



Inquiry Journeys: Supporting Culturally Responsive Education

Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education

Digital Curriculum with Embedded Professional Learning

Inquiry Journeys is more than a traditional social studies curriculum: its inquiry-based practices activate students' natural curiosities and support culturally responsive instruction. But culturally responsive practice can't be mass-produced in a textbook or taught by an algorithm. Instead, it requires a skilled classroom teacher who is able to adapt and respond to the needs of students. Inquiry Journeys' digital curriculum can be customized by teachers to make it authentic to their unique context — and it contains embedded professional learning to help teachers build their responsive practice.

A Focus on Instructional Practice

All of these elements work together to provide an instructional guidance system that supports culturally responsive practice. While there is no

single definition of culturally responsive instruction, inquirED uses criteria that have been adapted from the insightful scholarship of Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Zaretta Hammond, and others.

inquirED seeks to embed practices in our social studies curriculum that

- build cognitive capacity in students from diverse backgrounds;
- actively engage cultural learning styles and tools;
- include instructional approaches that mirror the cultural norms of underrepresented groups;
- approach difficult content with sensitivity and awareness; and
- scaffold 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



Digital Curriculum and Responsive Practice

Q: How can Inquiry Journeys support responsive practice in ways that textbooks cannot?

A: A fully digital curriculum like Inquiry Journeys can enable teachers to adapt and customize content and instruction to meet the unique needs of students. Digital curriculum can also provide embedded professional learning to teachers to build practice.

Q: How does Inquiry Journeys incorporate feedback and respond to events and changing circumstances?

A: Unlike a static textbook, Inquiry Journeys can be continuously updated to reflect feedback from users, address current events, incorporate new voices, and respond to shifts in perspective. This provides teachers with the content they need to connect instruction to the lived experiences of students.

What elements and strategies in Inquiry Journeys support culturally responsive practice?

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 study in 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 (more than 30 for sharing and discussion) to promote informal and formal conversation.

Cognitive Routines

Cognitive routines enable 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 of study 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 within lessons and units of study.

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.

Evaluating and Limiting Bias in Inquiry Journeys

inquirED is committed to evaluating and limiting bias in our content, striving for *authentic integration* and *continuous improvement*.

Authentic Integration

inquirED strives for the authentic integration of diverse perspectives, beliefs, and representations within Inquiry Journeys. This means that our curriculum is designed to

- incorporate the lived experiences of diverse cultures throughout each unit, avoiding the tokenism of special months and lessons that marginalize and obscure the complex identities of underrepresented groups;
- provide sources, texts, images, and other resources that move beyond single narratives, deficit-based depictions, or stereotypical representations to portray diverse populations in a wide variety of roles, occupations, and areas of expertise;
- utilize different platforms, including varied media types and publishers, to present primary and secondary sources that reflect the voices of the people and cultures being represented; and
- Promote inquiry-based investigations of state content standards, analyzing multiple, disparate viewpoints and narratives to support knowledge building.

Continuous Improvement: Multilayered Review

inquirED's Learning Experience Team reviews content and resources in Inquiry Journeys for bias across three phases of content development: Standards Analysis, Unit Mapping, and Lesson Development. Sample guiding questions used at each phase include:

- What are the traditional dominant narratives surrounding this content?
- How can an investigation of content include multiple perspectives and experiences?
- Whose stories are being centered in our design?
- If applicable, was the source used in the lesson created by someone who represents the population or culture being investigated?



Continuous Improvement External Review and Feedback

External Review

As part of our effort to evaluate and limit bias, inquirED seeks out guidance from independent organizations and reviewers. This external review provides opportunities for us to receive feedback that

- examines curriculum from perspectives outside of our Learning Experience Team;
- identifies gaps that exist in content; and
- provides suggested remediations in content and practice.

Partnership Feedback

inquirED acts as a collaborative partner with schools and districts, directly seeking their feedback through

- embedded channels within our technology that collect feedback directly from teachers
- synchronous monthly coaching sessions with instructional leaders that provide opportunity for the complex discussions necessary to evaluate issues of representation and bias.

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