

LSSU SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



The Teacher Work Sample¹



Manual for Teacher Candidates Tips for Preparing The Teacher Work Sample



¹Document modified from the teacher work sample manual designed within *The Renaissance Partnership For Improving Teacher Quality Project, 2004*
(<http://uni.edu/itq>)

Section 1

Overview of a Teacher Work Sample (TWS)

The Vision

Successful teacher candidates support learning by designing a Teacher Work Sample that employs a range of strategies and builds on each student’s strengths, needs, and prior experiences. Through this performance assessment, teacher candidates provide credible evidence of their ability to facilitate learning by meeting the following TWS standards:

1. The teacher uses information about the learning-teaching context and student individual differences to set learning goals and plan instruction and assessment.
2. The teacher sets significant, challenging, varied, and appropriate learning goals.
3. The teacher uses multiple assessment modes and approaches aligned with learning goals to assess student learning before, during, and after instruction.
4. The teacher designs instruction to accomplish specific learning goals based upon student characteristics and needs and learning contexts.
5. The teacher uses regular and systematic evaluations of student learning to make instructional decisions.
6. The teacher uses assessment data to profile student learning and communicate information about student progress and achievement.
7. The teacher reflects on his or her instruction and student learning in order to improve teaching practice.

The Process

The TWS contains seven teaching processes identified by research and best practice as fundamental to improving student learning. The Standards and Rubrics will be used to evaluate your TWS. The Prompts (or directions) help you document the extent to which you have met each of the Standards.

You are required to teach a 2-3 week comprehensive unit. Before you teach the unit, you will describe contextual factors, identify learning goals based on your state or district content standards, create an assessment plan designed to evaluate student performance before (pre- assessment), during (formative assessment) and after (post-assessment), and plan for your instruction. After you teach the unit, you will analyze student learning and then reflect upon and evaluate your teaching as it relates to student learning.

Teaching Processes Assessed by the Teacher Work Sample

Teaching Processes, TWS Standards, and Indicators

Contextual Factors

1. *The teacher uses information about the learning-teaching context and student individual differences to set learning goals and plan instruction and assessment.*
 - Knowledge of community, school, and classroom factors
 - Knowledge of characteristics of students
 - Knowledge of students' varied approaches to learning
 - Knowledge of students' skills and prior learning
 - Implications for instructional planning and assessment

Learning Goals

2. *The teacher sets significant, challenging, varied, and appropriate learning goals.*
 - Significance, Challenge and Variety
 - Clarity
 - Appropriateness for students
 - Alignment with national, state, or local standards

Assessment Plan

3. *The teacher uses multiple assessment modes and approaches aligned with learning goals to assess student learning before, during and after instruction.*
 - Alignment with learning goals and instruction
 - Clarity of criteria for performance
 - Multiple modes and approaches
 - Technical soundness
 - Adaptations based on the individual needs of students

Design for Instruction

4. *The teacher designs instruction for specific learning goals, student characteristics and needs, and learning contexts.*
 - Alignment with learning goals
 - Accurate representation of content
 - Lesson and unit structure
 - Use of a variety of instruction, activities, assignments, and resources
 - Use of contextual information and data to select appropriate and relevant activities, assignments and resources.
 - Use of technology

Instructional Decision-Making

5. *The teacher uses on-going analysis of student learning to make instructional decisions.*
 - Sound professional practice
 - Adjustments based on analysis of student learning
 - Congruence between modifications and learning goals

Analysis of Student Learning

6. *The teacher uses assessment data to profile student learning and communicate*

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information about student progress and achievement.

- Clarity and accuracy of presentation
- Alignment with learning goals
- Interpretation of data
- Evidence of impact on student learning

Reflection and Self-Evaluation

7. ***The teacher reflects on his or her instruction and student learning in order to improve teaching practice.***

- Interpretation of student learning
- Insights on effective instruction, and assessment
- Alignment among goals, instruction and assessment
- Implications for future teaching
- Implications for professional development

Section 2

Introduction to the Teacher Work Sample (TWS)

Why is this worth doing?

The TWS provides substantial evidence you are ready to begin your professional career as an educator. The development of a TWS will provide you with an authentic experience designed to develop in you “a teacher’s way of thinking.”

In other words, in your future career the systematic development of a TWS may not happen again in a formal written manner. However, very importantly, it will create a professional habit of mind where, as an educator, you will naturally think about the seven processes of the TWS as a matter of best practice.

Compiling a TWS provides you with professional growth experiences and documentation that reflect your ability to impact the learning of students. Many teacher candidates have found their TWS to be a valuable tool in their search for employment.

