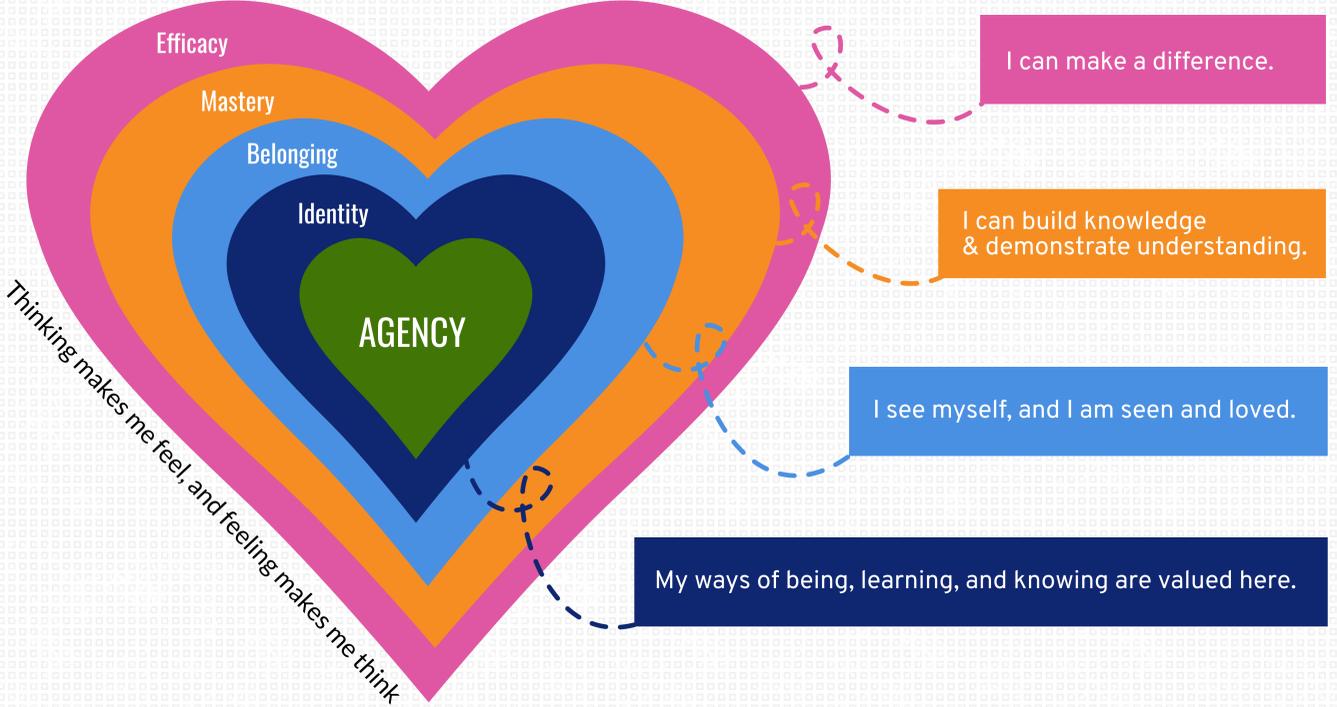


Creating a Culture of Inquiry

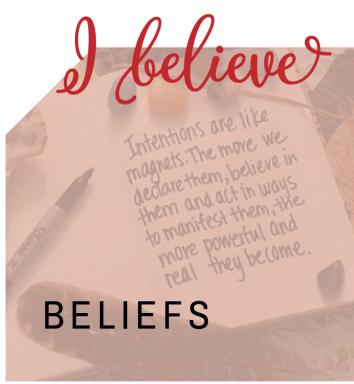
“Agency is the idea that people have the capacity to take action, craft and carry out plans, and make informed decisions based on a growing base of knowledge. In the social ecology of the classroom, agency is about connection to self, peers, adults, the community beyond the classroom, and ultimately the world. Agency doesn't emerge in a vacuum, nor does it flourish in a traditional classroom where the teacher is positioned as a content expert dishing out knowledge. It emerges in a learning space where power is distributed, knowledge is democratized, diverse perspectives are welcomed, and children are intellectually and emotionally nourished.” ~Safir and Dugan, Street Data (2021)

When You Are Creating a Culture of Inquiry, it is Important to Consider Student Agency



