

# Exploring Teacher Inquiry

Let's be experts!!

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# Overview:

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- Introduction Activity
- What is Teacher Inquiry?
  - Research vs. Inquiry
- Why do We do Teacher Inquiry?
  - Profession
  - For the Students
- Teacher Inquiry: The Students' Role

# Guiding Questions:

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1. What is it?
  - a. What are some of the key qualities of teacher inquiry?
2. Why does it matter?
  - a. What is the purpose and impact of teacher inquiry?
  - b. Why are educators using Inquiry Based Approaches?
  - c. And why does teacher inquiry matter?
3. Getting students involved?
  - a. What are the roles of students in Inquiry? Teachers?
  - b. How is Inquiry being used in the classroom?

# Introduction Activity: Popcorn!

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Using your reflection entry slip:

- Jot down 2-3 things you learned in this article regarding teacher inquiry, and also the impact it has on student learning.
- Then take that paper and crumple it up, and throw it to another table randomly.
- Take a moment to read the notes, and let's discuss what we learned. Do you agree/disagree? Why? Is this new insight to you?

# Take-aways: Does Coaching Help?

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- As an educator it is important to collaborate
  - Sometime the best ideas come from other people (probably most often)
- encourage students to be involved in extracurricular activities
  - The more involved, the more enthused students will be to get involved in class.



# Teacher inquiry is...

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“Teacher inquiry is ... a generally agreed upon set of insider research practices that promote teachers taking a close, critical look at their teaching and the academic and social development of their students ... Although known by many names – teacher research, action research, practitioner research, insider research – teacher inquiry involves classroom teachers in a cycle of inquiry, reflection, and action. In this cycle, teachers question common practice, approach problems from new perspectives, consider research and evidence to propose new solutions, implement these solutions, and evaluate the results, starting the cycle anew.”

(Lewison, in press; from Clarke and Erickson, 2003)

# The distinction?

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- Teacher Research is part of good teacher inquiry. It is a process of inquiring into teaching practice with a proposed hypothesis (typically, qualitative research). Research does not necessarily mean you will change your practice.

Where as...

- Teacher Inquiry is a process of observing and reflecting on teacher practice, proposing a hypothesis to improve teaching, researching or collaborating, and taking action based on your findings to improve teaching where possible.

# Why?

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- Profession vs. Job:
  - A Teacher is: one who observes classroom dynamics, student learning, and their own intentions in order to reflect on their pedagogy. By doing so, Teachers constantly construct new goals and strategies, and deepen their own knowledge of practice.
- If we don't continue learning, should teachers maintain right to curricular control?
  - “Failure to do this... will result in deprofessionalization forces wresting control of curricula and pedagogical practices from teachers” (Heargreaves, 2000).



# But really why?!

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“Education is what remains after what  
one has forgotten what they learned in  
school”

Albert Einstein

# Really, this is why.

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- It's all about the students:
  - Teachers must devote themselves to expanding their own knowledge, because it can help students educate themselves better.
  - backwards logic?



# Getting Students Involved in Inquiry

Reading: Family is someone to tuck you into Bed: Teaching a Unit on Family Diversity

- “We don’t make fun of anybody’s learning” is the teacher’s only classroom rule.
  - Q. Why do you guys think that this is important?
- Creating a classroom that is accepting of social, cognitive, and personal differences
- Investigation of family diversity in the classroom
- As a teacher, preparing students to become good, critically minded citizens for the future, you would have to be able to struggle with your own beliefs, traditions and opinions as well, just like her students too
- wants to give students the courage to speak up and stand up for themselves and to question the status quo

(Beale, 2004)

- Results of the teachers' inquiry:
  - Overall found that the class seemed much more at ease with each other; more open
  - Bigger risk-takers in all their learning
  - During discussions (sitting in a circle), they started looking at and addressing each other more
  - Initially, comments were directed to teacher
  - Towards middle and end of unit, class ran out of time because students wanted to share their experiences
  - Increased oral participation of all students
- Q1. How do you feel about this method? What are the pros for this method?
- Q2. Would you use this method in your own classroom? Why or why not?

## Reading: Free-Run Children

- Mr. McIsaac wanted to “investigate the relationship between space and healthy learning environments”
- His grade seven students spent four weeks investigating: field work, measuring, calculating, comparing, synthesizing information, proposing solutions
- Mr. McIsaac found it “difficult to summarize what [he] learned from this activity” but the most important finding was that

*“children are able to construct meaning and to create and to celebrate learning in dynamic ways. That is to say, despite the landscape they find themselves in, children are capable of learning”*

# Teacher's Role in Student Inquiry

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- Teacher has to be the “chief knowledge seeker”
  - Students as information producers, not consumers
  - Teacher doesn't have all of the answers → prepare students to find answers and formulate solutions (Power on Texas, 2011)
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- Teacher not authority on knowledge, but “mentor and orchestrator”
  - Teacher creates learning community where everyone teaches each other
  - Teacher creates environment for students to play with creating knowledge (Sarkar, 2008)

# Teacher's Role in Student Inquiry (continued)

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- From “Free Run Children” Mr. McIsaac’s students gained skills in basic data analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving, and creating solutions
- Mr. McIsaac gave students tools to compare data and guided students in discussions which encouraged them to think critically (McIsaac, 2004)

What do teachers gain from having their students engage in inquiry? What is a way you could get your students involved in inquiry in your classrooms? Discuss in groups for 3 minutes.

# Exit Slip

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On a piece of paper please answer the following questions:

1. Is involving students in inquiry worth the time and energy required by the process? Does the end result justify the investment of time and resources? (Think about for secondary students who you only see for one block a day.)
2. How do you engage students who are reluctant about participating?



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