

Inquiry in the MYP Language Acquisition 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:









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.

Webquests

Webquests are great ways for students to research details and explore a topic of learning. I really like having students create their own vacation plan to travel to a country within our target language. Students then have the chance to research cultural sites, learn about the customs and transportation of their chosen city/country, etc.

In the resources section, find:

- A lesson plan for a webquest to travel to France.
- A PowerPoint to guide students through this lesson.
- A student direction page for the vacation project.

Surveys

My students always seem to love doing surveys, so I have incorporated this into my teaching by asking students to survey their classmates and then Synthesize this information into an infographic.

In the resources section, find:

- A resource for a survey and infographic on the topic of health. The first page is in French and the second page is in English. You can then translate the resource into the target language you are teaching your students.

Discover a New City

Using Google Maps, I have my students explore a new city from our target language/country. In my Germany class example, my students selected a city in Germany to explore and then present on.

In the resources section, find:

- A student direction sheet for the Discover a New City activity. The directions are in both German and English so you can easily translate it into your target language.

Get Creative!

Give students a chance to be creative with the language they are learning. An example is in our unit about sports and activities, students had to prepare a game in German and play it with our elementary students whose language of instruction is German.

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.

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.



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