Student Agency Framework (Safir & Dugan, Street Data)

If we want our students to have agency over their learning, it is important that they can answer **YES** to all of these questions. To do create this, we must first create caring and connected communities who feel safe to share, learn, and grow together. To learn more about how to foster student agency by creating a culture of inquiry, [click here.](#)



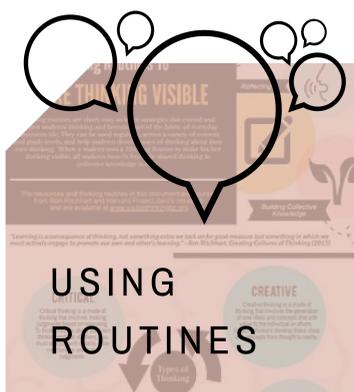
Starting With Beliefs & Setting Intentions for Learning



Having a Strong Image of ALL Students



Asking Big, Rich, Complex Questions



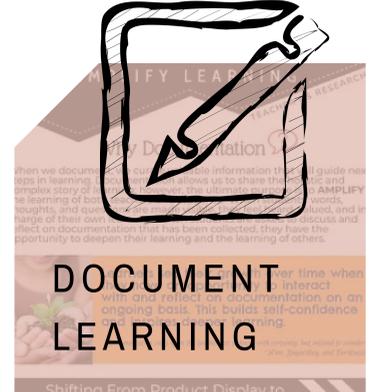
USING ROUTINES

Using Routines to Make Thinking & Feeling Visible



COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Collective Knowledge Building



DOCUMENT LEARNING

Listening and Using Documentation to Deepen Inquiry.



