

# Early Childhood Preview Test

This preview of the PLT Early Childhood test (0521) is designed to give you an overall sense of the test's format and to help you determine the content areas you need to focus on in your studies. This preview test will *not* help you with your pacing on the test—this preview is approximately half the length of the actual PLT and may not represent the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty.

After you complete the preview test, score your answers and use the explanations to self-diagnose content areas to study in Part III of this guide. You may also want to complete the preview tests in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 to aid you in determining which content areas to study. Even though these additional preview tests are written for other PLT test grade levels, the question topics—Students as Learners, Instruction and Assessment, Communication Techniques, and Teacher Professionalism—remain the same.

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## Case I

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**Directions:** The case history is followed by three constructed-response questions. Read the case history and then respond to the three questions.

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### Scenario: Daniel

Daniel is a 7-year-old second-grade student who loves nature, likes classifying and organizing things, and enjoys attention from his peers. His teacher, Miss Whitcomb, uses a science-based, thematic unit approach to instruction but has found that Daniel is having difficulty completing his science log each day. She immerses her students in the lives of many living things by placing a variety of animal tanks around the perimeter of the classroom. She allows the students to move the animals to their desks in order to get close-up views of the animals. She has a variety of information sources about animals in the classroom, including nonfiction books, reference books, children's science magazines, and computer resources such as online encyclopedias and Internet access. Miss Whitcomb asks her mentor to observe Daniel so that she can offer teaching suggestions to help Daniel complete his written work.

### Observation: Miss Whitcomb's Class

**Pre-observation notes:** Miss Whitcomb states, "The purpose of the science log is to make daily observations of a living creature in our classroom and to learn to express thoughts in complete sentences." She continues, "Daniel has not completed his science log for several days now. When Daniel remembers to turn in his log, or when he has not misplaced it, his log entries often have a drawing of the living creature and a few words, not complete sentences. I believe Daniel is capable of higher-level work than this, and I would like you to observe his work to make some suggestions so that I can better help Daniel achieve second-grade standards."

### Mentor Classroom Observation Focused on Daniel

Miss Whitcomb begins the whole-group lesson by asking students to share what they wrote in their science logs yesterday. Daniel does not offer to speak. Instead, he whispers to a friend nearby and then looks at the tanks of living creatures near him.

Next, the teacher makes a KWL chart on the chalkboard and asks students to share what they want to know about the living creature they are observing. The teacher writes these facts under the K (Know) column. Daniel excitedly contributes that he knows that a hermit crab can move from one shell to another and that he has seen hermit crabs at the beach. After several students share, Miss Whitcomb instructs the students to turn to the next clean page of their logs and write a sentence about what they would like to know. Daniel appears to think during this time and then begins to draw a picture of a hermit crab. After a short time, Miss Whitcomb asks three students to share what they want to know, and then she writes these sentences in the W (Want to Know) column. Daniel does not offer to share his sentence, as he does not have a sentence written, only a drawing. He shows his drawing to a girl nearby, and she praises his artistic ability.

Next, Miss Whitcomb asks the second-graders to get their living creature's container, place it on their desk, and observe the creature quietly. After five minutes of individual observation, the students are instructed to spend ten minutes writing in their science logs about what they observed today. She also asks the students to write what they wanted to know about their living creature.

Miss Whitcomb moves to her desk to correct spelling papers while the students complete their science log entries. Daniel completes his drawing of the hermit crab with careful attention to detail, and then he writes "my hermut crabbe," "bech," and "ates?" on his paper. Once he has finished his work, he talks with a boy near him about the hermit crab and asks the friend if he knows what a hermit crab eats. The boys have a serious conversation about the crab's eating habits until Miss Whitcomb brings the students back together to share their entries.

Miss Whitcomb closes the lesson with time to discuss what the students learned about their living creatures. Once again, Daniel is silent and appears uncomfortable with the written work in his science log. When Miss Whitcomb calls on Daniel to share, he appears nervous and says that he does not want to. Miss Whitcomb reminds the students to place



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## Case II

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**Directions:** The case history is followed by three constructed-response questions. Read the case history and then respond to the three questions.

