

## Guided Inquiry by Design: The Story of Student Learning

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Guided inquiry not only embraces the best constructivist learning models, but also supports the concepts of learning embedded in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and AASL's *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. This dynamic student inquiry process, developed by Carol C. Kuhlthau and outlined in *Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21st Century* (2007) and further fleshed out in *Guided Inquiry Design®: A Framework for Inquiry in Your School* (2012), is best learned and most effectively taught as a series of strategies that lead to a cohesive set of research and literacy skills, as well as deep content learning.

### INQUIRY AS STORYTELLING

Ken Burns describes storytelling as an art, "...one plus one equals three.... The whole is greater than sum of its parts" (Burns 2012). Storytelling is an underlying theme of Guided Inquiry and serves as a metaphor for learning about this process. Ken Burns states that story is a kind of manipulation (2012); as librarians and teachers, we choose to present certain information and in a specific order. Student research projects tell the story of what they have learned. The stories students create are their understandings as they work with science facts, news, or any subject (Todd 2012).

When instructors implement Guided Inquiry, they design around student learning, rather than assign specific research projects. Guided Inquiry connects students to learning in deep ways that focus on higher order thinking skills at levels of analysis, synthesis, and creation. Guided Inquiry stresses 21st-century competencies by requiring students to communicate their understandings by collaborating, sharing, and reflecting.

Kuhlthau identifies the three charges of education: to prepare students for the workplace, citizenship, and daily living. "We need to prepare them not just to live, but to thrive. This is an enormous challenge because our world is dynamic, cluttered, and chaotic. Guided Inquiry combines tradition and knowledge, expertise and best practice, research and innovation" (Kuhlthau and Maniotes 2012). Guided Inquiry focuses on leading students through the phases of the research process by helping them address their complex information environment in ways that older teaching methods cannot.

### FIVE KINDS OF LEARNING IN GUIDED INQUIRY

Guided Inquiry Design® provides a framework for rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Teachers and librarians design units that at once support and measure the learning process, and culminate in reflective outcomes that add metacognitive evaluation to content understanding. Students develop five kinds of learning when engaged in the Guided Inquiry Process. According to Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari, "These five kinds of learning are essential for developing academic competency, career readiness, and life skills."

- Curriculum Content "incorporates fact finding with interpreting and synthesizing in discipline-specific areas"
- Information Literacy "involves understanding underlying concepts for locating, evaluating, and using information"
- Literacy Competence "is the ability to apply reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and presenting for learning in a variety of different formats"
- Social Skills "involve the ability to interact, cooperate, and collaborate in successful sustained group work and within a variety of contexts"
- Learning How to Learn "develops a personal sense of the learning process" (2012, 8-9).

### CONNECTING TO THE CURRICULUM

"Third space" is an added learning dimension to Guided Inquiry. Students' world of home, school, friends, interests, etc. is their "first space," the teacher's curriculum is their "second space," and the "third space" is a concept of where those two worlds meet (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012, 33). The third space is a constructivist place in which students make connections to their real world and where learning is applicable to it immediately. It inherently engages students in learning and provides opportunities for teachers to get to know students. For example, talking to peers or "conversing" is a strategy for creating "third space." Guided Inquiry engages students because they function in that conceptual framework of a student's "third space." It immerses them in personal experience and makes connections to the curriculum. This aspect of Guided Inquiry provides real relevance to the curriculum.

### GUIDED INQUIRY DESIGN® FRAMEWORK

There are eight phases of the Guided Inquiry Design® framework that lead a student to achieve deep understanding:

- Open—invitation to inquiry (or hook) to open minds and stimulate curiosity
- Immerse—build background knowledge, discover interesting ideas, and connect to content, which creates “third space”
- Explore—explore interesting ideas, not reading deeply but identifying possible ideas, questions, and resources
- Identify—identify inquiry questions and decide direction
- Gather—select resources, gather pertinent and relevant information, look broadly, and read deeply
- Create—go beyond facts to make meaning, create product to communicate understandings
- Share—share learning, learn from one another, tell “your story”
- Evaluate—evaluate achievement of learning goals, reflect on learning process and content understanding (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012).

These phases are not purely linear and can be revisited. The product should reflect that students learn the process as well as the content (Kuhlthau and Maniotes 2012). Maniotes stresses the inclusion of formative assessment throughout the lesson to evaluate the process in addition to summative assessment to evaluate content mastery (Kuhlthau and Maniotes 2012).

