

# Inquiry based learning

## WHAT IS IT?

Inquiry is an approach to learning that is directed by questions that individuals and groups of learners work together to address. Both process and products of learning are assessed.

At its best the learning is driven by student-generated questions. Students, assisted by the teacher, clarify the questions being asked and determine how to answer them. The outcome of the inquiry is shaped by the teacher so as to align with curriculum expectations. In the pursuit of answers unplanned but important learning territory is often uncovered.

## WHY USE IT?

- Inquiry connects school learning to the student's own knowledge and experiences.
- It provides a context to develop critical thinking skills and encourages problem solving - an important learning strategy for developing engaged citizenship and entrepreneurial, employment, community and interpersonal skills.
- Inquiry learning requires that students pull information compared to other approaches that push it at them.
- Students are provided with opportunities to apply a wide range of reading, writing, talking, listening, and thinking skills.
- Student learning improves when schools adopt a consistent model of inquiry across all grades and subjects.
- Inquiry promotes the development of a community of learners where group knowledge-building contributes to individual understanding.
- Through inquiry students become more creative, positive and independent.

## TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Look for opportunities to be the 'guide on the side' as opposed to a 'sage on the stage'.
- Support student learning as opposed to directing it by providing the minimum amount of scaffolding students require.
- Convert curriculum expectations to 'big questions' that challenge students in language they understand.
- Give students as much freedom as possible in determining what questions to ask and what methods to use to investigate them.
- Provide feedback frequently
- Pose questions that require critical thinking.

<https://resources4rethinking.ca/en/toolbox/inquiry>

**Ideally students will generate their own questions with teacher guidance to ensure curriculum outcomes are met. To get started you can develop questions that will lead to the exploration of big ideas and stimulate further research and debate. From here students can form their own inquiry questions. The list below might provide some useful starting points.**

- What does nature teach us about diversity?

Resource to accompany ResourceSmart Loddon Mallee *Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum* workshop March 2021

- How does waste affect our environment?
- What is “sustainability” and why should we care about it?
- How can we balance agriculture, sustainability and environmental protection?
- In what ways do humans impact the environment?
- How does the environment affect human decisions?
- How does the exploitation of natural resources impact on the quality of life in both rural and urban environments?
- How does human activity impact on climate change?
- How can we boost sustainability in developing countries?
- What is the problem with plastic?
- What role do bees play in food production?
- How and why do places change over time?
- How are we connected to the ocean?
- What is a living world? How do we care for it and one another?
- How can we use natural resources in a sustainable way to help us in our everyday lives?
- What can we learn from an Aboriginal and Torres strati Islander perspective to help us live in a more sustainable manner?
- Why is it important that we live in an environmentally sustainable way?
- What can we do as young custodians to safeguard the environments of our planet?