Instructional Decision-Making:

As explained in my contextual factors, the school where I am student teaching divides their classes into “college prep” classes and “general” or grade level classes. The “college prep” classes are made up of students who are average and above average learners. The expectations are set slightly higher for these students. The grade level classes are made up of students who are lower level learners and IEP students. In order to teach the same lessons to both sets of classes, modifications must be made. The teachers, including myself, are required to post both sets of lesson plans on the school’s website each week. It must be relevant for parents, students, and administration that there are modifications or differences between the two classes.

In the class in which I collected data for my Teacher Work Sample, I did not have to make any modifications. The class was a small “college prep” class and for the most part the students were all on the same level of learning. However, I had to modify my lessons that I prepared for the “college prep” classes when taught the two hours of “general” classes.

In the general classes, I had to make modifications for the entire class. When reviewing study guides I had to provide answers on the study guides for them. I also followed the same procedures as my cooperating teacher when it came to late assignments with general classes. They are allowed to turn in late assignments no matter what the length of time is and still receive full credit. Also, general classes do not do as much homework as the “college prep” classes. If homework is given it is gone over thoroughly in class. Finally, the last modification I made with the general classes is that they were allowed to use their textbooks for fifteen minutes during their chapter test over Medieval Japan. My cooperating teacher informed me that he lets the general classes do this when they test so I did not want to change the environment that they were
already used to. The students who do not bring their textbooks are at a disadvantage though. This
gives the ones who do bring their books an incentive on test day.

I made most of my modifications because they were ones which my cooperating teacher
already practiced and I did not want to move these students too far out of their comfort zone.
However, one modification in which I made myself was giving the students in the general classes
more time to work on their tests. The “college prep” classes only had one class period but due to
the lower level readers in the general class, I allowed them an extra class period the next day to
finish their tests. I made this decision also based on the fact that ninety percent of the students
had not finished their tests or skipped constructive response questions on the first day. I did not
want these students to fail because they did not have the adequate time needed for their level.

Allowing the students more time and the opportunity to use their textbooks increased
their grades. I still had a few lower grades from the students who did not take the time to search
in their books for the answers. However, the grades turned out much higher than what they
would have if the students had not been given an extra day.

Other modifications were also made within the general classes. It was not the students’
learning response which caused me to make these modifications because they must already
receive modifications. Within these two classes there are several IEP students who must have
modifications made on their tests and in other lessons. When taking notes in class, these students
must receive hard copies of the notes to copy down and then return to the teacher. This allows
them to work at their own pace. My cooperating teacher also provided me with some examples
of modifications he uses for these students when he creates their tests. These modifications
included crossing out multiple choice options, providing page numbers to find answers for the
constructive response questions in the textbook, and filling in some parts of a diagram if there is
one on the test. Also, these students get to work with the special education teacher. She reads
them their tests and allows them to use their study guides when she works with them one on one.
These are modifications which their classmates do not receive. These modifications help raise
the grade of the IEP students. Most of the time being in a quieter setting with their teacher one on
one will help their concentration levels.

For the class that I collected data and the other three “college prep” classes, it was not
necessary to make modifications to my lessons, any other formative assessments, or their chapter
tests. However, for the two general classes and the IEP students it was both necessary and
required for modifications to be made.