

## **PART II: KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS AND THEIR LEARNING**

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### **A. WHO ARE MY STUDENTS?**

Hazel Park School District is in an urban area. It is comprised of one high school, one junior high, and four elementary schools. United Oaks Elementary School has approximately 377 students ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade. United Oaks Elementary School made Adequate Yearly Progress during the 2007-2008 school year and received the grade of "B" according to the Michigan Education Association. Of the 377 students attending United Oaks Elementary School, 190 students receive free lunch and 35 receive reduced lunch (\$0.40). Only 36 students pay full price, \$2.25, for lunch everyday. Every student at United Oaks Elementary School has the option of arriving at school early for breakfast. About four students out of twenty in the first grade class I am student teaching in arrive at school to be provided with breakfast everyday. Those students in my classroom are also provided with a snack that they eat during a break in our morning. My first grade classroom is comprised of twenty students; ten girls and ten boys. The racial background of my students is varied to include Caucasian, African American, and Philippino.

My students are at, above, or below grade level. Out of the twenty, about three are above grade level and about six are below grade level. My classroom is full of lively, talkative, excited, and amazing students. One of my students, A.W. is excited to see be at school every morning and always lets me know by saying,

“Good morning Ms. Greaves!” He also lets me know what he has for snack everyday, too. I have two students who have been diagnosed with ADD and ADHD and are on medication. These students are generally calm and can focus, but towards the end of the day, AL.W. is walking around the classroom and one can tell by watching him that he is having a very difficult time controlling himself and following directions to sit in his seat. Another student, N.S. has a hard time following the directions that are given to him during direct instruction, such as mathematics. He often asks the same question repeatedly and has a hard time completing his individual work. For the multiple students in my classroom with ADD, the lessons will have to be fast paced. When the directions are given, I need to make sure that I have these students’ attention and eyes on me. This will help them focus on what we are doing in the activity and I believe this will help their learning process.

One student, N.G., who is in the process of being tested for special education, has a hard time getting through simple activities. When the students enter in the morning, they are supposed to write in their journals. N.G. cannot stay in his seat and he is always saying, “Teacher! I need help.” When you go to help him, I have found that he just likes you being by him and not helping the other students. He has often said, “They don’t need your help, I need your help.” I wonder if this is a combination of getting attention, lack of confidence, and really needing help to complete an activity. This student cannot follow simple directions and he has trouble writing or copying anything on paper. He will begin

his writing on the right side of the paper and work towards the left side. He doesn't invert the letters, but rather works backwards.

This student will need to have lessons adapted to meet his needs. Often times, I will reduce the amount of work he has to complete. This mostly happens in mathematics because he is very below grade level. He has a hard time writing numbers and recognizing numbers to 100. When we are completing "Math Boxes," I will have N.G. work on one problem by himself that I know is at his level, and then I will have him raise his hand when he has finished that task and I will help him with another problem. Also, I give him a lot of positive attention in hopes that he will feed off of that instead of negative attention.

Besides the students who are always raising their hands to talk and be called on, my classroom has three girl students who stay on "green" from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. They complete their work and never get in trouble. Sometimes, I feel like I haven't given them enough attention throughout the day because I have been dealing with behavior problems.

### **FOCUS STUDENT DESCRIPTIONS:**

#### **A.W.**

A.W. is a very sweet boy who is polite and always excited to be at school. He is very social, which sometimes gets him into trouble. He always says hello and goodbye, even when the students are just leaving for a special. A.W. is very excited for Halloween and is very interested in the pattern of ghosts and pumpkins on our calendar. He will remind me everyday to show the pattern during calendar. A.W. has he homework turned

in every night, but his parents did not attend curriculum night. He often gets distracted when there are things in front of him to play with, like his pencil box. This is hard because then he will not pay attention to instruction being given. I hope to teach A.W. how to make connections to text and the thought process that goes along with making connections.

