

The art of inquiry in the early years

- A webinar for the Early Childhood Organisation of South Australia
- October 29, 2020.
- Presented by Kath Murdoch

- TEXT only SLIDES (learning samples and photos removed)

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Inquiry is...

Inquiry is anchored in our curiosity and innate desire to make sense of the world around us. When we ask questions, have wonderings and use our heads and our hearts to investigate what fascinates and confronts our thinking, we are engaged in inquiry.

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Inquiry is...

- a dynamic process that builds on the theories and wonderings of both children and educators.
- Inquiry is more than a process for learning. It is a way of being as a learner and teacher: it is a stance.

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The art of inquiry teaching: One slice of the inquiry pie...



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“Educational Research has made it clear: *the quality of teaching* is the single most important factor in student success”. (Berger, R. et al. 2014)

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HOW we teach slowly shapes the way children respond to the unknown – to change, challenge complexity and uncertainty. The culture that a teacher creates acts like a magnetic field that attracts stimulates and rewards certain habits of mind and not others. (Claxton 2019:17)

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What are
we
inquiring
into ?

What does it mean to use an inquiry approach in the early years?

What practices do inquiry teachers use?

How do these practices honour and amplify the child as competent, capable learner?

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- “ The young child is the first great researcher. Children are born searching for the meaning of life and the meaning of the self in relation to others and to the world.” Rinalidi in Pelo and Carter 2018:54


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	Traditional	Inquiry
Dominant Teacher's roles	Instruct Tell Explain Control Plan and implement activities Manage Cover curriculum	Listen Question Observe Suggest Notice Prompt Design and adjust Uncover understanding
Learners' roles	Listen Follow instructions Answer questions Stay quiet Complete tasks	Share thinking Ask questions Make, create Choose Test and try things out Offer ideas to the group

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“ONE REASON WHY PLAY IS SUCH AN IDEAL STATE OF MIND FOR CREATIVITY AND LEARNING IS BECAUSE THE MIND IS FOCUSED ON MEANS. SINCE THE ENDS ARE UNDERSTOOD AS SECONDARY, FEAR OF FAILURE IS ABSENT AND PLAYERS FEEL FREE TO INCORPORATE NEW SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND TO EXPERIMENT WITH NEW WAYS OF DOING THINGS.”
 GRAY, P. 2008

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As I share these practices with you...

" I know a number of scientists and whenever they are discussing their work, they describe it as play: "I was playing with the data and guess what I discovered," or, "I played with the variables and you won't believe what I found.

Conversely, the highest form of play is essentially science as children ask and answer their own questions with both rigor and joy without the soul-sucking artifice of rote"

<https://teachertomblog.blogspot.com/2018/05/a-good-stem-education-is-play-based-one.html?fbclid=IwAR1G07NUNWAM0-rgdLp6Xk37v4pnpqeFQ0TDG70Yy6j4F8H-Dy2W>

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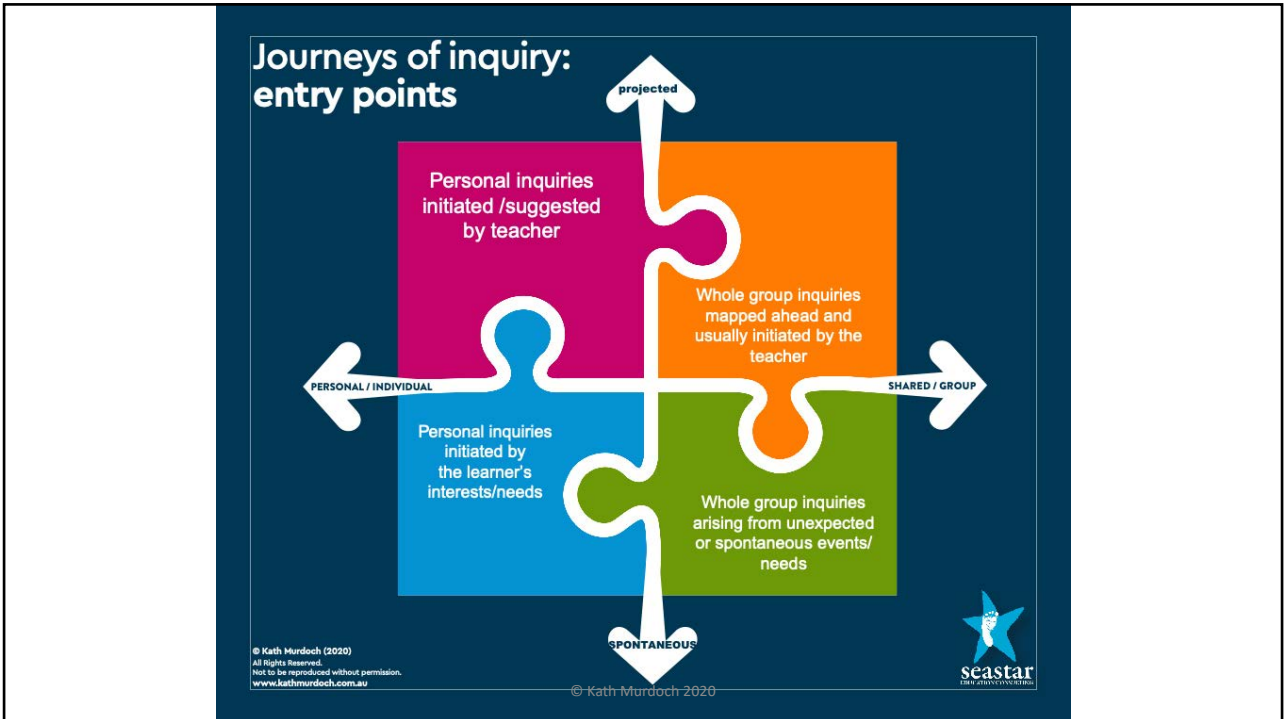
- *Think about what you are called to 'play' with. What might YOU experiment, investigate, explore as you return to your classrooms tomorrow?*

