

**SAMPLE IPA ESSAY**  
**Standard #5 (Reflective Thinking)**  
**Grade Three**

In every lesson any good teacher will include some element of each of the six IPA standards. But through the assignment of standards five and six I have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of reflective thinking as a teacher, and the coherence of content amongst the students.

The content, teaching style, and format chosen for my lesson were based on two theories created by theorist Lev Vygotsky. The first theory is zone of proximal development, and the second is scaffolding. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is the existing gap between what children already know how to do, but are not ready to do on their own.

By reflecting on the student's previous writing samples it was obvious for me to see the importance for teaching this lesson. The students had the ability to write paragraphs, but that their paragraphs had little structure. The creation of my objectives for this lesson was based on my reflection of the students past works and my understanding of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. I knew the students had the ability to write the paragraphs, but it was now my responsibility to guide them into writing stronger paragraphs with coherent structure that contained a main idea in a topic sentence and details with in the supporting sentences.

I chose topics throughout the lesson that I knew students could relate to and understand. After spending a few hours each week in the classroom and thinking back to different language arts activities the students did, I was able to incorporate topics that I knew had come about in prior classes. The topics I chose to use for my instructional examples included staying home sick from school, and the summertime. When it came time for the students to write their own writing samples I suggested topics like, sports and games they like to play, family vacations, and favorite animals. These were all topics which had been included in previous journals topics, readings from the student's classroom texts, or class discussions. Through my reflection on my previous observations in the classroom I was sure give the students choice. I did not want narrow down the assignment by assigning only one topic that would create biases or leave the children to write about something they were unfamiliar with.

Of course the most important aspect of reflection is after the instruction and assessment of the lesson plan is complete. At the completion of my instruction I reviewed the students' work. What I realized was that while the majority of the students completed the worksheet with high competency, there seemed to be a misunderstanding in the directions for some students. In activity 2 (example 8), I modeled with the class what the students would then have to do later by themselves on the worksheet. The worksheet I handed out required the students to write a

paragraph. The students began by using a “brain bubble” to record their main idea for their topic sentence, and key words for their detailed sentences as a pre-writing activity. (see example 8 or student work)

I then wanted the students to write a complete paragraph using their main idea in a complete topic sentence, and using their key words as details to create four or five supporting sentences. All the student were able to complete the first part of filling out the bubble, but a couple students, for example Kyle, (example 2) were confused and wrote their topic sentence in the bubble, and writing their detailed sentences on the lines allotted for their whole paragraph. Or Arthur who originally did not have a topic sentence and later added it during the editing stage of the writing progress on paragraphs (example 3 of page 3) after some individual prompting by me. On the worksheet I think I should have allotted a separate line with a label for the topic sentence, and then made lines for their detailed sentences to prevent the confusion.

Through the writing and instruction of this lesson and the students completion of the assessment for this lesson I realized the importance of reflection in ones own teaching. Reflection is something that comes about in all aspects of lesson plan writing. Reflection is a process that can help one develop their lesson, teach their lesson and revise their lesson.