How to Use This Guide

The advice that follows is useful. Here, you’ll find practical, efficient, and user-friendly suggestions for completing your Teacher Work Sample. Best of all, these suggestions come directly from other teacher candidates who have gone before you. Many suggestions are simple tips to keep in mind while developing and teaching your unit. Others are useful strategies for preparing the final written draft in a professional format. These suggestions and strategies can help you produce a solid, professional document of which you can be proud.

We encourage you to apply the tips and suggestions learned from these experiences.

Section 3

General Advice for Completing the TWS

Words of Wisdom

The TWS provides substantial evidence that you are ready to begin your professional career as an educator. From this point forward you will need to assume the role of a teacher and be held accountable for your own work by establishing a schedule to complete each section.

Even though you are writing each section independently, it is important that each one relates to the others. Keep in mind that the work you produce is a reflection of your work ethic and the professional skills, attitudes, and knowledge you have obtained during your pre-service career. Although it may seem overwhelming, this task may help you find the job you're looking for.

Some Super Suggestions

- Start early!
- Read the following materials NOW:
 - o this manual,
 - o one or more of the annotated TWS Exemplars. (Many are available at http://www.uni.edu/itq/Scored_TWS/printable.htm)Pay particular attention to two sections: Analysis of Student Learning and Reflection/Self-Evaluation.
- Meet with your cooperating teacher as soon as possible to plan the topic/goals and the dates of your 2-3 week unit.
- Develop with your cooperating teacher a workable schedule for administering your pre- and post-assessments.
- Begin a journal now. This will be useful in recording valuable successes, failures, frustrations, surprises, insights, and changes that you will use later. (Example: “I need to know more about earthquakes because the students asked so many questions.” This comment may be used later when writing the Reflection and Self- Evaluation section of the TWS.)
- Keep samples of student work such as the entire class set of pre- and post-assessments and the work generated by the two students you have selected. You will present and discuss this work in the Analysis of Student Learning section. (Remember to remove students’ names from all work you include.)
- Once you complete writing a section, plan to revisit it and update it periodically as you learn more.

TWS Reminders for Submission to TaskStream (Submit one hard copy to the School of Education.)

- **Ownership**

Complete a cover page that includes (a) your name, (b) date submitted, (c) grade level taught, (d) subject taught, (d) your university, (e) course number and title.

- **Table of Contents**

Provide a Table of Contents with page numbers that list the sections and attachments in your TWS document.

- **Charts, graphs and attachments**

Charts, graphs, and assessment instruments are required as part of the TWS document. You may also want to provide other attachments, such as student work. However, you should be very selective and make sure your attachments provide clear, concise evidence of your performance related to TWS Standards and your students’ learning progress.

- **Narrative length**

A suggested page length for your narrative is given at the end of each section. You have some flexibility of length across sections, but the total length of your written narrative (excluding charts, graphs, attachments and references) should not exceed twenty (20) word-processed pages, double-spaced in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Be sure to include page numbers!

- **References and Credits** (not included in 20 pages for TWS)

If you refer to another person’s ideas or material in your narrative, you should cite these in a separate section at the end of your narrative under References and Credits. You may use any standard form for citing references; however, the American Psychological Association (APA) style is a recommended.

[Available online at: <http://www.apa.org>]

- **Anonymity**

In order to insure the anonymity of students in your class, do **not** include any student names or identification in any part of your TWS. You may use fictitious names; however, you must note this somewhere in the document.

Section 4

Specific Advice for Completing Each Section of the TWS

The Prompt (directions) and Rubric tell you *what* to do. This section gives you clues on *how* to do it. Letters of advice from teacher education candidates who have completed a TWS, “Tips” and ”Pitfalls to Avoid” have been provided for each section.

I. Contextual Factors

Tips for Success

1. This section should be written in present tense, because it sets the groundwork and explains how the Contextual Factors relate to student learning.
2. From day one begin taking notes on the following: community, school, classroom, and students.
 - Ask your cooperating teacher and/or other school personnel for information.
 - Read a local newspaper for current and community information.
 - Take a driving tour around town.
 - Pay particular attention to environmental factors that might affect student learning.
3. Define each factor as it relates to the classroom and students. For example, climate does not mean room temperature!
4. For Contextual Factors, use less space for community and district factors and more space for school, classroom, and student factors.
5. After completing the Contextual Factors section, identify 3-5 factors about the students, classroom, school, or community to keep in mind while planning unit goals, assessments, activities, adaptations, and reflection on learning results. Keep these factors “front and center” when doing any of the other sections of the TWS. Each of the following sections should reflect a relationship to your specific Contextual Factors.

Common Challenges

1. Making sure the Contextual Factors identified are relevant to the design of the TWS.
2. Remembering the Contextual Factors identified should be at the community, student, and classroom levels.
3. Considering the relationship of instructional strategies to specific student/classroom Contextual Factors.

