Reflection on Instruction and Student Learning:

Two instructional strategies and activities I used which I think helped my students achieve their learning goals were activities we completed during lessons which were done in class. I found that my students did not complete homework assignments well so if I wanted them to learn and to reach the learning goals I set, then it was going to have to be accomplished in the classroom.

The first instructional strategy which worked well was open ended note taking. I designed a Power Point over Feudal Japan and I gave the students main ideas and key things to remember in the Power Point. However, I did not want them to write everything down word for word. I told them I wanted them to write down ideas and key words which would help them remember or recall the information. We discussed a lot as we took notes. I also included pictures of samurais and war lords so the students could have a visual. I would ask the students questions and relate my notes back to the main ideas in their textbooks. This helped the students to make connections and to draw from what they already knew about Feudal Japan. This type of strategy helped me and my students to reach LG1, students will define and recall their previous knowledge about Feudal Japan.

Another instructional strategy which worked really well was cooperative learning activities. In some classes these worked better than in others. However, I used them to review before the test and I was able to see how much the students knew or what we needed to spend a little more time reviewing. One activity in particular was Japan Jeopardy. I was able to use the Smart Board and divide the classes up into teams. The team with the most points at the end of the game got three bonus points on their test the next day. I was surprised to see how much the
students really knew and how eager they were to participate. This strategy allowed me to see where the students were in reaching all four of the learning goals.

**Reflection on barriers to successful learning:**

Two greatest barriers to learning for the students within the unit were: classroom management and the lack of modifications made to lessons for the general classes. As I said in my Contextual Factors, the classes are divided up in “general” and “college prep.” I did not collect data or use the general classes in my TWS but I should have made more modifications to their lessons. I tried to do the same activities with them as I had with the college prep classes because I felt like they always got the “short end of the stick.” I wanted them to see that they weren’t the “bad kids” who never got to do group work or hands-on activities so I tried this with them. It did not work out how I wanted it to and it was evident in their test scores. I think if I had made modifications to my lessons to include in-class reading out of the textbook with them then they might have done better on the test. The majority of them do not study at home or even take their books home to read so I should have planned more time in class to do this with them.

Another barrier with all of the classes besides the one I observed and collected data for my TWS was classroom management. My cooperating teacher did not have a very good classroom management plan laid out before I began. I tried to implement my own but knowing I was only there temporarily, the students were not willing to cooperate very long. It was difficult for me to get through a lesson without having to stop and discipline students on more than one occasion. There were not proper procedures put into place for homework, absents, and students needing to use the restroom. All of this made conducting class very difficult. As I said, I tried to implement my own classroom management but it did not last much longer than two weeks. I
believe this was my greatest barrier to learning because without effective classroom management there cannot be effective learning taking place.

**Reflection on implications for future teaching:**

In the future, I hope I can improve on what was done that did not allow my students to fully succeed in this unit. I have learned from experience that it is very important to have an effective classroom management plan from the first day of school. It must be followed by every student and it must be practiced daily. I have provided some effective classroom management procedures in the Classroom Management section.

I have also learned when to take the time to make modifications for students or even an entire class even if it is more work on me. It does not benefit anyone if the students do poor on the test because the teacher did not take the proper time and effort to prepare lessons to meet their needs. I will take the time to read with the students in class or to use the companion CD-ROM with the textbook so the students are able to get a sense of understanding of the material. I will also spend more than one day before the test reviewing with these students. It will take them more time than the advanced students and it will help me see what else I need to emphasize for them.

**Reflection on alignment among goals, instruction, and assessment:**

I feel as if I did a fair job of aligning my assessments and instruction with my learning goals. My overall achievement of my learning goals was pretty good. I was pleased with the scores the students had on their post assessments and their chapter test. I did not have any really low scores on the post-assessment and the students did really well on their chapter test.
I was also able to plan lessons and activities in alignment with my learning goals. We spent a few days on Feudal Japan, because this emphasized in the school’s curriculum. We took notes, watched a video from United Streaming, and completed a worksheet about their feudal system. We also spent a few days covering the geography of Japan and the students were able to make connections to see how it played a part in shaping their society. I also introduced and discussed three of the first cultures found in Japan. This was emphasized in their textbook and the students were able to see how cultures develop, change, and influence society over time.

**Reflection on learning community:**

I worked with members of the library staff when planning my lessons that required me to sign out the technology equipment. The main librarian helped me set up my lessons and walked me through the basics of using the Smart Board.

My cooperating teacher and I met with one student’s parent. She was very concerned about her son’s grade in the class and upset because he never brings out homework or study materials. She had received his progress report in the mail and wanted to come in to find out what he can do to help raise his grade. This was my first experience in meeting with a parent and it really opened my eyes to see how they can feel neglected or left out if their children don’t inform them of what is going on in the classroom. This particular mother does not own a computer so she is not able to check the homework postings or the lesson plans posted on the school’s website. However, she still wants to make an effort to help her son raise his grade. My cooperating teacher and she worked out a plan that the student would bring a notebook for my cooperating teacher to write down any assignments from that day and then he would take it home for his mom to see and initial.
I also had the opportunity to attend the Seventh Grade Dance. I volunteered to attend and poured soda for the refreshments table. It was fun to see the students outside of the classroom.

**Reflection on how to access specialized services:**

In my unit I had to make modifications for several IEP students in the general classes. Some of the modifications included: giving them time to use their study guide and textbook during a test, working with their special education teacher on their tests, giving them different formats of tests, reading their tests to them, using the CD-ROM textbook companion, and giving them a handout with notes or study guide answers on it instead of having them copy from the board.

This was my first experience in making modifications. I had to talk with the school’s guidance counselor and also the students’ special education teachers. I also had to work closely with my cooperating teacher to make sure I was making the right modifications for the right students.

**Reflection upon ethical practice:**

When I decided I wanted to show a video over Feudal Japan, I had to view the video before I could show it to the students. I used a video from the United Streaming website and this is a website which the school subscribes. However, my cooperating teacher informed me that there have been instances in which videos that are social studies based contain nudity or too much violence. Therefore, I previewed the video before I showed it in the classroom.

Also, when I was planning my unit I was going to make some copies out of a magazine before I realized the magazine was protected by copyright laws. I was going to use a reading selection from the magazine in class and copy it for each student. I soon realized this would not be legal and asked my cooperating teacher if it was something that is taken seriously or even if it
would be noticed. He told me that administration has made it very clear that nothing should be copied unless the teachers are positive in can be re-printed. A few days later I was make copies (appropriately) and right above the copy machine was a notice about copyrights and the legality issues involved.

Reflect on issues of professional development:

As I discussed earlier, I must learn to make appropriate modifications for appropriate classes. Also, I must be able to control a class and have management if I want effective learning to take place. I have room to grow in both of these areas. Having more experience and more knowledge about these two issues will help me to facilitate my learning much more effectively.

Two professional growth activities which will help me to improve my performance in these areas are the presentations over classroom management given by Cindy Rodgers and the presentation about concept attainment given by Donna Shaver. Both of these presentations presented good strategies to help me implement new ideas into my own classroom.

Also, I attended a teacher in-service at Sikeston Middle School and was given so much helpful information on note-taking, vocabulary, anticipation guides, and QARs. I will also use the RPDC, Regional Professional Development Center, on campus to help me in the future.