TASK 2: INSTRUCTION COMMENTARY

Respond to the prompts below (no more than 6 single-spaced pages, including prompts) by typing your responses within the brackets following each prompt. Do not delete or alter the prompts. Commentary pages exceeding the maximum will not be scored. You may insert no more than 2 additional pages of supporting documentation at the end of this file. These pages may include graphics, texts, or images that are not clearly visible in the video or a transcript for occasionally inaudible portions. These pages do not count toward your page total.

1. Which lesson or lessons are shown in the video clips? Identify the lesson(s) by lesson plan number.

[Video clip 1 is from lesson 1. This clip shows my hook for the lesson, which engaged students in the lesson by relating a created situation for the students to the situation of the colonists before the revolution. Video clip 2 is from lesson 2. This clip shows students working in groups and learning how to translate the Declaration of Independence into their own words.]

2. Promoting a Positive Learning Environment

   Refer to scenes in the video clips where you provided a positive learning environment.

   a. How did you demonstrate mutual respect for, rapport with, and responsiveness to students with varied needs and backgrounds, and challenge students to engage in learning?

   [In clip one I start off (00:00-02:02) by explaining new rules that I knew the students would react poorly to in the hope that they would be able to relate to how the colonists might have felt after the French and Indian War. At 02:04 I asked the students for their opinion, to which students responded in a negative way, as expected. My cooperating teacher has a relaxed set of guidelines that allows students to check their phones during class and move around the class at will. As a guest in his room I have allowed this as long as it does not disrupt the learning environment. The fact that my students do not hesitate to voice their dissenting opinion in a calm manner leads me to believe that they feel respected and that they know their opinion matters to me as their teacher. While one student’s voice is heard more clearly after the first wave of responses, a diverse group initially voiced their concerns for the rule change, especially over the increase in the percent that participation counted toward their overall grade. While the majority of the students that spoke up were students that do not often answer questions, they were not the only population to show descent; students from different cultures and backgrounds all united in protest of the rule changes. This was expected and I was then able to relate their protest to the way that the colonists might have felt prior to the Revolution. After explaining to the students that the rules were not going to be implemented and that it was a way to get them all to relate to the feelings that the colonists may have felt, they seemed to genuinely understand the point even though they responded with applause (02:55). I believe that the applause may have been sincere because they realized that I had tricked them into learning and relating to the colonists and I believe they were genuinely surprised that I had pulled one over on them. I believe that this is a great example of how I challenged students to engage in learning the content. This also activated prior knowledge by having them think about other ways they had learned similar content in previous classes. For example, one student recalled a way that her fourth grade teacher taught a system of taxes and how she recalled becoming rich. This example leads me to believe that this short activity will stick with them throughout the year and when it is time for finals it will help them to recall how the colonists may have felt and their reasons for going to war for independence. At 4:45 I questioned students about prior content knowledge that had been covered in the prior learning segment. Multiple students responded to both question to contribute to the class by helping everyone review prior knowledge.]

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Clip 2 shows students working in groups to interpret a section of the Declaration of Independence. The clip starts off with an explanation of the materials they have. At 00:30 a student asks for clarification of which paper they should be looking at and I walked over and explained to her what to look at, but it is hard to hear. I then went into asking the students how comfortable they feel with primary sources, to which only a few students stated that they felt comfortable working with primary sources. This was my way of introducing the subject to see who felt comfortable with primary sources. One student’s hand shot up very quickly, confidently, and with much enthusiasm, so I thanked him for answering mostly because he usually does not contribute to class and I wanted to encourage him to contribute more. At 01:05 I start modeling for students the process of interpreting the Declaration of Independence using a document camera and projector to show the students on the wall, just out of frame. During the process of modeling I asked students to interpret small portions of the Declaration a line or less at a time. I broke down the first line and asked students what it meant. Two students offered responses and both were close to the response that I was looking for so I stated that they were great examples and then I gave them the interpretation that I was looking for (01:45). I then continued to the next portion of the line and again asked students what they thought it meant. I noticed that the majority of them looked confused so I decided to ask another question that focused on one word that I thought they might be able to interpret in order to get them to take the chance to respond. One student answered correctly so I moved on to the next word that I thought might give them trouble in the context of the line, but that I thought they might know, which one student did and told the class. This process continued until they broke down the whole line as a class and then I restated what the whole line meant. At 03:05 I asked my students if they understood the process and if they had any questions to which no one showed any concerns so I continued to explain what they were going to do. I then walked around the room to talk to each group to make sure they knew what to do and were on task. I started on the side of the room that was out of frame and worked my way across to the groups that were in frame and at 07:27 I met with one group that was struggling with the process. I spent almost a minute rephrasing the direction and showing them their section and what I would like them to do. When I went back later they were on track, although this group was put together on purpose and given the first section that included the part that I modeled for the whole class because I know that two of the three have struggled in class with similar work. At 08:28 I asked the last group how they are doing and if they are all working together because when I first came over it appeared that only one student had been doing the work. After reviewing the clip I was pleased to see that they had been working a lot more than it first appeared, but that was the reason for my remarks and to make sure that the other two students knew where to look and were on task.]

