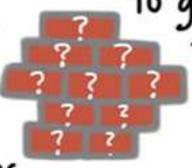


10 Reasons To use Inquiry-based Learning

@Trev_Mackenzie

@sylviaaduckworth

- 1 Nurture student passions & talents 
 - 2 Empower student voice & honour student choice 
 - 3 Increase motivation and engagement 
 - 4 Foster curiosity and a love for learning 
 - 5 Teach grit, perseverance, growth mindset & self-regulation 
 - 6 Make research meaningful & develop strong research skills 
 - 7 Deepen understanding to go beyond memorizing facts and content 
 - 8 Fortify the importance of asking good questions 
 - 9 Enable students to take ownership over their own learning and to reach their goals 
 - 10 Solve the problems of tomorrow in the classrooms of today 
- Genius Hour
Passion Projects
20% Time
- 

A Guide to Inquiry-Based Learning

How does it work?

Inquiry-based learning is a form of active learning that starts by posing questions, problems or scenarios. It contrasts with traditional education, which generally relies on the teacher presenting facts and their own knowledge about the subject.

Inquiry-based learning, if front-loaded well, generates such excitement in students that neurons begin to fire, curiosity is triggered, and they can't wait to become experts in answering their own questions. What inquiry-based teachers do isn't easy at all; it's just hidden, and some people confuse the two. Teachers hide the strategies they use to encourage inquiry, and the students develop their own skills as content-area experts.

While there are some areas of our curriculum, like Phonics, where robust research has demonstrated that other teaching approaches are more effective, we have found that the inquiry-based learning approach can be used to create depth, memorability and a love of learning across many areas of our curriculum.

A clear intention, but a curious path

Our teaching teams have a clear idea of the learning destination and skills that will be learnt, along with the overall direction of travel that the learning will take. However, the children help determine the route taken to reach that destination. Children feel that they have ownership over their learning as a result; this creates agency and investment.

The 4 Steps of Inquiry-Based Learning

So you've discovered something that generates your own inquiry, and you've recreated that moment for your students when your curiosity was triggered. So what comes next in inquiry-based learning? This can be answered in four basic steps that should represent the outline of a simple unit.

1. Pupils develop questions that they are hungry to answer. They will develop a problem statement that requires them to pitch their question using a constructed response, further inquiry, and citation.
2. Research the topic using time in class. It's crucial to have some of this be classwork so students have access to the head researcher in the room—you. You aren't going to do the work for them, but you are going to guide them and model methods of researching reliably.
3. Pupils present what they've learned. Pupils create and present a culminating showcase. We understand how important it is for our pupils to be able to communicate their knowledge and teach it to others once stored in their long term memory.
4. Ask students to reflect on what worked about the process and what didn't. Reflection is key. And it isn't just about asking them to think back on their opinion of the topic. It's about reflecting on the process itself. That's where you can work in metacognition—thinking about thinking. Have students focus on how they learned in addition to what they learned.

Carefully chosen stimuli

The teaching team employ carefully chosen stimuli – i.e. adults in role, books, non-fiction texts, objects, artefacts, video clips, artworks, musical clips – to 'hook' the children into the learning theme and set the direction of travel. Where an inquiry stimulus doesn't attract the children, it's up to the teacher to find a stimulus that does!

A process of investigation

There's always some exploration and experimentation involved. In more sophisticated inquiries, this can involve developing a plan of action and a method for recording what's been found out.

Investigations don't always go as planned, though. Things go wrong, there are dead-ends and red herrings – but this is how the learning process works. Through working in an inquiry mode, children build resilience to challenges and mistakes by understanding that this is all part of the learning process. Every project involves a process of reflection, critical thinking, and research.

Points of View

In more sustained inquiries, teaching teams ensure that the children investigate widely, in order to consider and evaluate points of view that could be useful to reach the learning destination. Considering different points of view promotes empathy, criticality and a richer, more considered understanding of what's being learnt.

Purpose

People's learning in the 'real world' is driven by motive – a compelling reason for doing it; perhaps a problem to be solved or a goal to be achieved. Good inquiry-based learning activities always have a purpose; for example: tackling a profound question; developing a product; finding a solution to a problem; weighing up different options to make a recommendation.

Celebrating Learning

Each inquiry ends with the learning being applied, demonstrated or presented in a showcase. Examples of this include: an art exhibition, a presentation, a handbook, a play or performance, a celebratory event, a product launch.

This motivates the learning process but also creates a sense of purpose and audience. Where there's an

authentic audience, children have to think carefully about someone else’s needs and be selective about what they include or leave out of their final product as a consequence. This involves high-level thought and makes the learning process richer and more challenging.

Individual lines of inquiry – sometimes better than what the teacher had planned!

When children embark upon an inquiry journey together, they inevitably create their own individual lines of inquiry along the way - things that they’re inspired to find out for themselves. The teaching team encourages them to pursue these lines of inquiry. This encourages their intrinsic motivation. We often start with an ‘I wonder...’ question and take the learning from there! Sometimes, a child’s line of inquiry provides a better route to the learning destination than the teacher had originally planned. When this happens, the teacher embraces this opportunity and adapts their plans accordingly. This process never really has to end, because the learning from one inquiry can become the impetus for the next!

Why Inquiry with an ‘I’ and not an ‘E’?

When we use ‘inquiry’ in our documentation and not ‘enquiry’, we do so deliberately. In the UK, the word ‘inquiry’ (with an ‘i’) is generally used to define a sustained process of investigation, rather than a one-off question or query (enquiry with an ‘e’). We very much see inquiry as a process and not a one-off event. We hope the table below helps to further distinguish between inquiry and enquiry.

Inquiry			vs	Enquiry		
Investigating				Enabling		
Interesting	Inspiring	In depth		Entry-level questions	Pre-determined answers	‘Googleable’
Questions that are worth asking				Questions that are already answered		
What do I need to know, do, learn, practice, develop, create, connect or test to be able achieve the goal?				What can I do with this information now I’ve found it?		

Inquiry happens across our school, at many times and in many different ways. It looks different in different year groups, based on the needs of the children and the curriculum. However, there are 5 common elements to Inquiry at Nelson.

Being Curious

The teacher launches an inquiry by choosing stimuli which provoke the children to think, ask questions and share their prior learning. The inquiry has a purpose in mind; this is a purpose that the children understand and that matters to them.

Exploring

This may involve many different processes; for example, creating a plan, making predictions, finding things out, trying out different ideas, trial and error, carrying out experiments and recording what’s been found out.

Making Sense & Meaning

This involves gathering together, organising and interpreting what was found out in the previous steps of the process, with the end goal in mind.

Creating and Sharing

This involves thinking about the intended outcome and the needs of any particular audience, then putting all of the previous learning into action to create something of value.

Reflecting

This step is the one that younger children can find most difficult, but is really important. It's the point in the inquiry process where the focus is on what has been learnt, what went well, what could have been even better, and.... what could we investigate next?!