

**INITIAL ASSESSMENT WRITING SAMPLE INSTRUCTIONS**  
**Master of Science in Special Education, K-12 High-Low Incidence**

**I. Cover Page**

**Please attach to your writing sample a cover page that includes all of the following information:**

1. Name, PSU ID number and e-mail address
2. Date Submitted
3. Master of Science with a major in Special Education with an emphasis in K-12 High/Low Incidence.

Minimum of two pages, double-spaced with 12 point font format, demonstrate your writing skills by addressing **ONE** of the following two prompts. These prompts have been aligned with the PSU Professional Knowledge Base.

**Prompt 1. Discuss how being a reflective practitioner impacts teacher decision-making and student achievement.**

**NOTE:** Please read and reference the PSU Professional Knowledge Base in your response.

**OR**

**Prompt 2. Discuss how creating an effective reading program impacts students' intellectual, social, and personal development.**

**NOTE:** Please read and reference the PSU Professional Knowledge Base in your response.

*Email cover page and writing sample as one attachment to:*

Dr. Brian Sims at [bsims@pittstate.edu](mailto:bsims@pittstate.edu)

Identify **WRITING SAMPLE** in the Subject Line of the Email

**PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**College of Education PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE**

**THE LEARNER AND LEARNING**

**Professional educators must understand that learning and development patterns vary among individuals, that learners bring unique individual differences to the learning process and that learners need supportive and safe learning environments to thrive.**

1. The candidate knows how learning occurs (how learners construct knowledge, acquire skills and develop disciplined thinking processes) and how to use instructional strategies that promote individual growth.
2. The candidate understands that cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and physical development influences learning.
3. The candidate understands and identifies differences in approaches to learning and performance and designs experiences that incorporate individuals' strengths to promote growth.
4. The candidate understands students with exceptional needs and knows how to use strategies and resources to meet these needs.
5. The candidate knows how to access information about the values of diverse cultures and communities and how to incorporate languages, experiences, cultures and community resources into practice.
6. The candidate understands how to manage the learning environment by organizing, allocating and coordinating the resources of time and space.
7. The candidate knows how to design experiences using strategies that enhance learner motivation and engagement.
8. The candidate understands the processes needed to foster a respectful learning community.

**CONTENT**

**Professional educators must have a deep and flexible understanding of the field and be able to draw upon the central concepts and structures of their discipline as they work with learners. They integrate cross-disciplinary skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and communication) to help learners apply content to propose solutions, forge new understandings, solve problems and imagine possibilities. Professional educators connect information to local, state, national and global issues.**

9. The candidate understands that learners should question, analyze and understand concepts from diverse perspectives.
10. The candidate has a deep knowledge of student content standards and learning progressions in the discipline(s).
11. The candidate knows how to use supplementary resources and technologies effectively to ensure accessibility and relevance for all.
12. The candidate understands how disciplinary knowledge can be applied as a lens to address local and global issues.

13. The candidate realizes that content knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex, culturally situated and ever evolving. S/he keeps abreast of new ideas and best practices in the field.
14. The candidate knows major concepts, assumptions and debates that are central to the discipline.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE**

**Professional educators understand and integrate assessment, planning and instructional strategies in coordinated and engaging ways for effective practice. They understand how to design, implement, interpret and communicate results from a range of assessments.**

15. The candidate knows how to engage learners in multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge and skills as part of the assessment process.
16. The candidate understands the positive impact of effective descriptive feedback and knows a variety of strategies for communicating this feedback.
17. The candidate knows how to engage learners actively in the assessment process and to develop each learner's capacity to reflect on and communicate about their individual progress.
18. The candidate understands the theories and processes of curriculum design (appropriate sequencing, developmentally appropriate instruction, builds on learners' prior knowledge and experiences).
19. The candidate understands the process for aligning instruction and assessment with learning targets.
20. The candidate understands how theory, research and best practices impact ongoing planning and instructional practice.
21. The candidate knows how to engage learners in using technology tools and a range of skills to access, interpret, evaluate and apply information.
22. The candidate knows how to incorporate a variety of strategies that stimulate the cognitive processes associated with various kinds of learning (e.g., critical and creative thinking, problem framing and problem solving, invention, memorization and recall).
23. The candidate knows how to apply a variety of developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to achieve learning targets.
24. The candidate knows how to analyze assessment data to understand patterns and gaps in learning, to guide planning and instruction and to provide meaningful feedback.

## PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Professional educators create and support safe, productive learning environments. They must engage in meaningful and intensive professional learning and self-renewal by regularly examining practice through ongoing study, self-reflection and collaboration. Professional educators contribute to accomplishing their school's mission and goals and demonstrate leadership by modeling ethical behavior, contributing to positive changes in practice and advancing their profession.**

25. The candidate knows how to use information and technology ethically, legally and safely.
26. The candidate understands and knows how to use a variety of self-assessment and problem-solving strategies to analyze and reflect on his/her practice and to plan for adaptations/adjustments.
27. The candidate understands laws related to learners' rights and teacher responsibilities (e.g., IDEA, FERPA, mandated reporting, etc.).
28. The candidate understands schools as organizations within a historical, cultural, political and social context and knows how to work with others across the system to support learners.
29. The candidate knows how to contribute to a common culture that supports high expectations for student learning.
30. The candidate understands the expectations of the profession including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice and relevant law and policy.
31. The candidate knows how to communicate effectively with all members of the learning community.

Note: The following is the rubric that will be used to evaluate the writing sample:

### Writing Sample Evaluation Rubric

NOTE: A rating of three (3) or higher must be achieved for unconditional acceptance into this program. If a rating below 3 is assessed, a second writing sample may be requested prior to beginning the next semester of coursework.

**Rating of 5 (Strong Skills in writing):** The writing is clear, enhanced by details, and well-developed. The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (i.e. grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, paragraphing). Errors are few and minor and do not interfere with the message conveyed.

**Rating of 3-4 (Satisfactory skills in writing):** The writer has made a solid beginning in defining a position or topic. It is easy to see where the paper is headed, though more expansion is needed to support the writer's position or concept. The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Some errors are evident and may, from time to time, interfere with the message conveyed, but the writer handles most conventions well.

**Rating of 1-2 (Unsatisfactory):** Sketchy, loosely focused information or ideas force the reader to make inferences about the writer's position or concept. Errors in spelling, punctuation, usage and grammar, capitalization, and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the message difficult to understand.