3. Engaging Students in Learning
Refer to examples from the video clips in your responses to the prompts.

a. Explain how your instruction engaged students in
   - developing the skills of interpretation or analysis in relation to accounts of historical events or social studies phenomena
   - building and supporting arguments

[In the first clip (0:00-2:02) I begin the lesson by reviewing new rules designed to upset students, to add to my cooperating teacher’s rules, which are very laid back, so that they could relate to the feelings of the colonists after Britain started to impose taxes and new acts that restricted the colonists. (02:04) I asked the students about their opinion, which I have been doing when I introduce a new learning strategy to see if they like it or if it is helpful. The students respond at once with their concerns, including the fear of the participation percentage
increase, which would make it difficult to receive a good grade without participating every day. Another student voiced her opinion of the sleeping rule that she believed to be redundant because she believed that if you are sleeping in class you are already hurting yourself. This student had never slept in class, which leads me to believe that she was just giving an honest opinion rather than being concerned for her own grade. I then inform the students that the rules are not real and that they were made up to show students how the colonists might have felt when the British started to impose new acts and laws on the colonies (02:25). The class then responded kindly with remarks such as, “You’re good,” which may or may not have been sarcastic, but they got the point that I was making. This activity was a way that students were able to connect to the possible feelings of the colonists, which helped them to understand the reaction of the colonists and the historical events that led to the Revolution. This also helped them to see why the colonists were upset and helped them to understand why every new act or law that was passed increased the colonists’ frustration with the British, which built up until they went to war. This activity also helped students to understand the colonist’s side of events and why they were willing to go to war, which they were then able to use to help build and support the colonist’s reason for the Revolution. At 04:45 I begin to ask students questions to activate prior knowledge to continue to reinforce their understanding about how the laws had changed by going from relaxed to a more restrictive environment, similar to the class rules activity. Students were shown how the change of events led to the colonist’s feelings that they were now able to relate too.

In clip 2 students are split into groups to cooperatively learn and interpret the Declaration of Independence. In order to help students develop their interpretation skills, I modeled the process of reading a line then breaking it down to try to restate the line in my own words (01:05). After asking students what they thought the first segment on the first line meant I realized that I would have to shorten it more to be able to get more students comfortable to try and respond. With the second half of the first line I break it down and have them give me another word for certain words that might have been giving them difficulty (02:05 to 02:55). This clip shows the process that I used to help students to interpret the Declaration, but it does not show the students’ full understanding that takes place towards the end of the lesson. This clip is just the first step in teaching my students how to read a primary source so that after they learn to put it into their own words they can start to analyze the document so that they can then use it to build an argument and support it using the primary source.

b. Describe how your instruction linked students’ prior academic learning and personal, cultural, and community assets with new learning.