USING MATERIALS

Using Materials as Thinking Partners to Deepen Thinking



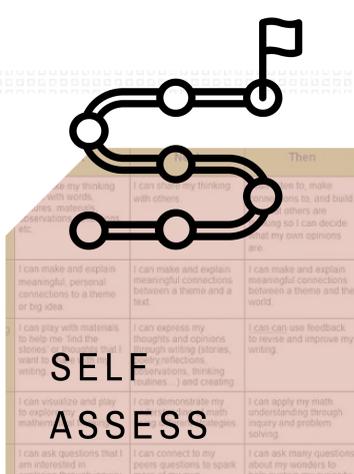
CULTURAL FORCES

Creating Cultures of Thinking & Feeling



CREATING SPACES

Creating Spaces That Nurture Curiosity



SELF ASSESS

Student Self Assessment With Learning Maps



'UN' PLANNING

'Un' Planning



PROVOKE THINKING

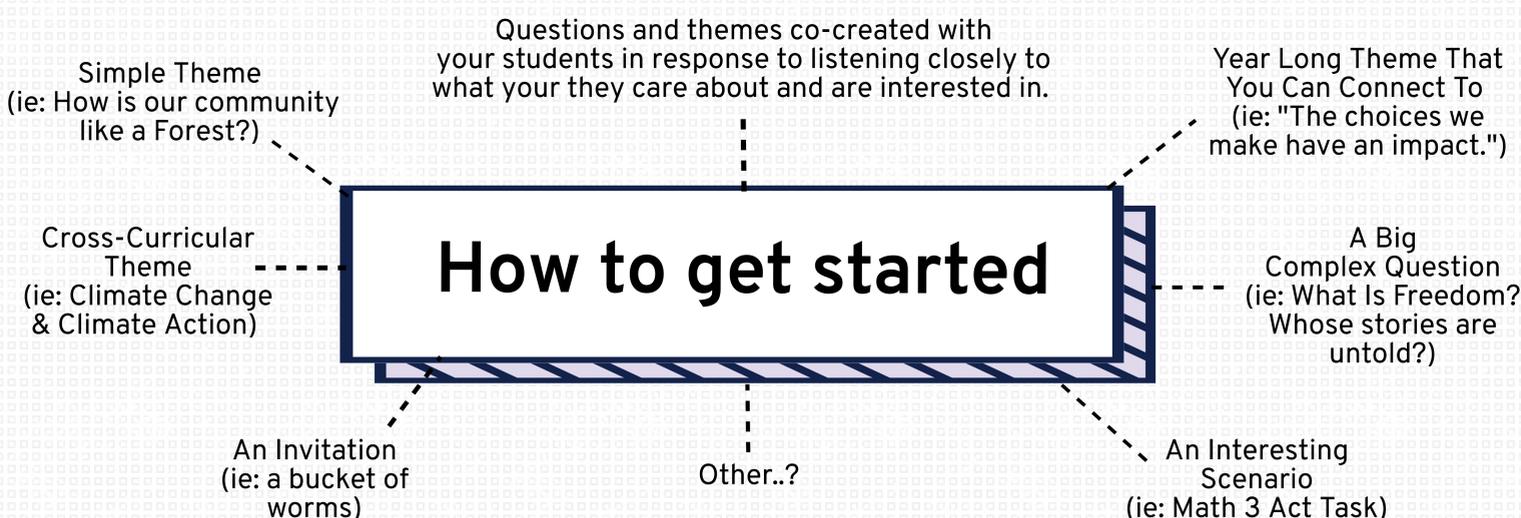
Provoking Thinking & Feeling

Want to see inquiry in action? Visit our [blog.](#)

Getting Started With Inquiry

“ **INQUIRY IS A BALL TOSS** - As educators, we toss an inquiry ball to our students, but we don't know what ball they will toss back to us. "We must be able to catch the ball that the [students] throw us and toss it back to them in ways that make [them] want to continue the game with us." ~Loris Malaguzzi ”

Choose Your Own Inquiry Adventure



As you create a culture of inquiry, you can inquire into things that take:

Hours

Days

Weeks

Months

Years

Try to connect what you are inquiring about across the learning. Write about it, read about it, play with numbers connected to it, etc.

Variety is best!

Inquiry is a culture that you will co-create with your students over time. There is no recipe, no rules, and no set procedure for inquiry. Allowing yourselves the patience, time, and flexibility to explore will take you and your students on many new adventures. When you create a culture of inquiry, the process of learning is valued over the products that are created, the learning, thinking, & feeling are made visible to all, and the questions are valued over the answers.

The Provocation Cycle

This phase of inquiry is very important AND might continue for an extended amount of time. It will help students discover questions they truly care about.

MULTI-MODAL PROVOCATIONS

What will you provoke your students to think and wonder about? Let your students' voices guide you as you determine how to continue to provoke their thinking throughout the inquiry cycle!

Examples of Provocations: Play tables, nature walks with intention, expert speakers/mentors, stories, videos, quotes, poems, experiments, ads, images, documentaries, your students' wise words, blogs, field trips, primary and secondary sources, political cartoons, artifacts, local issues/dilemmas, news articles/reports, food, scents, sounds, magazines, fun facts, questions, shared experiences, non-fiction books, etc... [See more here.](#)

MAKE STUDENT THINKING & FEELING VISIBLE

Create multiple opportunities for students to make their thinking, feeling, and questions visible to each other in many ways.



A) Use Making Thinking Visible (MTV) Strategies (see www.rcsthinkfromthemiddle.com)

B) Students Share Verbally in knowledge building circles, with partners, in a small groups, etc.

C) Educator(s) Document the Thinking & Feeling with a journal, Google Doc, anchor chart, sticky notes, Slide Deck, using the app 'OTTER', etc.

EDUCATOR MODELING

Model asking questions that don't have easy answers (ie: "I wonder how big the universe is..." Record your questions in your own inquiry journal.

Educators are co-learners and co-researchers. It's okay to not know all the answers.

Also, model digging deeper questions (ie: Tell me more, What makes you say that?, How do you know?, etc.)



STUDENT SELF REFLECTION

Students continually record their questions and thoughts in inquiry journals. Encourage students to include visuals as well as words.



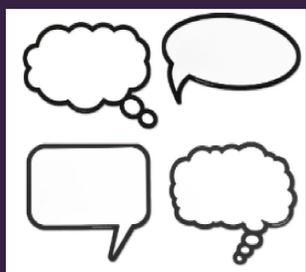
Educators will know it is time to move on. They might realize that students aren't really interested and that they need to try a new provocation cycle with something their students **do** care about. They might also realize that their students want to dig deeper. They will know when students are ready when they feel that **ALL** of their students have questions they care about or have a connection to the theme they are exploring. Sometimes, you might want students to explore in teams.



Question Selection



Have students choose and record their favourite questions by referring to their inquiry journals, their conversations throughout the provocation cycle, and the teacher documentation of the thinking, feeling, & questioning.

