

Kindergarten

Learning Through Inquiry



Children are naturally curious about their surroundings. They want to explore and investigate how things work and why things happen the way they do.

As children move naturally from noticing and wondering about the objects and events around them to exploring, observing and questioning, the educator team provides them with opportunities to plan, observe, gather information, and to interpret their observations. They interact with children to respond, challenge, and expand learning, or help children to articulate their thinking. They encourage the children to share their findings through oral and/or visual representations.

Educator teams use real-life contexts, based on the needs and interests of the children, to provoke learning through inquiry. Young children learn best when dealing with topics they can explore directly and in depth. They grasp ideas more easily and learn more effectively when they can make to their own lives and the world around them.

“Children need to engage in inquiry and the construction of their own explanations based on their results. They need to engage in developing their own theories and to argue with each other about why theory or explanation is better than another .”

Jeffery W. Bloom, *Creating a Classroom Community of Young Scientists* Second Edition, page 69

When children are learning through inquiry, you might see them:

- exploring objects and events, noticing patterns and properties;
- observing using all of the senses, and recording observations;
- comparing, sorting, classifying, interpreting, building, creating.

...or you might hear them:

- making predictions and sharing theories (“I think that....”);
- generating questions;
- sharing and discussing thoughts and ideas.

Effective ways in which parents can support children's learning through inquiry at home and in the community: Some sample ideas:

- ask children questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer .
Questions that begin:
 - "What would happen if..." encourage predicting skills;
 - "How might we find out....?" encourage analyzing skills;
 - "I wonder why/how...?" encourage children to ask more questions.
- encourage children to ask questions and then help them to find out the answers. This reinforces their sense of wonder and curiosity and their willingness to ask about things. It also encourages them to use multiple ways to find out about things that rouse their interest.

Talking With Children

*When adults engage in inquiry **with** children, the talk that ensues helps children to shape and articulate their thoughts and reinforces oral language and vocabulary.*

Adults can elicit talk by:

- *asking questions ("How did you make that work?")*
- *noticing their learning ("I see that you figured out how to make your bridge go over your road.")*

By providing ample time for children to respond, adults demonstrate respect for the children's thoughts, opinions, ideas and wonderings.

Parents as partners in learning:

Ask the educator(s):

- How do you determine what the children are going to explore and investigate when they are learning through inquiry?
- What can I do to encourage inquiry learning at home?
- What kinds of questions are good to ask my children when we are at the park/grocery store/on a walk? At home or out in the community?

Parents are encouraged to share observations or information about their child with the educator team.

Ask a child:

Some questions to ask about inquiry at home:

- What are you exploring or investigating?
- What do you notice about....? What do you think about...?"
- How did you figure that out?
- How did you share what you learned?



Learn more

For a list of resources, visit

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/index.html>

Or call:

Toll-free in Ontario,

1-800-387-5514

From Toronto and from outside Ontario,

(416) 325-2929

TDD/TTY

This toll-free number provides accessible information for the hearing-impaired, in both English and French languages

1-800-263-2892

