

Inquiry in the MYP Arts Classroom



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The Purpose of Inquiry

Inquiry-based learning is one of the central ideas of the MYP and puts students at the center of learning. It is a way for your students to directly connect their classroom experiences with their own knowledge, and the world around them.

Good inquiry starts off with the teacher having a very clear idea of what skills the students are going to be working towards and developing throughout the inquiry-based activity or unit.

Ideally, good inquiry-based teaching will involve lots of opportunities for differentiation of personalized learning.

So to sum up inquiry, it's a method of teaching where the teacher creates a structure where students work towards a particular goal or outcome with flexibility for students to make the work their own.

Do you already use inquiry-based teaching in your classroom?
What have you found works best for you and your students?

The Stages of Inquiry

There need to be multiple opportunities for students to succeed in different ways, but one of the key features of a good inquiry-based lesson regarding teaching is that the teacher is enabled to deal with students on an individual basis and support them on their particular individual needs.

Beginning a unit with a provocation, then proceed with activities that focus on inquiring into the concepts that will be taught in the unit.

When students embark on the process of questioning, they begin to evaluate their perspectives or the perspectives of others on the concepts of the unit.

This process provokes a deep interest and further inquiry into how, why, what, when.

Through this questioning technique, the students have an invested interest in the topic and a desire to uncover the response to their questions. They are also much more active and dynamic in the learning process. Learning is centered around thinking and thinking is inspired by questioning.

The Three Stages of Inquiry

To understand the different ways inquiry can work within the classroom, it is often helpful to think of inquiry regarding three stages - structured, guided, and open. During the teaching of your MYP unit, you will often move through these different stages of inquiry.



STRUCTURED INQUIRY

This stage of inquiry provides students with a high level of structure and guidance. Students often follow the lead of the teacher often engaging in one inquiry together as an entire group using teacher provided resources.

GUIDED INQUIRY

This stage of inquiry provides students with some direction with the teacher acting as a facilitator. The teacher takes great care to provide the right support when needed. Students can be given the necessary materials and questions to answer, however students have more freedom in answering the question versus structured inquiry, and are involved in designing the product or solution.

OPEN INQUIRY

This stage of inquiry involves students leading the direction in all respects, coming up with the questions then designing the investigation/process, carrying it out, and communicating and reflecting on the results.

My notes



Inquiry in Practice

Inquiry as a concept is a huge idea. In order to consider what an inquiry based classroom might look like, think about how you can put students in the driver's seat when it comes to learning. It can be really difficult to relinquish control over the classroom, particularly when you've put a lot of time into developing your well-thought-out unit plan!

Use the following questions and worksheets to help you think more about what inquiry can look like in your classroom.

What is a unit, project, or lesson that you would like to add more inquiry-based learning into?

List some of the activities in this unit/project/lesson that is teacher-focused and not inquiry-based:

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

Now add those teacher-based activities to the left side of the table and think about ways your students can learn this same information by investigating, exploring, inquiring. Then go ahead and fill in the right side of the table with your new ideas.

Teacher-focused:

Inquiry-based idea:









In order to think about this shift, it's helpful to consider this example. I like to choose an image, a quote, or video that's connected to the unit that I'm about to teach. Usually presenting something visual and asking them for their thoughts, ideas, and questions, will make it accessible and engaging to all students. As we often use stimuli for making theatre pieces this has become second nature to them. Even in research-based tasks, asking these questions can stimulate further thinking and engage commitment from students.

For example, I might show students an image and then ask them to think about what's happening. Alternatively reading a short text, or showing them an existing performance works equally well. Many times we may start with a 30-second pair discussion on what they saw, and one question they have. They will then share these thoughts and questions with the class in a wider discussion.

I will regularly work with Harvard Project Zero's visible thinking routines, and for Inquiry, 'connect-extend-challenge', '3-2-1 Bridge', and 'Creative questions' are great techniques to employ.

Connect-extend-challenge is a response in the form of spoken or written word. After the stimulus, ask students to document what it reminds them of -make connections. Then ask them to extend their thinking -the so what, or the what if's to take it to the next level. An example might be 'we used to think... but now we know...' Then finally, ask students to design some questions that might push the impossible. They can use wonderings, maybe's or imagine we could do this style phrasing.

Lesson Plans & Activities

Here are some learning activities and lesson plans that focus on inquiry-based teaching methods so students have the flexibility to really own their learning.

3-2-1 Bridge

3-2-1 Bridge will require students to respond to the stimulus with 3 thoughts, 2 questions and 1 analogy.

Its value shines when this response is repeated further into the unit, and this connected response easily demonstrates the next stages of learning and how far a student has already come in the unit.

The questions generated by students from this activity are often great factual, conceptual and debatable questions to infuse into the inquiry stages of the unit!

Creative Questions

Creative questions are the simplest form but often the one open to the greatest variety of questions. After the stimulus, students simply record questions they have -then develop them further than the original idea. For example in my unit on Starting points, based on devising skills, students were assigned The Future as their stimulus for a devising piece, as the culmination performance of the unit. They verbally brainstormed their initial responses to the stimulus and then developed questions to deepen exploration. Some of the questions recorded were: Will kids need school? Will humans use up the earth's resources? What would happen if the world had another ice age? And from these questions, the students start improvising their ideas.

Research Projects

I like using research projects on interesting topics to help my students jump into inquiry. For example in my music classroom, I have students research famous musicians using an inquiry approach. This helps them get excited about the musicians we will be learning about throughout the year.

In the resources section, find:

- A student direction sheet for the Famous Musicians project.

Projects

Projects are great ways to get students working together collaboratively and exploring topics within the Arts.

In my music class, I [Courtney] have groups of students work on a music lesson that they then teach to an elementary school classroom. The students love seeing the younger students and playing the "teacher", while investigating and reviewing concepts I've been teaching in class.

in my visual art class, I [Amanda] have students work through a PowerPoint project on Beauty in Decay where students work with digital photography in a hands-on project.

In the resources section, find:

- A worksheet leading students through the project called Music Appreciation.
- A PowerPoint guiding students through the Beauty in Decay project.

Flipped Classrooms

A flipped classroom is where students are investigating and doing the work in class, and researching and learning at home. This is a great way to make inquiry front and center in your classroom.

In the resources section, find:

- A student direction page for textile stitching in a visual arts classroom.

Get Creative!

Give students opportunities to create art based on what they are learning about. This gives them a chance to express their thoughts and ideas while making new connections. In a visual arts class, this is obvious. But for drama, music, etc. you can still use art as a gateway into inquiry.

In the resources section, find:

- A student direction page on Contour Drawing.

Conclusion

Taking an inquiry approach and building your unit of inquiry means starting with questions rather than following the traditional approach of providing examples and having the students repeat. An inquiry approach allows the student to develop an enduring understanding of the content and concepts, rather than developing a short-term, shallow understanding of the topic. I encourage you to fully embrace this way of thinking about crafting your units and enjoy the process!

Notes

Inquiry in the Classroom

Teacher Reflection

Think through the lessons and activities you have planned over the next month or so. How can you incorporate more student-led activities and inquiry into your plans?

How might your students benefit from more inquiry-based lessons?

What do you want to remember most about what you learned?

My notes



Resources

Find all the printables that were discussed in this Print and Go Pack by downloading the individual files in this Pack.



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