

AASD Shared Beliefs on Inquiry and Research

What is Inquiry and Research?

Inquiry and research require students to discover phenomena through experiences that require critical thinking and problem solving. Students actively engage in collaborative, relevant, deep, and thoughtful learning at all grade levels. Students are motivated to dig deep into topics and questions they really care about, gathering and weighing information, building knowledge, and putting knowledge to work in their lives. Based on the curriculum, teachers frame a unit around essential questions, and students exercise choice in topics, readings, and ways to show their learning.

Inquiry is about empowering students to find out: to get answers to important questions about school subject matter - and to questions they have posed for themselves. As we like to say, inquiry means turning schooling into a year full of questions that kids cannot resist answering.

- Harvey & Daniels 2015

Principles of Inquiry

- Choice of topics based on genuine student curiosity, questions, interests
- Digging deeply into complex, authentic topics that matter to kids
- Flexible grouping, featuring small research teams, groups and task forces
- Heterogeneous, non leveled groups with careful differentiation
- Student responsibility and peer leadership
- Use of proficient-read/thinker/researcher strategies
- Teacher modeling his/her own reading, writing, thinking and researching processes
- Drawing upon multiple sources: multi genre, multilevel, multicultural, and multimedia
- Going beyond fact finding to synthesizing ideas and building and acquiring knowledge
- Actively using knowledge in our schools and communities: sharing publication, products or taking action

What We Know About Inquiry

Inquiry Approach	vs	Coverage Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Question/ problem driven✓ Student voice and choice✓ Interaction and talk✓ Student responsibility✓ Authentic investigations✓ Real purpose and audience✓ Collaborative work✓ Strategic thinking✓ Cross disciplinary issues✓ Multiple resources✓ Multimodal learning✓ Using tools/ procedures of a discipline✓ Student as knowledge creator✓ Caring and taking action performance assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Curricular topic driven✓ Teacher selection and direction✓ Quiet and listening✓ Student compliance✓ Teacher presentations✓ Accumulating grades/ points✓ Solitary work✓ Memorization✓ One subject at a time✓ Reliance on a textbook✓ Verbal sources only✓ Hearing the findings of a discipline✓ Student as information receiver✓ Teacher as expert and presenter✓ Forgetting and moving on to the next unit✓ Classroom and standardized tests

Supporting Inquiry in AASD

In schools that promote active learning and collaborative inquiry, learning often reaches beyond the classroom, as students gather information from the world- and bring information to it. In schools like these, thinking is not a spectator sport. Room arrangement is central to life in the active learning classroom, from pre-kindergarten to high school. We arrange large areas where inquiry circles and other small groups of students can spread out and work together, as well as small spaces where students can read quietly and work independently.

Best Practice, Steven Zemelman and Harvey Daniels
Comprehension and Collaboration, Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels
Nonfiction Matters, Stephanie Harvey
Energize Research Reading and Writing, Christopher Lehman
Engaging Students in Disciplinary Literacy, K-6, Brock, et al.

Best Practices in Teaching Content	
Increase	Decrease
In-depth study of topics in the curriculum in which students make choices about what to study, emphasizing student interest, and responding to individual student needs.	Cursory, whole-group coverage of a lockstep curriculum that includes everything but allows no time for differentiation and deeper understanding of topics
Inquiry about and involvement with students' cultural groups and others in their school and community, thus building ownership in the curriculum	Use of curriculum restricted to only one dominant cultural heritage, use of curriculum that leaves students disconnected
Use of evaluation that involves higher level thinking skills and fosters further learning	Using assessments only at the end of a unit or grading period; assessments that test only factual knowledge or memorization
Participation in interactive and cooperative classroom study processes that bring together students of all ability levels, collaborative work	Lecture classes in which students sit passively, student as information receiver, solitary work
Integration of content with other areas of the curriculum, drawing upon multiple sources: multi genre, multilevel, multicultural, and multimedia; use of primary sources	Narrowing of content activity to include textbook reading and test taking, using an isolated block of time to teach content
Implementing inquiry as instructional strategies, abilities, and ideas to be learned, strategic thinking	Memorization of isolated facts, reliance on a textbook, broad coverage of unconnected factual information, covering many disconnected topics
Activities that investigate and analyze authentic questions over extended periods of time, student as knowledge creator	Activities that demonstrate and verify content confined to one class period
Using evidence and strategies for developing or revising an explanation, building on students' prior knowledge	Exploring content without purpose and understanding, getting an answer, providing answers to questions about content
Assessing to learn what students do understand	Assessing to learn what students do not know
Continuously assessing student understanding with students engaged in ongoing assessments of their work	Testing students for factual information at the end of the unit chapter or term
Actively using knowledge in our schools and communities: sharing publication, products or taking action	Forgetting and moving on to the next unit

Adapted from:

Best Practice, Steven Zemelman and Harvey Daniels

Comprehension and Collaboration, Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels