

Planning Overview

Week One

-Introduce the overall inquiry question with a focus lesson that hooks the learners. We have used a video clip, a news article, or a picture book to engage learners' curiosity. This also becomes the platform to begin building background knowledge related to the inquiry. Through this lesson we also form a partnership in learning by asking what we would need to know and discover to answer the inquiry question. As learning coaches we are constantly asking questions to guide learners toward discovery.

-Asking what would it look like, sound like and feel like if we were to embark on an inquiry journey together? From there you introduce the community of learners' as one process that supports us. Taking your class through the initial process will take two to three hours. It is recommended you do this over two days. Once the values are set for a community of learners' you weave them in through self and peer assessment opportunities through the day. You ask: what is working for you as a community of learners, what do you need to rethink, what strategies can you incorporate from our values to help you take your next steps forward as a community of learners? (This should take a few minutes at a time with a quick whip around of ideas everyone can use to move forward.) Overtime you will need to do the assessments less and less as the culture of your room begins to shift and adopt the values as a way of life. Sometimes this takes a few weeks or a few months depending on the group. The key is to persevere.

Weeks 2 to 5

-Next begin to plan other learning opportunities that are modelled and guided by the teacher till you feel learners are ready to take the plunge into their own personal inquiry questions. When we plan these learning opportunities we constantly think about what is needed to answer the inquiry question based on where we see learners placed on the learning continuum. Usually this takes approximately 4 to 6 weeks of integrating the curriculum strands that will connect to the essential learnings. Often times when you discover the patterns in the curriculum outcomes overtime, they give you more leverage to transform learners. (e.g. reading for information, reading for literature) The outcomes that connect to the performance standards are often where you can find those leverage points of enduring essential learning outcomes. Introducing the standards and the descriptors helps learners begin to see what tools, strategies and processes can be utilized to support them overtime. Introducing the standards and pulling out the descriptors to use as criteria that will guide learning becomes part of the learning within the first 4 to 6 weeks of the first inquiry cycle. Once the criteria are developed they can be used on an ongoing basis for multiple

inquiry cycles. Learners begin to transfer the learnings from previous inquiry cycles more easily when they are familiar with the criteria.

Another component to consider when designing your instruction for cross-curricular integration is to look where the essential learnings intersect. The points of curricular connection also give you leverage in learning. For example, when we think about where language arts and social studies intersect we can cross boundaries and broaden our perspectives. (Give example) This helps you plan and teach more effectively and efficiently.

-Once the foundation for learning is set within the first 4 to 6 weeks, we guide our learners into developing their own personal inquiry questions based on what they are curious about or what interests them, as well as, what they feel their strengths are as learners as a way to represent their learning. These are done through elbow to elbow conferences followed up with ongoing check ins. To do a whole class of 30 students we take about 3 to 5 personal inquiries a day for approximately 15 minutes each. The first conference takes the longest as you co-design a question and a plan. Once the first conference is complete students go away and begin the learning searching out materials they will need, resources they will access and then begin formulating their learning. Check ins are every week or bi-weekly depending on the progress. Overall personal inquiries take approximately a month to complete with time allotted in class to work for 60 to 90 minute blocks of time per day or as long as learners can manage being self-regulated. This is why a community of learners foundation becomes an essential part of the process.

-Teachers are on the go during the self-regulated time doing check ins with learners to provide ongoing feedback on their learning. We continually ask these questions: how is it going, what support are you needing, where to next? Feedback to their answers keeps the momentum of learning continuous. Learners seem to love this portion of the inquiry cycle often giving us feedback that suggests we would always include the personal inquiry component.

-Finally the learning culminates into a learning showcase celebration. During this part of the cycle learners justify their transformation related to the overall inquiry question and their personal inquiry. This is an opportunity for learners to share their learning experience and what impacted them the most to contribute to transformation. We continue to shape our learning around the answer to these questions: what did you learn and how did you transform your thoughts, beliefs and actions, what supported your learning, what will you take to your next learning experience? The showcase is the impetus to be accountable and take ownership for

your learning. No one wants to sit for two hours at showcase with nothing to share about themselves as learners.

What becomes obvious at the learning showcase is how engaged each learner is to share their story of learning. It does not matter where the learner is on the continuum of learning. What matters most is that they move forward. At showcase each learner is proud of their accomplishments and aware of what they might do differently next time. After one inquiry cycle learners become more committed to learning and continuously improve their learning.

From start to finish the inquiry cycle can take anywhere from 3 to 4 months depending on the level of depth you under take. Our perspective is that learning evolves and transforms learners the most when you engage deeply in learning. This requires time, commitment and a willingness to learn from the teacher's perspective and the learner's perspective. Hence we live by our motto, "We are all learners, we are all teachers."