

The Inquiring Classroom

What do effective inquiry teachers DO?

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August 2010

Text slides from
conference keynote
address

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Confident, connected, actively involved, life long learners.

- To cope with the demands of the 21st century, students need to know more than core subjects. They need to know how to use their knowledge and skills-by thinking critically, applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, comprehending new ideas, communicating, collaborating, solving problems, and making decisions.

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THE INQUIRING CLASSROOM

- A place where teachers support their students to **investigate** questions, problems, passions and interests about the world both around and within them. In an inquiring classroom, the student is researcher – both in **collaboration** with others and **as an individual**.

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- ...in the inquiring classroom, the focus is on learning to learn alongside learning about 'big ideas' that helps us make sense of the world.
- In an inquiring classroom, it is the LEARNER that constructs his/her understandings – moving from the known to the new.

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- "It is the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act...the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies during their 15,000 hours of schooling". Hattie 2003

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" We are all responsible for our own learning. The teacher's responsibility is to create educational environments that permit students to assume the responsibility that is rightfully and naturally theirs."

Brooks and Brooks 1999: 43

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- Pedagogy should, at its best, be about what teachers do that not only helps students to learn but actively strengthens their capacity to learn.'

• David Hargreaves, Learning for Life, 2004

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TOP 10 PRACTICES OF THE EFFECTIVE INQUIRY TEACHER

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Practice 1

Work in ways that challenge more students to think more deeply more of the time.

Effective inquiry teachers rarely think 'for' students – rather they question, prompt and scaffold in ways that assist students to do more thinking for themselves.

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Practice 2

- Effective inquiry teachers **teach students about thinking**. They use specific vocabulary to describe thinking and build students' tool kit of critical, creative and reflective thinking skills and strategies. They help students 'notice' their thinking and ask students to share their thinking and thinking processes with each other.

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Practice 3

- Effective inquiry teachers deliberately provoke curiosity and wonderment. They encourage and celebrate questions and explicitly teach students about how to ask different kinds of questions. They model what it means to be a continuously curious person.

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Questions drive learning

- What makes a great narrative?
- How do good teams work together?
- How can science help us cook?
- What does it mean to be healthy?
- What's the REAL cost of what we buy?

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Practice 4

- Effective inquiry teachers **invite students' voices** into the learning process. They **CO** construct learning experiences, intentions and success criteria. They routinely involve students in making decisions about their learning.

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Practice 5

- Effective inquiry teachers help students **make connections** between the 'known' and the 'new'. They work with students to assist them to see how their thinking grows and changes over the course of an investigation.

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Practice 6

- Effective inquiry teachers explicitly teach the skills and processes used by researchers. They help students see themselves as capable researchers who have several 'methodologies' available to them.

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Practice 7

Effective inquiry teachers ensure that students have the **'bigger picture'**. They provide students with a context and purpose for their learning – and they have a clear picture of what that bigger picture is themselves.

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Practice 9

- Effective inquiry teachers 'let kids in' on the secret. They share learning intentions with their students. Their planning is transparent.

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Practice 10

- Effective inquiry teachers focus as much on 'process' as they do on content. They regularly invite students to plan and reflect on ways in which they will learn. Their feedback to students focuses on learning behaviors and skills as well as understandings. They pose questions about process and build it in to their everyday discourse. ...(Guy Claxton's) split screen teaching!

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...one final ingredient

- All these practices are highly dependent on the **relationships** that teachers build with their students and those they foster between students. The best inquiry teaching strategies and techniques in the world will fail if there is not a genuine attempt to build trusting, warm and connected relationships within the learning community.

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Effective inquiry teachers ask....

- What is it that we want our students to understand and do – and why?
- How will we know if they understand it?
- How will we find out what their understandings and interests are right now?
- What instructional strategies will best suit this?
- What questions will we ask? What guidance will we give? How will we organise for learning to take place?
- How will we move through this teaching episode?

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Pedagogy and the meaning rich classroom - a layered approach

- Transferable/re-usable strategies and procedures (eg: 6 hats, jigsaw, TPS, graphic organisers, collaborative tasks, thinking tools etc>
- 'Micro' techniques - eg
 - Wait time
 - Quality questioning/probing
 - Productive feedback/response
 - Room position
 - Visuals

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- I have come to a frightening conclusion. **I am the decisive element in the classroom.** It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized."
- Haim Ginott

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