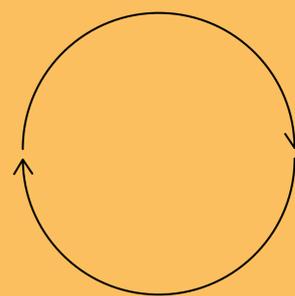


Sharing Circle

Students can share their favourite questions with each other in a sharing circle.

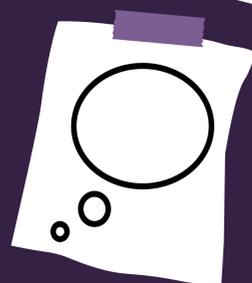
Educators ask students to pay attention to new questions that are sparked in their brains as they listen to each other.

The sharing circle will continue as students share the new questions that were sparked by others. This continues until all the questions are exhausted.



Burning Questions

Students select the question(s) they want to explore in depth. This question might change and evolve throughout the inquiry.



UN-PLANNING

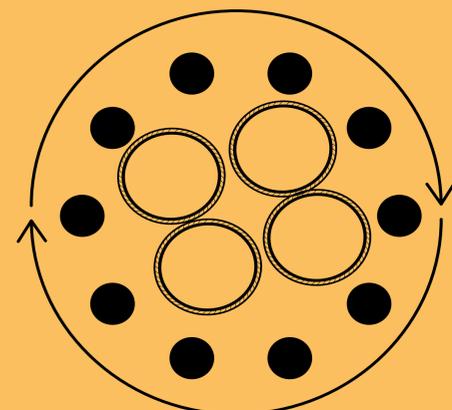
DECISION TIME

A common theme emerges from student questions that they will explore as a class.

The class votes to determine the order they will investigate the most popular wonders/themes (as a large group).

Students explore their own individual questions.

Students sort their questions to form inquiry teams.

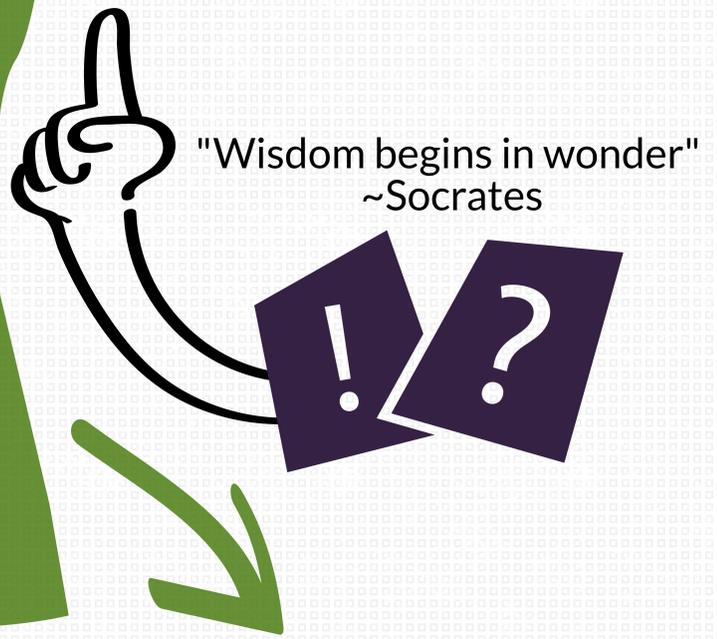


Have students go around the circle and sort their own questions (consider using hula hoops) into groups with related questions. Educators and students can ask questions to dig deeper into why questions are being sorted this way.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As a class, in an inquiry team, or as individuals connected to others with similar questions:

- 1) Determine the big theme(s) that unites their questions.
- 2) Think about and record all other questions connected to that theme.
- 3) Use these questions to determine larger overarching "umbrella" question(s).



Record Your Thinking

CONSIDER THIS

#1 What do we already know or what do we think we know?

#2 What do we predict we will find out when we start to explore our question(s)?

#3 How can we start to explore our questions?



REMEMBER:

inquiry is **NOT** a "one size fits all."

Now that we have our question

THE 'ANTI-RESEARCH' PROJECT

It is about **TRANSFORMING** our **THINKING!**

Why isn't inquiry a research project? While research might be involved, it is the educator's role to stay very involved in this next stage of inquiry. Don't just send your students off individually. It is the collective knowledge building that will allow your students to dig deep into their learning. To honour student questions and transform student thinking, educators can continue to listen to and document what is going on for students throughout the inquiry. This will help to inform educators about where the students want to take the inquiry next and what they might want to bring to the students to consider next. Be patient and allow your students to guide you.