[In clip 1 my students came together in protest against new rules that made for a more restrictive class environment, which they were then able to relate to how the colonists felt about the new restrictive environment that the British had created. This knowledge was then used to build and support the argument that the colonists would have been upset with the new restriction and this would have caused them to want to self-govern and separate from British rule. At 04:45 I begin to ask students questions to activate prior knowledge to continue to reinforce their understanding about how the laws had changed by going from relaxed to a more restrictive environment similar to the class rules activity. Students were shown how the change of events led to the colonist’s feelings that they were now able to relate to. By having students recall the policy of salutary neglect from the past learning segment they were able to recall the relaxed governing style of the British before the French and Indian War. The students were then asked to recall the Proclamation of 1763, which was one of the first new restrictions the British placed on the colonies, which upset the people. By having students recall these events it helped them to understand the situation of the colonists and relate to them because of how they felt about being placed in a more restrictive classroom.]
Clip 2 shows how I tried to help students learn how to interpret primary sources. From 00:40 to 01:00 I informed the students that we have looked at primary sources before in class and then I asked them how comfortable they were looking at primary source and understanding what they meant. The majority of the class did not indicate that they were comfortable working with primary sources as I had predicted so I went on to model the process that I wanted them to use. I informed them that we had looked at them before in class to try and remind students that they had worked with primary sources and in the hopes that the term might not scare them if they remember working on them in class.

4. Deepening Student Learning during Instruction

Refer to examples from the video clips in your explanations.

a. Explain how you elicited and built on student responses that supported your students’ ability to form interpretations or analyses of history/social studies sources and accounts and build and support arguments.

[I elicited responses in the first clip by first asking students their opinion of the new rules that were created to elicit negative responses so that they could then empathize with possible feelings of the colonists. By empathizing with the colonists they would then be able to build and support an argument that they would be able to understand because they had felt similarly to those colonists who decided to protest. At 04:45 I began to ask review questions to activate students’ prior learning and relate it to the current learning segment. The first question, “What was salutary neglect?” was answered correctly by a student so I restated the response so that I was sure that everyone heard the answer. I then built onto the student’s response by asking why the British were going to change this policy, referring to after the French and Indian War, which the same student responded correctly again so I once again restated and elaborated on her response. The second question, “What was the main reason for the Proclamation of 1763?” was designed to build off of the first to help them to understand how the Proclamation restricted the colonists. This question was answered by another student only partially correct; the student rarely tried to answer questions so I wanted to make sure that he felt comfortable trying to answer more questions in the future so I did not want to say anything negative. I then rephrased the question and used the map as a visual aid that is out of frame to indicate the area west of the Appalachian Mountains to help refresh their memories. Another student was then able to answer the question correctly so I once again restated her answer for the benefit of all the students so I was sure that they all heard the response.

In clip 2 I asked students more questions to try to elicit responses to show the students that they knew what they were doing and how to go about working on their own and in their groups. As previously stated I asked the students to rephrase the part of the first line of the Declaration of Independence. This was done to see if any students could reword the first part of the line as a whole rather than one word at a time. Two students attempted to answer and were successful to a degree. I then informed them that they were right and gave them another way of rephrasing the line as another example. For the second half of the line I realized that students were struggling by the looks on their faces so I broke it down further and asked what certain words meant. This was done not only to model the process, but also to prove to some students that they knew what they were doing and in the hope that more students would try to answer, which worked. Each word that the student interpreted helped to give the class a better interpretation of the whole line, which I then rephrased after receiving each answer.]

b. Describe and cite examples from the clips of how you supported students in using evidence from sources to build and support arguments about historical events, a topic/theme or social studies phenomenon.
[In the first clip students were asked two questions that were intended to activate prior knowledge, but were not specifically asked to use evidence from a source other than their own memory. Later in the same lesson students were asked to use evidence from multiple sources to build an argument for why the colonists went to war with Britain.

The second clip shows my students working directly with a primary source and interpreting lines into their own words. While the clip focuses on the modeling process it shows how students were taught to break down the source by breaking it into smaller pieces and even by the word if they need to (01:00 to 03:00). This activity also helped students to understand the reasons that colonists went to war and why they were upset with their current form of government, although the clip does not show the conclusion of the lesson where we discuss the main purpose of the document and all of its meanings. Students were later able to cite the source as part of their understanding for why the colonists went to war with Britain.]

5. Analyzing Teaching

Refer to examples from the video clips in your responses to the prompts.

a. What changes would you make to your instruction—for the whole class and/or for students who need greater support or challenge—to better support student learning of the central focus (e.g., missed opportunities)?

