

Inquiry is at the Heart of Learning

*Thinking About Inquiry and Student Learning**

- As inquiry is about asking questions to expand understanding, what role does background knowledge have in supporting inquiry?
- Inquiry engages students and allows them to investigate their interests. How do we respect student interests while helping them meet the expectations of the curriculum?
- If inquiry supports instruction, then how might inquiry support differentiated instruction? When do we use inquiry to support learning, when do we explicitly teach?
- When students inquire they ask questions, investigate, explore, research, study, think and interact with other learners in their community. What does assessment look like as students use these strategies of inquiry to guide their learning?
- As student thinking is fundamental to learning in all subject areas, how might we work collaboratively to develop an inquiring “habit of mind” in our students?



Some Ways to Find “Thinking” in the Ontario Curriculum: K – 12:

- Open up any Ontario Curriculum document. Take a look in the Table of Contents, or search electronically for the term “inquiry”. Then do the same search with a different curriculum document. What does our curriculum say about inquiry and its place in our classrooms?
- Select a strand within a curriculum document. Highlight the verbs used in the Overall and Specific Expectations for the strand. Which verbs promote inquiry in teaching and learning?
- Take a look at the Achievement Chart in a curriculum document. How might inquiry support us in our assessment for and as learning efforts? What challenges does it present? How could inquiry help scaffold student learning? Is inquiry useful for assessment of learning?
- For primary/junior teachers, research the inquiry process in the Early Learning Kindergarten document. (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/kingergarten_english_june3.pdf) Compare it to the process outlined in the Grade 1 - 8 science document and the Grade 9 science document. How are they similar? How are they different? What does this mean for designing the student journey?
- For intermediate/senior teachers, check out the newly released Adolescent Literacy Guide: A Professional Learning Resource for Literacy, Grades 7 – 12 (Literacy Gains, Ontario Ministry of Education – [http://edugains.ca/resourcesLIT/AdolescentLiteracy/Vision/AdolescentLiteracyGuide Interactive.pdf](http://edugains.ca/resourcesLIT/AdolescentLiteracy/Vision/AdolescentLiteracyGuideInteractive.pdf)). Where do we find “inquiry” in this document? In particular, the section on questioning has many links to “inquiry” both as teaching and learning practices.
- For all teachers, try some of these ideas with colleagues to provide opportunity for professional dialogue. How do we design learning for students so that thinking is embedded in daily classroom work? How do we shape teaching and learning in all subjects to develop the inquiring “habit of mind”?

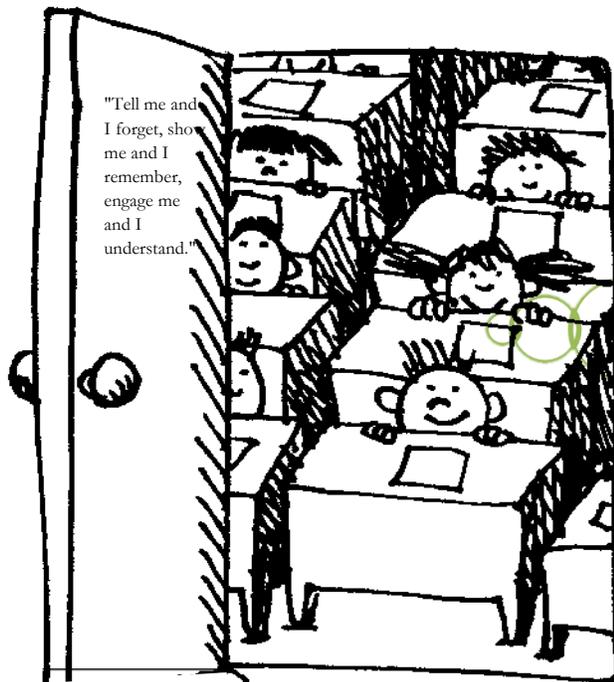
*Reflecting the professional dialogue of *The Thinking Symposium* sponsored by the Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network

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Student Engagement

Inquiry has been shown to increase student engagement. The Ministry Capacity Building Series Monograph #24, "Getting Started with Student Inquiry" includes "6 tips for getting started."

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_Student_Inquiry.pdf Try co-planning and/or co-teaching with a colleague and reflect together on student engagement and learning that resulted from using an inquiry approach. Working with a colleague provides opportunity for professional dialogue, a key support as we begin to incorporate inquiry into our instruction.



We invite you to check out these resources/video links

Jeffery Wilhelm -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xpTBZw8mg>

Lucy West -

<http://resources.curriculum.org/secretariat/readers/lucy.html>, particularly, the clips: *Making Meaning, Questioning, and Talk*