

SAMPLE IPA ESSAY
Standard #3 (Critical Thinking)
Grade Two

The activities I have used in my lesson have connected in several ways to the critical thinking standard. The objectives were accomplished throughout my lesson, which enables students to go beyond the goals set and use their recently learned knowledge in new situations. Basing my lesson on the theories of Jerome Bruner, I have devised a lesson to focus on the cognitive structure of a child's mind which will provide meaning and organization to their experiences. Through the activities, students are encouraged to build on schema and new information as a whole group, individually and during small group discussions to learn by doing and develop inventive thoughts.

In my lesson, children were exposed to several different activities that encouraged creative/critical thinking. Throughout the lesson students were provided with opportunities to discuss the topic and concepts with one another and myself. On page 3, #3 of the lesson plan, children discussed with each other their reasons why they believe the big box is the heaviest box. Imani believes_ "The little box has nothing in it because it is so small." While Sky replies; "The big box weighs more because it has more stuff in it." The students compare and assess their ideas and analyses, which relates to their critical thinking skills by drawing out conclusions.

Children are given the opportunity to discuss topics with one another during the weight activity (Page 6, #1), because they were working in cooperative groups. In each group the children shared one scale to which they would have to verbally think aloud to compare and contrast two objects with the group. The groups were used to communicate and explore ideas deeply, not just on recall of facts. The students had to determine the weight objects with their eyes, hands and scales which allows them opportunities to ask one another for their reasoning why some may believe an object looks heavier. Ashley wonders on page 6, #6 "Quadir thinks the rock is heavier than the candle, but I told him that it doesn't matter what size the rock is and then we weighed it and I was right." Ashley and Quadir are going beyond recalling facts by discussing the topic deeply on another level.

By using materials for the measuring activity, a group was asked to work together to discuss and use trial and error to figure out a problem by building on their knowledge. You can see from James's response on page 6, #11, that the children discussed and thought about what would make each side of the balance weigh the same. "Kevin was almost right, I thought the red ball needed to go on that side but Dionna knew what was missing by adding the white ball to that side." This example also shows that I encouraged a creative learning environment that gives students time in class to use their knowledge in a new situation. The students were using all of the techniques learned in class to figure out an innovative strategy that we have not yet talked about to problem solve.

This lesson builds on knowledge that students already possess as a source of learning in this lesson. Jerome Bruner's theory of spiral organization is what made many children connect to what he or she already learned. Children were asked to think about a past experience that can relate to pounds and ounces. This is evident on page 3, #10, and page 5, #12. These two students

are showing their past real world experiences and knowledge about weight and connecting it to their newly learned information.

Drawing out past learned knowledge was evident by Quazim's response on page 5, #18. Quazim was encouraged to use his knowledge about pounds and ounces to think of a way to connect them. Jerome Bruner's theory is evident because I related what Quazim said to the rest of the class's experiences which makes them more eager to learn. Students are learning actively by providing them with an example that is placed in a format appropriate for their learning state of understanding. Critically, students are recalling their own experiences and relating it to carrying pounds of flour and ounces of oil. This can be found on Page 5, #26.

Students were also asked to compare four objects and then place them in weight value from heaviest to lightest (Activity 5, page 7). The students were demonstrating that they could develop unique strategies. The students were not taught how to do this but were successful in their application of new skills. Zalika responds to the activity on the back of her student work (page 10): "Pick up two objects and see how heavy are they. Then see how heavier is the two to the other object. Put them in order by doing this." By doing this activity I provided students with the opportunity to use their higher order thinking skills to devise a strategy that they have created after learning all the techniques applicable in measuring weight.

My lesson was connected to critical/creative thinking which was evident through my learning objectives. My objectives were met through activities that encouraged students to ask questions, seek solutions, draw conclusions and develop unique strategies to build on their knowledge and use it in new situations. Jerome Bruner's theory of active learning based upon current/past knowledge was clearly proven in my lesson and my write_up of how students used their minds to critically and creatively complete the lesson to its fullest.