

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ANALYSIS (CFA)

If you are a B-K Teacher Candidate or Mentor, please see the **Birth to Kindergarten section** toward the back of the student teaching handbook

Assignment Description: The CFA requires you to research relevant factors in the community, district, school and classroom in which you teach. You will analyze what these factors are and how they may affect the teaching-learning process.

Purpose: In order to effectively plan and assess student learning, teachers need to understand their students. You will gather data to understand the broader context of your students' lives and to select appropriate and relevant activities, assignments, resources, and assessments.

Task: Using a variety of resources, provide an overview of the contextual factors (see below). Address how contextual factors of the community, classroom, and students have **implications for instructional planning and assessment**. In addition to providing an overview of the context of your teaching situation, it is essential that you address how certain contextual factors influence the planning and assessment process in your classroom. Be sure to include how this information influences your Teacher Work Sample and cite sources.

CFA is to be a 10+ page double-spaced document with appropriate citations. Create 4-8 computer-generated graphics displaying relevant data. While all categories are important, the focus of the paper should be on "Student Characteristics." **All work to be submitted to TK20.**

Contextual Factors and Characteristics:

- **Community, district and school factors.** Characteristics may include: geographic location, community and school population, socio-economic profile and race/ethnicity. You might also address such things as stability of community, political climate, community support for education, and other environmental factors.
- **Classroom factors.** Characteristics may include: physical features, availability of technology and resources and the extent of parental involvement. You might also discuss other relevant factors such as classroom rules and routines, grouping patterns, scheduling, and classroom arrangement.
- **Strength/Needs Analysis.** It is essential that teachers know their students! This involves knowing the student as a "whole person" with unique interests, skills, hopes, styles, preferences, as well as numerous other factors that need to be taken into consideration when planning for the student's learning experience. A strength analysis is an instrument or method you will create and use to gather information about your students that will assist you in getting to know each student in order to best meet that student's needs.

There are endless ways you can gather this information. It depends on your specific classroom situation, mentor expectations, age/developmental ability of students, and your own style and needs as far as what information you believe would be most useful.

A strength analysis can be as informal as "getting to know you" activities you may see at the beginning of the school year. It is a good way for students to get to know themselves and each other as well. Results of the activity are often excellent open-house materials for parents to see. Below are just a few general suggestions you may want to consider to spark ideas for how you may want to conduct your strength analysis.

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| ◆ Student interest inventory | ◆ Questionnaire |
| ◆ Parent survey | ◆ Time line activities |
| ◆ Journal writing | ◆ Personal narratives |
| ◆ Students write autobiography | ◆ Use of music |
| ◆ Writing poems | ◆ Artistic self-expressive activities |

- ◆ Multiple intelligence surveys
- ◆ Learning style surveys
- ◆ Student collage
- ◆ One-on-one interview with students
- ◆ Curriculum related assignment
- ◆ Read student files
- ◆ Look at test results—standardized tests, pre-tests....
- ◆ Talk to other teachers, parents
- ◆ Conduct observations

- **Knowledge of Characteristics of Students.** Conduct research and reflect on individual characteristics of each student’s developmental levels, interests, cultures and language that may affect learning.
- **Knowledge of Students’ Varied Approaches to Learning.** Gather information related to how students learn (learning styles, modalities, preferences) that may affect learning.
- **Knowledge of Students’ Skills and Prior Learning.** The purpose of this section is to research and record about each student’s skills and prior learning that may affect your success with planning, instructing, assessing and managing the class. Consider age, gender, race, ethnicity, special needs, developmental levels and assessment results, such as NWEA, DRAs, etc.
- **Implications for Instructional Planning and Assessment.** Demonstrate appropriate implications of instruction and assessment of Lessons/Unit based on student individual differences, and community, school, and classroom characteristics.

CFA Confidentiality & Privacy Statement: Confidentiality is critical in Education. The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires us to maintain the confidentiality of information related to students’ educational progress, and some types of personal information that we may learn in the course of working with students. Any student information that is going to be shared with people other than your mentor, supervisor and seminar group needs to have the student names replaced by numbers. Assign each student a number for the purposes of this assignment, and do not refer to them by name or by initials. Do not include photos of the students with this work. You will be presenting this work as part of your portfolio eventually, and potentially sharing your CFA with hiring committees as well. It should not be possible for people reading your CFA to identify specific students after reading your work.

Be especially thoughtful about students with disabilities. If you reference a student’s disability, make sure that you have not provided other details about this student that would identify who the student is. (For example, “The newest student in the class has a learning disability in the area of reading comprehension” could identify a student, whereas “Student #6 has a learning disability in the area of reading comprehension” would not.)

Do not include the name of the school where you are student teaching, or the name of the teacher. In most cases, a reader with some knowledge of the school would be able to make some assumptions about which students you are referencing. This does not apply to TK20, which is secure. Remember, the goal of this work is to demonstrate that you can think systematically about teaching and learning, as opposed to creating a narrative of your student teaching experience in a specific school.

On a related note, if students need to disclose sensitive personal information, they should be directed to a school counselor, social worker, administrator or their teacher, as those people have been trained by their district about how to respond to these types of disclosures. If, for some reason, a student discloses sensitive personal information about themselves to you, or you receive sensitive information about a student from another student, you are obligated by law to pass that information along to your mentor teacher right away. Do not share this information with anyone other than your mentor teacher or one of the school officials previously referenced. You should notify your field supervisor that a student disclosed sensitive information to you, but you should do so without disclosing the name of the student or the specific information that was disclosed.