II. Learning Goals

Tips for Success

1. Use the format and terminology suggested by your cooperating teacher. The term “goals” is used in the TWS directions to give latitude to the particular institution using the instrument. Some institutions use the term “goals”, others use the term “standards”, and still others use the term “objectives.”

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2. Select 3-5 of your most significant Learning Goals for your work sample.
3. Ask for your district’s standards and benchmarks or get them from the Web.
4. Allot time for each of your goals commensurate with the importance of each goal.
5. Make use of a taxonomy of objectives to incorporate higher order thinking skills.
6. State Learning Goals in specific behavioral terms.
7. Use scope and sequence charts to help you justify your goals.
8. Write this section of your work sample in future tense.

Common Challenges

1. Basing your TWS upon Standards, rather than around a “pet project/cute activity.”
2. Writing the appropriate number of goals. (If you have too many, they might be too narrow; if you have too few, they might be too broad.)
3. Establishing Learning Goals that are challenging (have high expectations for learning), significant (based on the standards) and varied (more than one type/level of learning).
4. Writing Learning Goals that are appropriate for your students. They should be written as learning outcomes (what students should know and do) rather than activities.

III. Assessment Plan

Dear Future Teachers,

In making your Assessment Plan, here are some tips to assist your planning. Make sure you pre- and post-assess at least two Learning Goals, but they all must be formatively assessed. If your pre- assessment shows a different level of knowledge than you expected, you may need to eliminate or rewrite that goal. Be sure to link your Learning Goal to the best type of assessment for that Learning Goal. You must adapt your assessments based on needs described in your Context. Be sure to use a variety of assessments as this helps maintain student interest and meets the TWS requirements.

Most importantly, make sure your pre- and post-assessments measure the same content, so your scores can be compared. That way you will know if learning took place and if your students met the Learning Goal.

Good luck in your assessments,

*Former TWS Writer
Idaho State University*

Tips for Success

1. Remember, students learn by doing. Therefore, you will create an Assessment Plan that will actively engage each student in a personally meaningful assessment that

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provides evidence of individual student’s accomplishment of each Learning Goal.

2. Consult appropriate resources for ideas about assessments, adaptations, and modifications.
3. For the Assessment Plan, justify the pre-assessment you will choose. This may involve using the same pre-assessment and post-assessment instruments. However, if a goal is to be assessed by an authentic project, it may be impractical to have students do the project as a pre-assessment. In such cases, you may pre- and post-assess the conceptual understandings required in the project. Otherwise, you may use a completely different task for the pre-assessment, but one that can be scored with the same rubric as used in the post assessment.

Common Challenges

1. Including multiple modes of assessment (formative and summative).
2. Relating adaptations to the factors identified in the Contextual Factors section.
3. Making the adaptations specific to the needs of individual students.
4. Relating the adaptations to the assessments rather than to instructional activities.
5. Aligning the assessments with the goals in terms of taxonomic levels of learning.
6. Incorporating different types of assessments (authentic, alternative, paper/pencil, etc).
7. Utilizing a pre-assessment that results in a measurable score or rating.
8. Assuring the pre- and post-assessments will yield individual student scores (e.g., a class discussion is hard to measure and score).
9. Making your scoring methods or criteria clear by correlating the items with specific goals and providing criteria for scoring students’ responses.

IV. Design for Instruction

Dear Future Teachers,

The Instructional Design section is the part of your TWS that will take the most time and preparation. Make sure you have good communication with your cooperating teachers as they will be your greatest resource. Remember that your professors and peers are also excellent sources for lesson plan ideas.

Also, remember lessons plans are not written in stone, and you may need to make necessary adjustments when you are actually teaching. Never forget the students are the most important factor of the lesson. You are teaching to benefit them, so do whatever is necessary to achieve this.

Make note of all the adaptations, and if you notice you are making them for someone you didn’t anticipate you would, be sure to go back to your Context and make note of the special needs. Remember to reflect after each lesson. Don’t wait until the end or you will forget. Most importantly, have fun and be flexible!

*Former TWS Writer
Idaho State University*

Tips for Success

1. Lay out the Design for Instruction in a flowchart or in visual form. This will help you

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visualize the overall unit.

2. When you are designing activities, keep in mind the various learning styles of your students as described in your Contextual Factors. Plan activities that will incorporate these learning styles
3. This section of your work sample should be written in future tense.
4. Be sure to relate your Design for Instruction to what the pre-assessment told you about the students.
5. Keep samples of students’ work.