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### Scenario: Miss Elliott

Miss Elliott is a second-year first-grade teacher in a large urban school district. Miss Elliott’s students have diverse learning styles and needs. Of her 25 first-graders, six students are English language learners, five have learning disabilities, four receive gifted and talented program services, and two have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). In addition, one of Miss Elliott’s students, Susie, was born prematurely with fetal alcohol syndrome. Of all her first-graders, this student is making the least progress academically and socially. As required in her contract, Miss Elliott must complete a professional portfolio that contains clear evidence that she is achieving her professional goals. She also will be evaluated by her principal this month.

### Document 1: Professional Goals

The teacher evaluation process requires her to document two ways that she has demonstrated her achievement of three professional goals. Miss Elliott has set the following goals:

1. Create effective bridges between students’ experiences and the first-grade curriculum goals.
2. Improve classroom discussions to help students share thinking in different ways, for different purposes.
3. Develop and utilize active partnerships with parents, colleagues, and school leaders.

### Document 2: Unit Goals

Miss Elliott plans to collect all six artifacts for her professional development portfolio during the next unit of instruction, which involves the theme of friendship. The following are three curriculum goals for this unit:

- Students will express qualities of a good friend.
- Students will read about friendships to make comparisons/contrasts to their experiences.
- Students will write a story involving friendships with a beginning, middle, and end.

### Document 3: Project Assignment: Family Book Bags

A key assignment in Miss Elliott’s friendship unit involves the children and their families reading a book at home together in a project called “Family Book Bags.” The book bag contains a quality and age-appropriate children’s book, a toy or prop that comes from the story, a journal for the student and family to respond in, and a letter to the family explaining the project. Here’s a sample letter from the *Baby Animals* book bag:

Dear first-grade friend and family,

Please enjoy reading the book *Baby Animals* with your child. You and your child can read the book together. It’s also okay for you to read the whole book to your child. After reading, your child should write and draw on the notebook pages. You should write and draw on the pages labeled “family pages.” Your child may want to draw a favorite baby animal, either a real or a stuffed animal. You should write down the child’s retelling, as well as any comments or questions you have about reading *Baby Animals* with your child.

Good retellings include:

- The characters
- The setting
- The main events in the story
- How the story ends

If your child has a picture of your real animal or would like to bring a stuffed animal to school for the day, please put it in the book bag. Your child can share it with the class! Please have your child return the book bag the next day, if possible. You may have up to two school nights with the book bag, if needed.

Happy reading!

Miss Elliott

## Document 4: Project Assessment

When the family book bag is returned to school, the child has the opportunity to show and tell about the book bag experience. The book bag reading experience is assessed on the following criteria:

- Retelling includes characters
- Retelling includes setting
- Retelling includes main events
- Retelling includes conclusion
- Student response includes drawing and words
- Student oral sharing is clearly spoken and connected to *Baby Animals* reading

## Document 5: Transcript of Susie Sharing Her Book Bag

**Miss Elliott:** Susie, it's your turn to share the *Baby Animals* book bag that you read at home with your grandma.

**Susie:** Oh, good! I love share time!

**Miss Elliott:** Tell us about your favorite part of the story.

**Susie:** My favorite animal is a leopard. My grandma and I went to the zoo, but I could not see the leopard because it was hiding behind the rocks, and then we had an ice cream and I had to go home.

**Miss Elliott:** Did you see a baby leopard in the *Baby Animals* book?

**Susie:** No. I did not like this book because it did not have a leopard.

**Miss Elliott:** Oh, Susie. You will be so happy to know that I saw a baby leopard in the *Baby Animals* book. Look at this picture!

**Susie:** Yeah! That's a baby leopard. That's my favorite animal. I love the spots and her color.

**Directions:** Questions 4–6 require you to write short answers, or “constructed responses.” You are not expected to cite specific theories or texts in your answers; however, your knowledge of specific principles of learning and teaching will be evaluated. Be sure to answer all parts of the question. Write your answers in the space provided.

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- 4.** Miss Elliott's first professional goal—to create effective bridges between students' experiences and the first-grade curriculum goals—will require her to consider her students' prior experiences and how these experiences relate to the goals in the friendship unit.
- Suggest TWO instructional techniques for creating effective bridges between students and curriculum goals.
  - Explain how Miss Elliott can document her use of these techniques as part of her professional evaluation portfolio. Be sure to base your response on best professional practice and principles of learning and teaching.



