

A Brief Introduction to Inquiry by Design

Inquiry By Design is committed to student-centered literacy and language learning marked by the reading, writing about, and discussion of content rich, complex texts. We firmly believe that all students deserve—and even crave—real, meaningful, and relevant work. Hence, our motto: **NO FAKE WORK.**

Our curriculum is based on this premise and designed as an alternative to traditional textbooks and worksheet-based activities so prevalent in classrooms. We contend that collaboration is the energy behind serious and sustainable learning. To help teachers—and their leaders—move toward collaborative classroom environments, we also offer professional development to support our unique inquiry-based curriculum design.

We are passionate about the importance of real learning and the critical role teachers play in that process. We are looking forward to a successful and productive partnership in your school district and supporting your students to thrive!

Middle School Microcourses	In a nutshell...
Creating a Text-Based Culture	Students arrive in our classrooms as active and even avid users of language. But if they are to perform and thrive in academic and real-world settings, they must develop the stamina, tenacity, and habits of lifelong readers and writers. These foundational studies focus on creating the contexts and tools that make that learning possible. Topics include setting up literacy notebooks, establishing independent reading projects, and exposing students to the problem-solving strategies and practices of avid readers and published authors.
Introduction to Argument	Designed to provide students with in-depth orientations to the development of text-based arguments about literature where students engage in carefully sequenced and integrated cycles of reading, rereading, writing, and discussion that culminate in formal, written arguments about engaging and important pieces of short fiction.
Close Reading of Informational & Literary Nonfiction	In the first unit, students work with thematically linked pairs of complex informational texts to determine the central ideas and to analyze how they unfold over the course of a text. Students also work to describe and understand the language and methods writers employ to develop content. In the second unit, students work with complex literary nonfiction to build the skills and tenacity acquired only by encounters with difficult texts. In both units, students experience sequences of reading, writing, and discussion specifically designed to ensure support, engagement, and success in culminating writing tasks.
Writing Across the Types: Narrative, Exposition, and Argument	An individual is literate in proportion to his or her ability to do work with and across texts that grapple with big ideas. Each writing-intensive unit is structured around a cluster of texts linked by theme or genre. Whether they are wrestling with questions about why fairy tales matter, exploring how other people’s stories and ways of storytelling can give shape to their own experiences of growing up, or investigating the impact of the ways in which essayists reveal or obscure themselves in a text, these multi-text studies invite students to participate in “conversations” with texts about ideas that matter. In addition to text-based argument tasks, students also take on significant narrative and informative/explanatory writing projects in each study.
Analysis, Explanation, and Argument: Reading Nonfiction	It isn’t enough for students to merely comprehend informational texts. To navigate a world brimming with information and argument, students need critical instincts and know-how. These microcourses invite students to create “reading like a detective” theories that they test and refine through progressions of experiments in reading nonfiction. The key in all of this work is <i>engagement</i> : Detective fiction by Carl Hiaasen and Roald Dahl, reportage by award-winning writers including Michael Pollan and Jonathan Kozol, and cutting edge ideas about how our language and worldviews are shaped by metaphor—these texts and ideas ensure “reading below the surface” experiences for students that are, at once, empowering and illuminating.
Reading & Writing About Poetry	These studies feature clusters of poems written by poets from different times and traditions and provide sequences of work designed to stimulate collaboration and close reading of poetry. In addition, students practice writing text-based arguments about literature and take on poetry writing tasks where they try writing poems like those written by the poets they study.