

Inquiry for every classroom



Culturally Responsive Practice in Inquiry Journeys

inquirED has designed Inquiry Journeys to be culturally responsive in the instructional practices it supports as well as the content it presents.

Instructional Practice

Inquiry Journeys is more than a traditional curriculum: It contains detailed lesson plans, professional learning videos, and embedded instructional coaching. These elements work together to provide an instructional guidance system that can empower a shift to culturally responsive instruction.

While there is no single definition of culturally responsive instruction, inquirED has established a set of criteria to describe its use in our curriculum and to guide us as we continue to evolve. We have developed these criteria from the insightful and groundbreaking scholarship of Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Zaretta Hammond, and others.

inquirED considers instructional practice to be culturally responsive when it meets the following set of criteria:

- Builds cognitive capacity in students from diverse backgrounds.
- Actively engages cultural learning styles and tools.
- Includes instructional approaches that mirror the cultural norms of underrepresented groups.
- Approaches difficult content with sensitivity and awareness.
- Scaffolds students toward independence, increasing the freedom they have to choose the course of their own learning.

“Culturally responsive teaching is about helping culturally and linguistically diverse students build their skill and capacity to do rigorous work.”

—Zaretta Hammond



Courtesy of Allison Shelley/
The Verbatim Agency for
American Education

Curriculum as an Entry Point

It's important to acknowledge that curriculum alone cannot create a shift to culturally responsive practice. It can, however, serve as an entry point for teachers by prioritizing culturally responsive instructional strategies.

"It's important to start with instructional practice," says Shanti Elangovan, CEO and Founder of inquirED, "because that's what has an immediate impact on the learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students."

Of course, educators must also examine their own implicit bias, supported by school and district-wide professional development. "It's just not the starting point," according to Zaretta Hammond, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, "If you start there," Hammond says, "you can't pivot to instruction."

What specific elements within Inquiry Journeys support culturally responsive instruction?

Lesson Structure

Lesson structure is an important part of activating, deepening, and integrating new knowledge. Inquiry Journeys' lessons maximize learning. Lesson Openings prime thinking and curiosity. Active Inquiries prompt students to explore and investigate. Lesson Closings promote reflection and integration of new knowledge.

Addressing Real-World Problems and Opportunities

The application of knowledge and skills is central to deeper information processing. Each Unit of Inquiry Journeys challenges students to respond to their learning by taking action to address real-world problems.

Talk to Learn

Oral information processing can be a dominant form of meaning-making for many students. Inquiry Journeys uses multiple strategies (over 30+ for sharing and discussion) to promote informal and formal conversation.

Cognitive Routines

Cognitive routines allow students to practice and take ownership of information processing. Inquiry Journeys includes repeated use of questioning, brainstorming, feedback, and reflection protocols to empower students.

Long-Term Projects

Long-term projects promote information processing on a deeper level, giving students extended time to practice skills and apply knowledge. Each unit in Inquiry Journeys contains a sustained investigation of an Inquiry Question and ends with an informed action project that stretches across lessons.

Collective Learning Instructional Strategies

While traditional instruction is often rooted in individualism, some students are more familiar with collectivist cultural norms. Inquiry Journeys prioritizes collaboration and consensus building within its lessons and across units.

Non-linguistic Representations

Graphic organizers, flowcharts, and other visual resources aid in information processing. Inquiry Journeys provides these resources, including anchor charts and organizers that are developed and revised across a unit of study.

Stories, Metaphors, Analogies

Narrative structure, metaphors, and analogies help students process new information. Inquiry Journeys is a literacy-rich curriculum that not only shares content via these strategies, but also prompts students to use them to share ideas with others.



Courtesy of Allison Shelley/
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Inquiry Journeys includes integrated, multicultural content within its units.

inquirED considers content to be multicultural if it:

- Integrates the history and experiences of historically underrepresented groups throughout the curriculum, avoiding the tokenism of special months and lessons that can serve to marginalize underrepresented groups.
- Investigates the history of discrimination as a determining force in shaping historical narratives and practices.
- Incorporates the voices, ideas, images, and perspectives of underrepresented groups in the primary and secondary sources used during student investigations.

