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

[“Samantha” will benefit from the time students will be given to independently work on their RACECE paragraphs, which will be followed by guided practice while filling out the graphic organizer. “Samantha” will be able to follow along with the rest of the class as we fill out the graphic organizer, because instructions will be given one at a time, and each one will be explained by me. She will not have to remember a long list of instructions, but rather focus on the one question that we are working on as a class. I will also spend time talking with her one-on-one as she writes her RACECE paragraph so that she understands the end goal and can focus on each element of the paragraph at a time.

“Caleb,” too, will benefit from the step-by-step instructions being given as the class fills out their graphic organizers. Because he gets easily distracted, he can focus on the question or section at hand. He will also be allowed to use his “fidget” tool during this time so that when he finishes, he can focus on using his hands to occupy himself, instead of defaulting to distracting others as they finish with talking. He will also be allowed to sit anywhere he chooses (within reason) in the room as he writes, as he gets easily distracted by the students around him.]