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 first clip shows only the portion of the lesson in which I engaged students in the material by relating the content to their own lives and to build empathy with the colonists. While at the time I believe I did well, I now see that there is room for improvement. First, I believe that the lesson’s hook— the new rules—was a great way to engage students, but I feel that I became excited because they were responding to the questions the way that I had wanted and I ended it too quickly before giving everyone the opportunity to have their say. Having gone through the whole learning segment I have noticed that I often do not allow students enough time to fully comprehend and respond to questions. I believe that this is due to the fact that the silence makes me nervous so I try to rephrase the question thinking that they don’t understand, rather than giving them time to process and respond. I also make the mistake of calling on the people that put their hands up first and do not wait long enough to allow others the time they need to think. I think I do this because I am afraid that I will run out of time, which only hurts the students that want to participate. If I teach this lesson again I would still use the same hook and introduction seen in clip one, but I would make sure to give more time for students to think about their answer so that more students have the opportunity to participate. I would also ask more questions and have the students give me the information that I am looking for rather than elaborating on their responses. I would try to make a point to connect the rules activity to the actual review, which I believe I did in the classes that I had after this period. By connecting the rules activity I believe that the students’ ability to relate and empathize to the colonists would have been strengthened.

In the second clip I believe that there were many missed opportunities for learning. As in the first clip, I was in a rush to get students to answer questions and move the lesson along so that they had as much time as possible to work with the document. I believe that because I rushed I did not give every student the ability to participate, which when reviewing the lessons upset me because I could relate to those students because I was nervous to answer although I knew the answers and teacher never gave me enough time to raise my hand. This is something I have been working hard on since reviewing the tapes and I will continue to work on. I also]
believe that I could have done a better job explaining the directions that I gave as well as modeling for the class. Once again I believe I tried to rush and get the students started rather than taking the time to make sure the students knew what their task was. I went to each group after giving the instructions to make sure they knew what they were doing, but I could have saved time by going over it right the first time. The modeling process as a whole should have started as a think aloud and demonstration then gone into questioning the students about what the lines might mean. If I had done it as a think aloud the students would have seen my thought process and then more students might have participated when I started to ask them to help me interpret lines into our own words. I believe that I also should have gone to each group first to get them on task rather then re-explain what I wanted each group to do, which took more time, then I realized at the time. By the time I got to the last group the students had been working for almost six minutes, which could have been a lot of wasted time.

b. Why do you think these changes would improve student learning? Support your explanation with evidence of student learning AND principles from theory and/or research.

[In the first clip I did not give the students enough time to have the opportunity to think about the questions I asked so they did not have a chance to share their knowledge. If I had given them enough time it would have kept all of the students actively engaged throughout the lesson. In the second clip I make the same mistake and I have been working on giving the students more time to answer even though this means there may be an extended silence before I call on someone to respond. Carma (2005) states that students need at least five to ten seconds to think about a question or longer if it is a higher cognitive level question. I also believe that in the first clip I should have asked more questions to have the students give me more information rather than elaborating on the short responses that I did receive. I believe that by having the students give me more information they would be teaching each other rather than giving students information. I believe that I should have also kept making the connection from the content back to the hook. I believe that the hook activity hit home and by continuing to relate the content to them they would probably have had a better understanding of the conflict between the colonists and the British. It also would have strengthened the students’ ability to relate and empathize to the colonists.

In the second clip I believe there were many missed opportunities for learning. As in the first clip I was in a rush to get students to answer questions and move the lesson along so that they had as much time as possible to work with the document. As previously stated I believe that if I had given all of the students more time they would have all stayed engaged and actively participating. I also believe that in the second clip I did a poor job of explaining the directions and letting students know exactly what I wanted them to do. I know that modeling is an important process of teaching a new strategy and even though I tried to model the activity, I once again rushed through it, which left students confused. By taking the time to use the document camera and demonstrate the actual process while also using a think aloud strategy to show students the process I would have been more successful in getting the students to understand exactly what to do and how to do it. I believe that had I explained the directions and the process more clearly the first time I would have been able to go to each group first to get them on task rather than taking more time to re-explain what I wanted each group to do. I also believe that I should have gone to my groups with lower performers in them first rather than going from one side of the room to the other. This would have given me the opportunity to move back and forth across the room to make sure the students were on task while giving the groups with lower performers more help to make sure they are on track and working. One major thing that this process has taught me is that I still have a lot to learn when it comes to implementing a lesson plan and the theories.]