

What is Inquiry-Based Learning?

“Inquiry is the dynamic process of being open to wonder and puzzlements and coming to know and understand the world.”
(Galileo Educational Network, 2004)

Using an inquiry approach to address health allows students, schools and school districts to reflect on the health and learning of students including the conditions that contribute to a healthy student and/or healthy school. Inquiry is a continuous improvement cycle; the end leads you back to the beginning where you can reflect and begin the process again. Inquiry can lead to new learning and insights while setting the stage for an improvement plan and process that ensures it will be significant and sustainable.

To use an inquiry approach, individuals will examine student competencies or existing practices, their impacts on students, the school’s program and the school environment. The inquiry approach allows those interested in making improvements, to develop action plans that respond to their unique circumstances. It affirms existing strengths and highlights areas for improvement.

Student-led Inquiry is a process of learning where students formulate and ask meaningful questions. In student-led inquiry, the students are at the centre of the process - posing a question, discovering an answer, taking action and using the knowledge gained to share with others. Inquiry-based learning helps to generate excitement, creativity, and support students to become more independent in their learning. Characteristics of inquiry participants include a willingness to take risks and an openness to change. The approach fosters feelings of purpose in all those participating.

A good inquiry question is one that:

- Asks ‘why’, ‘how’ or ‘what’ and creates the potential for reflective change;
- Is relevant to those who will be exploring it;
- Generates creativity, curiosity, engagement and new possibilities to address issues;
- Is a question where the answer is unknown;
- Allows for new questions to be asked.

A powerful inquiry question may take some time to be developed. You may pose a question and then refine it several times until you feel like it captures the essence of what you want to discover. For example, you may begin with a question such as: ***Will our school meet the DPA requirements if we use Action Schools! BC materials?***

However, this question can be answered with either a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. Consider revising it to something that is asked with ‘why’, ‘how’ or ‘what’, such as: ***How will the use of Action Schools! BC materials affect students’ attitude towards DPA?***

Other examples of inquiry questions include:

- *How will providing healthy breakfasts to students improve their overall emotional, physical and academic performance?* - AS Matheson Elementary School SD #23
- *How will student participation in the Polar Activity Monitor lessons affect attitudes and behaviors toward DPA of students in linear PE as compared to semester PE?* - Alpha Secondary School SD #41
- *How will peer coaching and mentorship improve students' ability to engage in relationships that contribute to positive engagement with school and community (connectedness)?* - Smithers Secondary School SD #54

For more resources on inquiry, visit <http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/healthy-schools-process.aspx> or view the HSN DASH Drive.