

Inquiry in the MYP Design Classroom



Table of Contents

The Purpose of Inquiry	3
The Stages of Inquiry	4
Inquiry in Practice	7
Lesson Plans & Activities	10
Conclusion	13
Teacher Reflection	14
Resource 1: Journey around the Globe	
Resource 2: App Development	
Resource 3: Life Skills Project	
Resource 4: The Marshmallow Challenge	
Resource 5: UDHR Poster	

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.

When I start a unit, 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. For example, you can show students an image and then ask them to think about what's happening such as 'Good Design / Bad Design' examples of signage that is very confusing in airports or street signage. Or how confusing products and services might be (introduce terms like 'constructive discontent' and 'affordance').

Have them make a list of things at home or they have come across that are confusing or "just don't work well enough". Then in teams ask them in small teams to go around the school campus and take photos of such 'problems'. On return we brainstorm and compile various findings, hoping this makes a great lead-in to a new teacher-directed unit or gives them authentic opportunities and problems to solve if it were an open unit.

This is an example of how inquiry can take place:

Step 1: Choose an image that's connected to the unit

Step 2: Show the image to my students and ask them: What's happening?

Step 3: Ask my students to write down questions or guess who the people are/setting is in the image

Step 4: Provide an opportunity to let my students think about why the image exists (for example, I've used a photo of a land bridge over a busy highway. I would ask students what the benefits of a structure might provide? The possible negative effects it could have? And how one could best engineer this structure ?).

Lesson Plans & Activities

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

Hands-on Projects

Give your students many opportunities to explore what they are learning with hands-on projects. This is one way that you can put the learning in the students' hands.

One of my favorite ways to teach students about the design cycle is to have them do the marshmallow challenge. Afterwards we can talk through their processes.

In the resources section, find:

- A task for students to create their own webpage from the Journey Around the Globe unit I teach.
- The Marshmallow Challenge PowerPoint project.

Development of Ideas

Give students chances to develop their own ideas to solve problems in their every day world. Your students can come up with the problem and then create a solution to it.

One of my favorite activities to do with my students is to have them create an app that solves a problem they see in their community.

In the resources section, find:

- A worksheet on creating their own App.

Projects

Instead of a big test at the end of your units, consider asking your students to create a project to show their learning instead. This way students are able to be creative, explore and investigate their learning further, and make more connections.

In the resources section, find:

- A student direction sheet for a life skills project.

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 the resources section, find:

- A student direction page for creating a Universal Declaration of Human Rights poster.

Conclusion

An inquiry approach requires more work on the front-end of instruction. It's also important to maintain a balance of instructional approaches. Inquiry can be achieved using a variety of instructional approaches, but remember, the task is to ensure that students are in charge of what they're learning.

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.



Ready to learn more?



Teacher Toolkits

Subscribe to a full year of tools with an Ibtrove teacher toolkit. The toolkits break down all the subject information you need to be more successful!

[Click Here](#)

Print and Go Unit Plans

Make planning easier with print and go unit plans, which include the official unit plan, daily lessons, and supplementals.

[Click Here](#)



IB Books & Resources

Find all the IB books and resources you need to teach your IB subject on the IB Source website.

[Click Here](#)