A.W. is currently in the lowest Read Well group (Unit 5). When tested for Read Well placement, he scored 25 out of 26 in letter recognition, 13 out of 26 in sound recognition, and 0 out of 20 for both high frequency word recognition and pattern word recognition. He has not passed any area of the MLPP. Also, A.W. is placed on the intensive area for DIBEL, needing substantial intervention. Although he is low in many literacy areas, he is getting extra help by being pulled out for Power Hour, which is one on one interaction with the Title One teacher. With this intervention, we are hoping that A.W. will make great strides in reading and writing.

### **R.W.**

R.W. is a male student who is above grade level. R.W. started off as being a shy, introverted student in August. Now, he is talkative and very social with other students. Sometimes R.W. has to have his card turned to yellow from green because he is talking to other students during inappropriate times. Although this happens, his card never gets flipped to red, which would result in a time out. R.W.'s parents seem to be involved because his homework is always completed on time, but they did not attend curriculum night.

R.W. is currently in the highest Read Well group (on Unit 16). He was at grade level when he was tested for DIBEL. When R.W. was tested for placement in Read Well,

he had 100% accuracy in letter recognition, sound recognition, recognizing high frequency words, and recognizing patter words. On R.W.'s MLPP, he passed the phonological awareness section, including rhyming, blending, and segmentation. He also passed letter identification and sound identification. R.W. is bright in all areas, but he has difficulty writing with lowercase letters. He will write in lowercase if you bring it to his attention, but if he is completing work on his own, he will write in all uppercase letters.

### **H.S.**

H.S. is a female student who always follows directions and is on task. She will talk to you if you ask her questions, but she will not offer up information. She knows the answers to almost every question she is asked during calendar and math. Her homework is always turned in on time and both of her parents attended curriculum night. H.S. has never had her card changed from green, and seems to be proud of that fact because she gets a big smile on her face when we get her folder ready at the end of the day. She never has to be reminded of directions and is generally always on task, even during snack time. She does well overall in all subject areas and is a great student to have in class.

H.S. is currently placed in the second highest Read Well group (Unit 10). When tested for Read Well, she had 100% accuracy in letter name recognition, 24 out of 26 in sound recognition, 7 out of 20 in high frequency word recognition, and 2 out of 20 in pattern word recognition. She has passed phonological awareness in the areas of rhyming, blending, and segmentation on her MLPP. She is at the strategic level on her DIBEL which requires additional intervention.

B. STUDENT KNOWLEDGE AND INTERESTS:

Recently, my students have been learning about Martin Luther King Jr. They have also been learning about base-10 blocks in mathematics and have been learning about water in science. During this social studies unit, I will be teaching my first graders about producers and consumers. When I asked M.B. what a producer was, she said, "It is someone who holds a camera." I believe that she has the background knowledge of hearing the word producer with the word director. She must think that only producers make movies and that sort of thing. When asked what a consumer was, R.K. said, "I have no idea." I believe this is a new area and although many students might know what producers and consumers do, they do not connect the actions to the words. Many of my students talk about buying things and wanting to buy things, so from listening to their conversations, I believe that they have an interest in learning that they are consumers and that there are many different kinds of producers.

C. LINGUISTIC, SOCIAL, AND ACADEMIC CHALLENGES, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT:

During this unit, I plan on making several accommodations for my students. For the students that are advanced, I will extend my lessons. If the students have to come up with examples of producers and consumers, they will have to make a larger list than the other students. Another way to extend the lessons for my advanced students would be to have these students elaborate more and add detail to what they are describing or writing. This will help the students not get bored and challenge them at the same time.

For the students that are restless and that have ADD and ADHD, I will make sure that, whenever possible, the lessons will be engaging and hands-on, instead of talking at the students. I have found that during mathematics instruction, it helps these students if they can write on the board and do hands-on activities.

Shy students will be encouraged with positive feedback and given many opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts with me first, and then, hopefully, with the class. I would like these students to break out of their shells and gain confidence.