

## TEMPLE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

### Tips for the IPA Exam

As assignments go, the assignment for the IPA exam is long and complex. By now, you've probably received many pages of information explaining the assignment and the scoring rubric. You should read all of this information very carefully, but keep in mind that the central task is pretty simple: the goal is to describe some things you've done in the classroom in order to demonstrate how your teaching reflects two of the six standards.

This means that your paper will include a lot of description: you'll be telling stories about what you did to help a group of kids learn something. But the main task is persuasive: you need to convince your readers that you understand the standards and that you know how to apply them. It also means that you're trying to present yourself as an expert teacher, even though you may not feel like one.

Here are four things that you can do to help make this essay successful on the first try:

1. **Brainstorm before you draft, draft a complete essay, and then thoroughly revise it.** This essay has a lot of required pieces, and it's not easy to keep that many balls in the air. When you brainstorm, try making a chart that addresses each of the aspects of your two standards. Once you have written a draft, let it rest for a day or two, then look at it with fresh eyes. If possible, get feedback on your draft from a Writing Center tutor or a friend.
2. **Answer the question: What does this show about my teaching?** It's easy to get caught up in describing what you did in the classroom, or what you included in your lesson plan. But unless you explain why this information is relevant, the scorer may not make the connection.
3. **Use professional vocabulary and cite educational theorists where appropriate.** If your teaching style draws on the work of Gardner or Freire, say so. If your lesson plan demonstrates the principles of whole language or constructivism, point that out. This helps establish your expertise. But remember that these theories are only helpful if you directly connect them to your lesson plan and/or to the standards. If you merely mention them without providing clarifying details, the scorer may not understand why the theories are relevant.
4. **Think carefully about what you attach to your essay.** You can staple all sorts of things to your essay – your complete lesson plan, your students' papers, your quizzes and worksheets – but that doesn't mean that the scorers will read any of it. In fact, the scorer won't look at any materials that you don't reference explicitly.