Q How does inquirED decide on grade-level content?

inquirED chooses grade-level subject matter to align with state standards and reflect the core disciplines of social studies. Specific content choices are made according to inquirED's criteria for culturally responsive instruction and multicultural content.

Q How does inquirED choose reliable, diverse sources?

inquirED's Learning Experience Team seeks out reliable primary and secondary sources that represent diverse perspectives, including those of historically underrepresented groups. These sources are vetted using a Lateral Reading Protocol to identify bias and authenticate veracity.

Q How does Inquiry Journeys address sensitive topics?

inquirED does not shy away from sensitive topics in Inquiry Journeys and supports classroom teachers who choose to address them. We do provide teachers with content and instructional alternatives, encouraging them to customize Inquiry Journeys to meet the needs of their unique classrooms.

Q Does content connect to students' lived experiences?

Each unit of Inquiry Journeys addresses an authentic problem or opportunity that impacts the students' world. Additionally, the Inquiry Question and Essential Questions frame a unit to connect content to students' experiences. Inquiry Journeys also empowers teachers to adapt content to local context.

Q How do you respond to critical feedback?

inquirED encourages its partner schools and teachers to give critical feedback about content, sources, and strategies. As a digital curriculum, we can respond immediately if changes are required. This flexibility also allows us to improve representation in our curriculum as new voices and perspectives emerge.

Q Where can I find examples of your content?

On the following page, you'll find an outline of a unit from 1st, 3rd, and 5th Grade. If you would like to view a full scope and sequence, visit inquired.org. To explore lessons, sources, and instructional strategies in depth, sign up for a demo account. To set up an account, email us at info@inquired.org.

Spotlight on Content in Inquiry Journeys

The brief unit outlines below provide a glimpse into the type of content that students explore in Inquiry Journeys. Note: Each unit ends with an Informed Action project that teachers can customize to meet the needs of their classroom.

1st Grade: Families Near and Far

Inquiry Question

How can we bring families together to form a stronger community?

Description

Students work to build an understanding of family that is inclusive. They explore what makes their family unique, and examine the similarities and differences among the families in the class.

Essential Questions and Content

What is a family?

- Inclusive definition of family
- Exploration of different family structures
- Families around the world

Why are family traditions important?

- Customs and traditions
- Interview classmates for perspectives
- Honoring the voice of others

How can family members care for one another?

- Family roles
- Family responsibilities, needs, and wants
- Compare and contrast family roles

Can differences between families be as valuable as similarities?

- The types of families in the community
- The strength of diversity in family types
- The ways that families help each other

3rd Grade: Fairness and Justice

Inquiry Question

How can we promote fairness and justice?

Description

Students explore justice and fairness through the lens of the Civil Rights Movement, investigating the importance of equality under the law and in practice within our society.

Essential Questions and Content

What is fairness?

- Rules, fairness, equity in communities
- Roots of prejudice
- Ruby Bridges: Civil Rights Change Agent

Do rules make things fair?

- How and why rules ensure fairness
- Rules aren't always fair & can be changed
- How society changes rules: Rosa Parks

How can people work against injustice?

- Developing arguments with evidence
- Organizing with others for change
- Nonviolence: Martin Luther King Jr.

How do ordinary people do extraordinary things?

- Young people as change agents
- Being a change maker: Malala Yousafzai
- Be an upstander, not bystander

5th Grade: Native American Cultures

Inquiry Question

How should history be remembered?

Description

Students are challenged to question the historical portrayals of Native American cultures, uncovering a more complete representation and considering why a more accurate story of the past is important today.

Essential Questions and Content

What was life like for early Native Americans?

- Cultural areas, geography, climate
- Social organization, shelter
- Use of resources, tools, and technology

How does culture reflect the landscape?

- Regional Native American traditions
- Storytelling, iconography
- Threats to history and culture

How do people's belongings tell their stories?

- Role of archaeologist, artifact analysis
- Historical fiction
- Building empathy through writing

What's the whole story of the "first"

Thanksgiving?

- Inconsistencies in the historical record
- Uncovering untold stories and lies
- Multiple perspectives of Thanksgiving