## Discrete Multiple-Choice Questions

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**Directions:** Questions 7–18 are not related to the previous cases. For each question, select the best answer and mark the corresponding letter space on your answer sheet.

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### ANSWER SHEET

7	A	B	C	D
8	A	B	C	D
9	A	B	C	D
10	A	B	C	D
11	A	B	C	D
12	A	B	C	D
13	A	B	C	D
14	A	B	C	D
15	A	B	C	D
16	A	B	C	D
17	A	B	C	D
18	A	B	C	D

**7.** Mrs. Dougherty’s first-grade students work in small groups at the blocks center three days a week. Which of the following provides the best rationale for blocks center work?

- A. Direct instruction
- B. Discovery learning
- C. Independent practice
- D. Visual learning

**8.** A reading lesson plan that is organized with direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice is likely to provide which of the following to students?

- A. Grade-level expectations
- B. Phonemic awareness
- C. Scaffolding
- D. Vocabulary development

*Questions 9–10 are based on the following description of a class.*

Mrs. Horton teaches a second-grade class of 20 students. She has a diverse group of children, including:

- Five students identified as eligible for an IEP and placed in her classroom, which is considered each student’s “least restrictive environment”
- Two students whose primary language is not English
- Two students who have been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder
- Two students who are eligible for the gifted and talented program

**9.** One of Mrs. Horton's goals for the class is to have the students take turns and listen attentively to the speaker. Which of the following instructional strategies will best support the students whose primary language is not English?

- A. Practice taking turns and listening in a small group with support from the teacher
- B. Whole-class practice listening and speaking
- C. Listening to a tape-recorded conversation
- D. Brainstorming a list of rules for taking turns and listening

**10.** Mrs. Horton also has set a goal to teach each student to read at the second-grade level by the end of the school year. Which of the following methods is LEAST likely to support this goal for the diverse group of learners in her class?

- A. Language experience approach
- B. Independent reading of a book on the child's frustration level
- C. Whole group reading of a quality children's literature book
- D. Guided reading practice in small groups

**11.** During oral reading, one student reads the word *cape* as *cap*. This child most likely needs help with

- A. concepts about print.
- B. encoding.
- C. comprehension.
- D. phonics.

**12.** A student in Miss Cindy's kindergarten class loves to repeat the rhymes in poems, visits the listening center often, and has memorized the letters of the alphabet by singing the ABC song. Which of the following best describes this child's intelligence?

- A. Visual/linguistic
- B. Verbal/spatial
- C. Musical
- D. Interpersonal

**13.** Mrs. Antosh strives to make accommodations for the students in her kindergarten class who have short attention spans, have difficulty starting a task, and often appear distracted by the busy classroom. Which accommodation is LEAST likely to support these students?

- A. Providing a less visual, quiet area to work
- B. Providing short tasks with immediate positive feedback
- C. Moving the student closer to the teacher
- D. Seating the student in a group

**14.** As part of the district's assessment plan, Miss Webb gives a criterion-referenced assessment to her first-graders at the end of her Communities social studies unit. Which of the following types of information will Miss Webb most likely get from this assessment?

- A. Each student's grade-level equivalent compared to other first-graders in the district
- B. Each student's attainment of the unit's goals and objectives
- C. A better understanding of the student's attitudes about social studies
- D. Each student's percentile rank in social studies performance on the Communities unit

Questions 15–16 are based on the following teaching situation.

Mrs. Lahiri is a teacher assistant in Mrs. Campbell’s primary grade-level resource classroom. During a time when Mrs. Campbell created a lesson plan in which Mrs. Lahiri works with a small group of students drafting a story, the principal asks Mrs. Lahiri to assist in the office because of an absence. Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Lahiri are discouraged that their plans have been interrupted. Furthermore, their students will not receive the small-group instruction delineated in their Individualized Education Plans.

**15.** Which of the following is a professionally responsible and reflective way for Mrs. Campbell to approach this situation?

- A. Discuss concerns with Mrs. Lahiri and encourage her to file a complaint.
- B. Discuss concerns with the school principal and offer alternative solutions to the problem.
- C. Support the change in student services in order to be a team member.
- D. Discuss concerns with colleagues in the teacher’s room and brainstorm solutions to the problem.