### **INTERVENTIONS WITH INQUIRY TOOLS**

The essential element of the Guided Inquiry process is the concept of “intervention.” Librarians and teachers deploy interventions when students are confused, frustrated, or bored during the inquiry process. Guided Inquiry interventions address the affective and intellectual issues students face in conducting any inquiry project. Interventions provide students with tips, tools, and techniques to help them learn skills, perform tasks, and achieve learning. Interventions provide scaffolding to support students as they learn to perform at higher levels and become independent learners.

Inquiry tools are implemented to nurture an inquiry environment and social development as well as cognitive growth. These tools are based in the “six Cs” strategies that help students work through each stage of learning from a variety of sources. Inquiry tools apply a constructivist approach to learning that enable students to build their own understandings:

- Collaborate—(work jointly with others) in Inquiry Communities
- Converse—(talk about ideas for clarity and further questions) in Inquiry Circles
- Compose—(write throughout the research process) in Inquiry Journals
- Choose—(select what is interesting and pertinent) and track decision making in Inquiry Logs
- Chart—(visualize ideas using images and graphical organizers) decisions and research extensions and interpretations in Inquiry Charts
- Continue—(develop understanding over a period of time) (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012, 37)

These tools function to support the process of inquiry by engaging students throughout the process. They operate as informal and ongoing aides to help teachers and librarians assess learning, as well as to support learning. Guided Inquiry Design® contains a wide variety of examples and templates. For example, “pair share” protocols value the strategy of conversing, co-construction of making meaning, and reflecting across the process (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012, 37). Librarians and teachers implement varied groupings of tools to help students interact with information.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDED INQUIRY**

To implement Guided Inquiry effectively, Maniotes recommends developing a core learning team, supported by extended learning teams (Kuhlthau and Maniotes 2012). A three-member core team is the ideal: school librarian, classroom teacher, and one additional teacher. The team works together from planning through completion. A team of three creates synergy and utilizes varied expertise. Extended learning team members, such as reading specialists or content experts are brought in as needed.

Although Kuhlthau and Maniotes recognize that librarians and teachers do not have the time to implement many Guided Inquiry projects during a typical school year, longitudinal studies show benefits of adopting this searching, reflecting, creating, and sharing process (Kuhlthau and Maniotes 2012). Students over time demonstrate that they prefer to choose their own topics, build on prior research topics to develop an area of expertise, want to share what they learn, and do something further with that knowledge. They internalize the research process as well as their understanding of their own learning styles, transfer those techniques and understandings to new learning situations and expect to apply them to their working experience (Kuhlthau 2004, 168).

### **GUIDED INQUIRY AND THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

Ross Todd, Director of the Center for International Scholarship on School Librarianship (CiSSL) at Rutgers University, addresses the dynamics of the Core Content State Standards and role of the school librarian in implementing them through Guided Inquiry (Todd 2012). "The school library is the center for schoolwide professional development, the center for digital citizenship, and the community connector. And, the school library is primarily the pedagogical center of the school and the center of inquiry-based pedagogy. The inquiry process incorporates many types of learning: resource-based, thinking-based, knowledge-based pedagogies. It improves personal and interpersonal capabilities, and fosters reading to learn. The mind is the greatest app that we want the students to activate" (Todd 2012).

Guided Inquiry supports *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* and the Common Core State Standards. Because students cannot possibly learn all of the content that is known, learning how to learn and understanding one's own learning process are more important than ever before. Learning through inquiry is relevant and authentic because it is integrated, just like the real world outside of school. Five distinct kinds of learning are intentionally interwoven throughout Guided Inquiry so that students gradually develop a familiarity and fluency in their own learning process (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2012, 1). Students learn to tell their own stories.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*Ken Burns: On Story*. Video. Red Glass Pictures, 2012. 5 minutes 21 seconds.; American Association of School Librarians. *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. American Library Association, 2007. (Downloadable for free at: <http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards>).; Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS). 2010. <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>. (accessed October 3, 2013).; Kuhlthau, Carol, and Leslie Maniotes. "Residential Institute for Designing Guided Inquiry." Presentation, the Center for International Scholarship on School Librarianship Summer Institute at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, June 27-29, 2012.; Kuhlthau, Carol, Leslie Maniotes, and Ann Caspari. *Guided Inquiry Design: A Framework for Inquiry in Your School*. Libraries Unlimited, 2012.; Kuhlthau, Carol, Leslie Maniotes, and Ann Caspari. *Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21st Century*. Libraries Unlimited, 2007.; Kuhlthau, Carol. *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services*. Libraries Unlimited, 2004.; Todd, Ross. "School Libraries in the Digital Age: conceptions of the Next Generation of School Libraries." Presentation, the Center for International Scholarship on School Librarianship Summer Institute at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, June 28, 2012.

#### MLA CITATION

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