Educators might want to consider giving students a **learning map** that will show which skills/curricular competencies they will be developing throughout this inquiry. Students will understand the learning map better if they have an opportunity to have input into the map and co-construct criteria for each section. These learning targets should be made explicit so students can set goals and collect evidence of their growth throughout the inquiry process. Teachers can conference with students to look at their evidence, help them to determine their strengths and stretches, and to set realistic personal learning goals.

STUDENT EXPLORATION



Students will explore their questions in a variety of ways

*Educators can scaffold learning by continuing to stretch and provoke student thinking around the theme/question(s) using **multimodal provocations**.*

Educators can be listening to how the students' thinking is growing and changing, to what their theories are, to what misconceptions they are having, to what new questions they are having, etc. This will help them to determine what provocations might be useful for their students to explore next. Consider connecting students to long term community/family learning partners so students can engage in real world learning and problem solving. Students can also be involved in curating provocations for themselves & others.

COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

This is a key move in inquiry-based learning. Regardless of the structure you choose (individual, team, whole class inquiry, etc.), it is important to get small and large groups of students together.

Students will continue to share with each other in order to connect to, question, and build on each others' ideas in order to transform each others' thinking and build collective understanding. This can be done with MTV strategies, knowledge building circles, and other sharing strategies.

EDUCATOR AS RESEARCHER

Holding the belief that all students are curious, capable, creative, & courageous, & competent.

Educators document what students are saying, thinking, theorizing, feeling, and wondering. They will use this to both scaffold skills (ie: how to collaborate, how to use technology, how to research, how to conduct experiments, how to reflect, etc.) for students and to continue to nudge the understanding forward.

*This could be done by making observations, conferencing with students, documenting conversations (can use the **OTTER** app), & videotaping/photographing the learning moments.*

STUDENT REFLECTION & SELF-ASSESSMENT

Students can use their inquiry journals to record all of their thinking, questions, observations, drawings, etc.

They can use their learning map to guide them as they collect evidence and grow their curricular skills /competencies. They can keep track of their goals, their strengths & stretches, and how their thinking is transforming.



When students are ready, they can help you decide...



HOW WILL WE...



SHARE WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED IN A MEANINGFUL WAY?



USE WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED TO TAKE ACTION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE (FOR OUR SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, CITY, WORLD)?



Your students might choose to continue to explore these questions or they might want to move on to another line of curiosity. Help your students to see how all of their learning is connected!

The student's role in inquiry is to:

- ask questions, reflect, discuss, seek to discover, create, uncover, and understand.
- actively participate in building the group's collective knowledge.
- take responsibility for designing ways to investigate and play, explore problems, take on challenges, and discover their passions.
- develop their competencies.
- self-assess, collect evidence of growth, and conference with teachers on a regular basis.
- share their learning and seek to make a difference.



The teacher's role in inquiry is to:

- build strong relationships with students.
- create a safe, trusting learning environment where students are able to be brave and vulnerable with each other as they create collective knowledge.
- help every student to feel seen, heard, and valued.
- help students to understand that they matter to you, to each other, and to the world.
- provoke thinking, honour student questions/interests/emotions, listen, observe, document and make visible the thinking and feeling, and use student ideas, theories, questions, emotions, and misconceptions to determine future learning opportunities.
- answer questions with more questions.
- support students as they inquire, scaffold skills, and ask strategic questions.
- connect students with family & community members with expertise who can become students' long term learning partners and can support them with authentic and meaningful learning and doing.
- notice, name and nurture competencies, assess learning, give timely feedback, and conference with students/teams.
- give demonstrations, explain concepts (mini-lessons), redirect when required, suggest and connect students with resources that might be helpful, and provide opportunities for students to share what they have learned in meaningful ways.
- be flexible with 'un-plans,' be ready to follow the paths students take, and be ready to catch the 'ball' they toss back to you! The student is the curriculum!

//////////////////// YOU'RE ALL SET - GO FORTH & INQUIRE! //////////////////////

For More Ideas, and to see case studies of inquiry in action, go to:
www.instructionalleadershipteam.com/inquiry-based-learning

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