**16.** Which of the following best provides guidance to Mrs. Campbell when considering solutions to this teaching situation?

- A. Reading First
- B. Title VI
- C. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- D. Title I

**17.** Mr. Colombino, a second-grade teacher, has a student who has repeated difficulty following class rules. Which of the following approaches can he use to best change this student’s behavior?

- A. Corporal punishment
- B. Regular communication with the student’s family
- C. Negative reinforcement
- D. Formal operational development

**18.** The *Brown v. Board of Education* legal case of 1954 struck down which of the following doctrines?

- A. “Carpe diem”
- B. “Least restrictive environment”
- C. “Separate but equal”
- D. “Separation of church and state”

# Answers and Explanations

Cases, or “constructed responses,” are graded holistically on a scale of 0–2, with 0 being the lowest score. For details on this type of question, be sure to read Chapter 5. In this section, you’ll find the content categories and suggested content to include in your case study responses. For more information about the content category, you can study Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10. The suggested content is designed to help you get a sense of the type of response required, but it may not cover all the correct options in such an open-ended question. You may also find it helpful to share your constructed responses with an education professor, adviser, or educator.

## Case I

- 1. Suggested content:** Provide direct instruction as to how to complete a science log entry; share benchmark papers to demonstrate exemplary, acceptable, and not acceptable examples of the assignment; elicit specific observations from Daniel one-to-one and help him compose sentences in his science log.

Each of these alternative strategies provides a higher level of scaffolding, or support, for this assignment. Daniel may be choosing to draw observations and write words because he is not clear on the assignment’s expectations or because his level of literacy development is below the level expected by Miss Whitcomb. One key to opening this lesson is finding out what Daniel knows and is able to do and providing specific, corrective instruction.

- 2. Suggested content:** Two strategies to use during this lesson might include: breaking the task into smaller chunks; providing more frequent, positive feedback to Daniel; having Daniel work with an equally able or more able peer; asking Daniel to verbally describe his drawing and then encouraging him to put this description in writing.

Students such as Daniel benefit from differentiated instruction. Daniel’s level of literacy development may be at an earlier stage than his peers. His behavior may be age-appropriate for his knowledge level. Daniel would benefit from positive guidance and timely feedback. These changes in the learning environment will likely help Daniel’s self-motivation. Encouraging Daniel to explain his thinking probes for his understanding and may encourage his divergent thinking, which sends a message of caring and respect.

- 3. Suggested content:** This response seeks your knowledge of assessment and professional ability to communicate with parents. Suggested content includes using a four-point rubric with specific indicators for what makes an exemplary science log. TWO criteria could include: Two detailed sentences describing what the animal is doing; a sketch of the animal with labels for the animal’s habitat; sentences including a capital letter and end punctuation; or an “I wonder question,” which is a question about the animal’s behavior, habitat, or physical characteristics. ONE way to share information could include: a brief letter to parents detailing the purpose of the science log; an activity page for the family to complete with the child after reading the science log (for example, writing a note back to the child to praise his or her work); or extension ideas for keeping a science log with the family at home.

Teachers should share the criteria for success on a task before the assignment is completed. Criteria should be measurable, free from bias, and understandable to the student. Teachers should regularly communicate with parents and guardians to develop and utilize active partnerships that benefit the child, as well as the larger school community. Communication should be respectful and reciprocal.

## Case II

- 4. Suggested content:** Based on principles of learning and teaching, there are several ways to bridge students and curriculum, including the following: modeling, guided practice, independent practice, appropriate homework, activating prior knowledge, and teaching predicting and verifying. For more information about this content, turn to Chapter 8.

Teachers must actively teach students to connect prior knowledge to new curriculum content. Schema theory, scaffolding, and teaching to a student’s “zone of proximal development” are three theories that provide a rationale for the techniques.

- 5. Suggested content:** You might include the following techniques: helping students share their ideas and thinking processes; promoting risk taking and problem solving; or teaching students to question, such as those found in Bloom’s taxonomy. It is also important to develop an example or two that describes how the technique you’ve chosen will best support a diverse learning environment in Miss Elliott’s classroom. For example, four of her students attend gifted and talented programs. Asking questions at the analysis and synthesis levels of Bloom’s taxonomy will challenge such students, while at the same time discussing a topic that can benefit the whole class. For more support on this content, see Chapters 7 and 9.