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- In the early years classroom, journeys of inquiry can emerge from and be strengthened by play...

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The inquiry teacher cultivates curiosity.

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BE curious ...

- Remain passionately curious about your students...
- Ask: what are they revealing to us?
- Where to next?
- How are they thinking about this?

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Teaching to Cultivate Curiosity

- BE CURIOUS. Model what it means to be fascinated as you learn and hungry to know more
- Allow spontaneous moments of wonder to re-direct your teaching
- Value and celebrate questions
- Bring the world into the classroom or connect learners with awe inspiring wonders through images, objects, clips, people...

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The inquiry teacher...

- Thinks beyond 'topics' and towards concepts
- Thinks about the interconnectedness of knowledge
- Sees the child as a fellow thinker in the learning space

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Moving from 'topics' to concept based inquiries

Toys	How and why do things move ? What do living things need to grow and survive ?
Plants	
Seasons	How does the environment around us change ?
Frogs	How do living things grow and change ?
Families	How are we the same AND different ?

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When designing a journey of inquiry...

- Think about concepts
- Ask yourself: “What do we hope the children will come to UNDERSTAND more deeply as a result of this investigation?”

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How and why do we tell stories?

Stories can help us learn about our families, our culture and our past.

Stories can be communicated in different forms.

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Inquiry teachers 'release' ...

from a plan they made – in
order to explore something
much more powerful

Learners to do more of the
heavy lifting

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“Pedagogy offers an invitation to walk with children, fully engaged and present, not relying on activity books or pre determined curriculum to shape our days ... but drawing on our capacity to be thinkers alongside children. (Pelo and Carter, 2018: 57)”

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Gradual *and* rapid release

I do it (teacher models)	You do it (teacher poses a problem/challenge)
We do it (work on it together)	We do it (children share their discoveries/strategies/questions)
You do it (more independent application)	I do it (teacher provides necessary instruction)

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Release

- Try ‘flipping’ your lessons to allow more problem solving and investigation
- Involve learners in the decision making about next steps in the inquiry
- Be aware of your language (‘How might we’... vs ‘The next think I want you to do is...’)
- Ask more than you tell



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"FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE CHILD, THE GREAT WASTE IN SCHOOL COMES FROM HIS INABILITY TO UTILIZE THE EXPERIENCE HE GETS OUTSIDE WHILE ON THE OTHER HAND HE IS UNABLE TO APPLY IN DAILY LIFE WHAT HE IS LEARNING IN SCHOOL. THAT IS THE ISOLATION OF THE SCHOOL--ITS ISOLATION FROM LIFE.
(DEWEY, 1915)

Keep it Real

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Teaching to keep it real

- Use the events, issues and challenges in your school and community as the context for inquiries
- Emphasise the real world connections between school learning and learning at home
- Design learning challenges for real audiences and real purposes

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Notice

- The teacher's goal is to understand the student's thinking, to get inside their heads and make their thinking visible. Thus we shift the paradigm of teaching from trying to transmit what's in our heads to our students to trying to get what is in our students' heads into our own!
- Ritchhart and Church 2020:25
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Teaching as noticing

- Historically, teachers have been positioned as those we should listen to, with many teachers feeling an enormous pressure to have answers to questions before they are even asked. Teachers talk, students listen. **When we imagine ourselves as those listening, we position ourselves as partners with the children in the learning experiences, standing beside them, instead of in front of them.**" (Britt and Mclaughlin 2015)

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HOW WE
TEACH
REFLECTS
WHAT WE
BELIEVE...

ABOUT THE NATURE OF LEARNING

ABOUT IT MEANS TO BE A TEACHER

ABOUT CHILDREN AS LEARNERS

ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM

ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL

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