

*This essay does a reasonably good job of persuading readers that the writer understands the standards. The writer invokes Jerome Bruner throughout to ground her pedagogical strategies in theory. Her description of her lesson is detailed and carefully cited; she does not repeat herself unnecessarily. The writer's conclusion includes some information that might have been more appropriate at the beginning of the paper (i.e., what the standards entail), but overall, this essay balances description and theory in a persuasive manner. One warning: this writer could have done a better job of proofreading! There are numerous grammatical error that undermine the argument she makes.*

### SAMPLE IPA ESSAY

#### Standard #1 (Active Learning) & Standard #3 (Critical/Creative Thinking) Grade Two

The standards I have used in my lesson have connected in several ways because of the direct correlation between active learning and critical thinking. 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 introduced them to active learning and 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, bullet 3 of the revised lesson plan, children discussed with each other their reasons why they believe the big box is the heaviest. 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, bullet 65), 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 weigh 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 7, bullet 70, "Miss \_\_\_\_\_, 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, one group was asked to collaboratively 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 7, bullet 75, 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 proves that I encouraged a creative learning environment that gives students time in class to use their knowledge in a new situation. The students were giving all of the techniques learned in class to figure out an innovative strategy that we have not yet talked about to problem solve.

Building on knowledge that students already possess was 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 or ounces. This is evident on page 3, bullet 11, and page 5, bullet 47. “A scale! I was on a scale at the doctor’s last week, and so was my baby sister.” “My baby sister was just born and weighed 7 pounds 9 ounces.” These two students are showing their past real world experiences and knowledge about weight and connecting it to their newly learned information.

Drawing out on past learned knowledge for critical thinking and active learning was evident by Quazim’s response on page , bullet 53. “When making a cake.” 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. Actively, students are participating in an activity that builds on their schema of measurement. 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 6, bullet 61.

Students were also asked to compare and contrast four objects and then place them in weight value from heaviest to lightest. The students were actively demonstrating what they know about the topic and using it in a new situation. The students were not taught how to do this but were successful in their application of the new skills. Zalika responds to the activity on the back of her student work: “ Pick up two objects and see how heavy they are. Then see how heavier is the two to the other object. Put them in order by doing this.” Zalika was not given instruction by which she had to use her own unique strategies to complete the task.

Again with the same activity, Kaulee demonstrates his critical and creative thinking skills to develop an argument and construct an explanation about his thought process in creating his strategy. He uses higher order thinking skills by choosing how to

complete his assignment by manipulating the ideas in a new situation. This can be found on the back of Kaulee's student work: "First, I put the rock in my hand. Then I put the candle in my other hand. Then I use them both to see which one is heavier. Then I saw that the rock was heavier than the candle." By doing this activity I was promoting students 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 both critical/creative thinking and active learning which was evident through my learning objectives. My objectives were met through the activities that promoted 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.