Metacognition (thinking about one’s own thinking) provides one important reason to promote the communication techniques detailed in this response. Teaching students a variety of ways to ask and respond to discussion questions provides an opportunity for all students to learn to think.

- 6. Suggested content:** Miss Elliott might turn to the professional literature, the school nurse, or the child’s family to help her make instructional decisions for her student who was born with fetal alcohol syndrome.

Building partnerships to solve educational problems provides an opportunity for shared ownership and shared decision-making of the problem. Susie may need to repeat first grade or receive evaluation for special education services. When school and home are working collaboratively, a student’s needs are met more effectively.

## Discrete Multiple-Choice Questions

### Answer Key

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Content Category</i>	<i>Where to Get More Help</i>
7.	B	Students as Learners	Chapter 7
8.	C	Students as Learners	Chapter 7
9.	A	Students as Learners	Chapter 7
10.	B	Students as Learners	Chapter 7
11.	D	Instruction and Assessment	Chapter 8
12.	C	Instruction and Assessment	Chapter 8
13.	D	Instruction and Assessment	Chapter 8
14.	B	Instruction and Assessment	Chapter 8
15.	B	Teacher Professionalism	Chapter 10
16.	C	Teacher Professionalism	Chapter 10
17.	B	Teacher Professionalism	Chapter 10
18.	C	Teacher Professionalism	Chapter 10

## Explanations

- 7. B.** Discovery learning is an instructional approach based on Bruner’s constructivist theory. Students select and transform information, creating hypotheses relying on cognitive structures.
- 8. C.** Scaffolding is an instructional technique introduced by Vygotsky. The teacher models how to approach a task, breaks complex assignments into smaller parts, and offers scaffolding, or support, for student learning. When the student is ready, the teacher provides independent practice.
- 9. A.** English language learners benefit from working in small groups, where they can practice speaking in English and listening to peers.

10. **B.** Mrs. Horton will least likely achieve her goal of teaching her second-graders to read at grade level if her students read books independently at their frustration level. It is best practice to have students read books at either their independent or instructional level.
11. **D.** When a child reads the word *cape* as *cap*, he or she needs help with phonics or decoding. You may have chosen answer choice B, encoding, which is synonymous with spelling. The question states that the child is reading, not writing, so phonics is the credited response.
12. **C.** According to Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, there are eight different intelligences. Students who possess musical intelligence have sensitivity to pitch, tones, and rhythm. They are the students who like to hum, repeat chants, play instruments, and learn melodies.
13. **D.** The LEAST effective accommodation for a student who has a short attention span, struggles to begin a task, and appears distracted in the classroom is placing the student in a group. This student would be more successful with added structure and teacher direction until he or she can learn strategies to deal with these attention problems.
14. **B.** A criterion reference test compares a student’s knowledge, as demonstrated on the test, to the goals and objectives in the curriculum.
15. **B.** Discussing concerns with the school principal and offering alternative solutions to the problem would be the most professional response to this situation. According to the No Child Left Behind Act, teacher assistants assigned to children as part of their Individualized Educational Plans are required to spend instructional time with students. Working professionally and collaboratively with the principal is the most desirable professional option presented.
16. **C.** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act became a public law in 1997 to ensure that students with disabilities and their families have access to a free and appropriate education. This law focuses resources on teaching and learning for students with Individualized Educational Plans.
17. **B.** Of the choices offered, regular communication with the student’s family has the most potential for supporting the learning needs for a student who struggles to follow class rules. Corporal punishment—spanking or striking a student—is not an option in public schools today. Skinner’s theory of negative reinforcement states that a student escape punishment by repeating desired responses, such as not following the rules in Mr. Colombino’s class. Formal operational cognitive development does not make sense in the context of this question.
18. **C.** The *Brown v. Board of Education* legal case of 1954 struck down the “separate but equal” doctrine in public schools during this time. The Supreme Court determined that state-mandated segregated schools were inherently unequal and discriminatory.

