

## **The IPS Workshop: Why This Teacher Recommends It**

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Last March, at mid-year, I began teaching at a new school. Two of my courses were eighth grade IPS, to which I had no prior experience. I was impressed by the atmosphere in the IPS classes compared with my other eighth grade classes. At that time I had no adequate explanation for the mature, disciplined, scientific tone of my IPS classes.

I was present during the last two weeks of the previous teacher's tenure, during which time the students conducted their Sludge Tests. The teacher sat back like a conductor whose orchestra no longer needed him. I sat and marveled at the technical skills and dedication of the students. It was the details that amazed me - for example, the time, effort, and pride the students invested in using their balances. In lecture and discussion, it was obvious these students were willing and eager to tackle concepts and to take the time to reach a full understanding of them. The students were confident and relaxed doing labs that would intimidate many college students.

As the school year neared completion, I began to realize that the high quality of my IPS students was a result of the high quality of the curriculum. I became convinced of how finely honed a curriculum IPS is this summer at the IPS Workshop in Golden, Colorado. As a veteran teacher who has too often developed my own curricula to replace the typically poor quality curricula draped around weak textbooks, it was refreshing to walk into a system that addressed critical needs in science education in detail. Instead of a hodgepodge of science topics, IPS has a purposeful story line that leads to a solid basic understanding of physical matter and scientific methods. Here was a curriculum I did not have to spend endless hours correcting and refining. This curriculum had been field-tested and refined for decades. The labs worked. The tests were meaningful.

The IPS workshop takes teachers through the course chapter by chapter. Participants perform each lab and complete many of the homework problems that their students will do during the school year. Even those teachers who have previously taught IPS benefit from the level of comfort, smoothness, and safety that results from mastery of this excellent curriculum. This workshop teaches the reasons behind the methods of IPS. There are so many nuances -- do you know, for example, why the bulleted questions are not numbered? Knowing the underlying philosophy of IPS can help a teacher explain its

importance to students, parents, and administrators.

Attending the workshop enabled me to meet other IPS teachers from my area and to find out how IPS is used in various settings. Motivation is important to teachers. I feel inspired to teach knowing that I am part of an important program in science education. I feel I am sending my students on to high school, college, and/or life superbly prepared to think scientifically and to enjoy exploring our world.

This is all by way of saying: Go to an IPS workshop! It will enable you and your students to reap the most benefit from this great curriculum. (And hiking the Rockies isn't so bad either.) Enjoy Colorado and enjoy teaching!