

# THE INQUIRY CYCLE

A TOOL TO SUPPORT DESIGNING, DOCUMENTING, ASSESSING,  
AND REFLECTING ON MAKER-CENTERED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Design the Learning Experience

1

a) Explain what theme, subject matter, or unit of inquiry you'll be focusing on during the learning experience that you will be documenting in this inquiry cycle (e.g., the Civil Rights Movement, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, conjugating verbs, velocity, wind & waves, collaboration, etc.).

b) List one or more learning objectives (something you hope your students will learn or understand as a result of the learning experience AND one or more of the Agency by Design maker capacities (looking closely, exploring complexity, finding opportunity) that you'll explore through this experience.



Facilitate the learning experience you designed related to the Agency by Design Framework

## What did you do?

Document the Experience

2

First consider how you are going to document and share the learning experience: audio, video, notes, photos, etc. Describe how you incorporated your learning objectives and one or more of the three capacities into the learning experience. Share how you facilitated this activity. Be sure to include the dates of the experience you are documenting and any other notes that may be helpful for reflection or future planning. Include any appropriate documentation of student and teacher products or processes: quotes, photos, videos, samples of student work or teacher created materials that share the process of learning that occurred during this experience.

3

**How did it go?**

Describe how this learning experience met your learning objectives and supported your students' engagement with one or more of the maker capacities. What were some surprises that happened along the way?

**What did your students learn?**

Describe one or more things your students learned in regard to your learning objectives and one or more things your students learned in regard to the maker capacities.

4

**How do you know?**

Use 2-3 artifacts from your documentation to serve as evidence or reflection points for the learning you described above. Be sure to add captions to each artifact that help to place this documentation in context, and to emphasize any connections to your learning objectives or one or more of the maker capacities. These contextual notes will be helpful when you are reflecting on the learning with colleagues or learners.

**What did you learn?**

From your perspective as an educator, in a few sentences, describe one or more things you learned from this experience.

5

**What would you do differently?**

Think about what you learned, what your students learned, and to what extent your goals around learning objectives and exploration of the maker capacities were met. Describe what you might do differently if you were to facilitate this same learning experience again.

6

**What will you do next?**

Now take a moment to think about what you and your learners will do next. Based on the learning experience you just documented, what is the next activity related to maker-centered learning that you'll be experimenting with next?

7

**REPEAT!**

## The Inquiry Cycle

The Inquiry Cycle is a tool to support teacher and student learning—and to make that learning visible—all the while exploring the capacities associated with the Agency by Design framework for maker-centered learning.

The Inquiry Cycle was designed to provide educators with a documentation and assessment tool that they may use over time to both tell the story of teaching and learning in a particular setting, but also to support educators in developing learning experiences for their students. Making this tool a cycle was intentional. The cyclical nature of the tool serves as a formative documentation and assessment instrument to support teachers in designing their learning experiences by reflecting on where they have been, what their students have learned, and what they might do next.

### Tips for When and How the Inquiry Cycle Can Be Used in Practice

- *Do it Together*—While the Inquiry Cycle can easily be applied by a lone educator in a particular setting, the potential of the Inquiry Cycle is amplified when educators share their work with one another. In this regard, we recommend that educators using the Inquiry Cycle seek out a community of diverse colleagues that frequently meet or connect with one another either online or face-to-face.
- *Make Time to Reflect*—While utilizing the Inquiry Cycle tool becomes routinized and therefore easier over time, we have learned from our teacher colleagues that contributing to an Inquiry Cycle on a regular basis takes a good amount of time and effort. Teachers are busy people, and time is a precious commodity within most every learning environment! Making the time to reflect upon one's work is no easy feat, but our teacher colleagues have found it to be valuable in the long run.
- *Hack It!*—The Inquiry Cycle that we have presented here has been very deliberately designed, but we expect that it will not perfectly fit each educator's needs... without alteration. To this end, we encourage educators to hack the Inquiry Cycle to suit their needs, best serve their students, and be responsive to the demands of their unique teaching and learning environments.
- *Experiment and Take Risks*—The Inquiry Cycle deliberately prompts educators to try something out, reflect on how it went, and then try it out again. This is a process of tweaking one's practice over time, experimenting with new approaches, learning from those experiments, and then experimenting again.
- *Celebrate*—Great stories of teaching and learning have emerged from educators' use of the Inquiry Cycle. And while learning is its own reward, it is also something to celebrate! In that regard, we encourage educators and learners to use the Inquiry Cycle in exhibitions to celebrate their work.