Common Challenges

1. Analyzing the results of the pre-assessment to determine how they have impacted your Design for Instruction. What will you do for those students who:
 - are ready to start,
 - are not ready to start, lacking pre-requisite knowledge, and
 - have already achieved the objectives and are in need of an extension?
2. Using Contextual Factors to guide both instruction and the adaptations made to instructional activities.
3. Incorporating a variety of methods and activities in your lessons.
4. Aligning your lesson with Learning Goals. (You may copy and paste from your Learning Goals section.)

V. Instructional Decision Making

Dear Future Teachers,

In this section, you have the opportunity to describe your ability to “think on your feet.” Just be sure the incidences you describe are based on your students’ learning and not on things such as your power point presentation not working or a fire drill shortening your course period.

Good luck!

*Former TWS Writer
Idaho State University*

Tips for Success

1. Throughout the course of your learning unit, keep a journal describing what went well and what you want to change. This information, accompanied with a sample of your students’ work, will facilitate your making more thorough and confident decisions.
2. Make note in your journal of the manner in which you “think on your feet.” Were you able to read students’ body language, behavior, attention, etc. How

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did you know your lesson was or was not working? How and why did you decide to make changes? Asking yourself these questions will also help when writing the Reflection and Self-Evaluation section.

3. This section of your work sample should be written in present tense.

Common Challenges

1. Describing the decisions you made that were prompted by your observations of students’ reactions/responses throughout the unit.
2. Providing a clear description of the situation including an explanation of the modification(s) made and an explanation of how the modification(s) will help improve student learning.

VI. Analysis of Student Learning Results

Dear Future Teachers,

When preparing your Analysis of Student Learning, remember to have all of your data organized so you can easily represent student learning. Experiment with different types of charts and graphs until you find one that clearly shows what you want to represent.

Good Luck,

*Former TWS Writer
Idaho State University*

Tips for Success

1. Create computer-generated graphs to highlight the data collected on student achievement. Remember to relate this to the Contextual Factors section of your TWS.
2. Copies of student work, including assessment scores, provide the data needed to generate graphs illustrating evidence of student learning.
3. Only include examples of student work that validate your results.
4. Do **not** include students’ names on the examples of their work.
5. This section should be completed in the past tense.

Common Challenges

1. Describing criteria for proficiency and discussing what each score means in terms of how closely students came to meeting the Standard.
2. Making your display of data easy to read so that patterns are evident.
3. Relating subgroup selection to Contextual Factors and/or content being

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studied.

4. Giving your interpretation of and conclusions from data. Making accurate interpretation of and drawing meaningful conclusions from data.
5. Providing a thorough analysis of the pre- and post-assessments in relation to students’ achievement of the Learning Goals.

VII. Reflection and Self-Evaluation

Dear Future Teachers,

You are almost finished! Don’t slow down now. Be sure to give this section the time and attention it deserves. It’s amazing that the reflection upon an experience can be more valuable than the experience itself! When you think about why some students met the Learning Goals and others did not, be happy with their successes and consider what you can do better next time.

Ask your cooperating teacher for suggestions for professional development. For example, does the school district offer workshops? To what professional organizations do your cooperating teachers belong?

Good Luck!

Former TWS Writer

Tips for Success

1. Identify ways in which the completion of the TWS impacted your skills and knowledge as a teacher.
2. Provide reasons for the success or lack thereof in students attaining the Learning Goals. Go beyond description and include the “why” based upon best practice. Remember to ask yourself questions such as:
 - Was the content over your students’ heads?
 - Did students lack sufficient prior knowledge?
 - Did you pace your instruction appropriately?
 - Were your Learning Goals appropriate to your students’ needs?
3. Create a professional plan that will foster your strengths and help you develop in areas where you need to improve.
4. Be specific when describing your professional growth goals so that your Professional Development Plan is relevant and linked to its impact on student learning. As a professional, you are ultimately responsible for your own growth, development, and improvement.
5. Deliberately and seriously analyze what you can do to improve your own professional practice.
6. Write this section in past, present, and future tenses as appropriate.

Common Challenges

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1. Developing a re-design plan and providing a rationale for making modifications in the original TWS and its implementation.
2. Recognizing how your performance as a teacher impacted your students’ learning.
3. Examining how this process has impacted your professional behavior and enhanced your development as an educator.

Section 5

Annotated TWS Examples

The following website includes TWS that were written by teacher candidates. The annotations have been added to indicate well-written sections as well as areas that could be improved (text boxes have been bolded). These annotated TWS provide models of a complete product and examples of feedback from instructors. They are available in many grade levels and topics for units.

Teacher Work Samples (TWS) Exemplars with instructor annotations
http://www.uni.edu/itq/Scored_TWS/printable.htm

We, the LSSU School of Education faculty and staff, wish you great success as you begin this journey. The TWS provides you an opportunity to document your impact on student learning and therein lies the greatest reward of teaching: knowing that **you** have made the difference in the life of a child.