

INTEGRATED INQUIRY POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

The core of the curriculum at MPW is delivered through Integrated Inquiry units.

An Integrated Inquiry Unit attempts to make learning more real and meaningful for the children.

Children do not view their world in terms of separate subject areas; therefore the curriculum should be holistic in nature.

The following documents taken from *Learning Links – Strategic Teaching for the Learner Centred Classroom** by Kath Murdoch and Jeni Wilson (used with permission) outline the *generative topic selection* and the *process of inquiry learning* used at MPW. They provide scaffolding for the planning of Integrated Inquiry units.

* *planning thoughtfully – an audit sheet (p109)*

* *basic overview of the inquiry process (p111)*

INTEGRATED INQUIRY POLICY STATEMENT (Continued)

Planning thoughtfully: an audit sheet

The following grid gives teachers a set of reminders to use when planning. While it is general in nature, it will be helpful for teachers mapping out an extended, learner-centred unit of work.

What's the big idea?	Selecting resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the topic/focus generative in nature? Does it connect to significant concepts about how the world works? ● Is this topic relevant to these students? ● Does it have the potential to teach skills and content from a range of learning areas? ● Could the topic make a difference to the students' thinking? To their actions? To the way they see and work with others? ● Will the topic be intellectually challenging to these students? ● Is the topic planned to connect students emotionally? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can this topic be resourced by real-life, authentic experiences? ● Can the students gather first-hand data? ● Are there a range of resources available from which students can access information (written, visual, human, and other)? ● Are the resources inclusive? Do they (collectively) offer a range of viewpoints? ● Can the resources be used in a range of ways for different purposes?
Strategies for learning	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are strategies included to ascertain students' prior knowledge and experience? ● Are students given some choice/ownership over what and how they will learn? ● Is there a wide variety of strategies to meet the individual needs/learning styles of students? ● Do strategies require students to use several skills? ● Do the strategies aim for active participation by all students? ● Are strategies transferable? Will students be working in ways they can adapt to other situations? ● Are the strategies open ended? Do they allow students to work at a range of levels towards a range of outcomes? ● Are strategies/learning experiences sequenced in order to effectively scaffold students' learning over time? ● Are thinking skills included in the explicit planning for this topic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What understandings, attitudes, skills and values will be assessed? ● Has information about students' prior knowledge/skills been recorded for later reference? ● Is there a range of strategies used to allow all students to demonstrate what they understand and can do? ● Are assessment strategies embedded into the ongoing teaching program? ● Are specific arrangements in place to help students assess their own learning and the learning of their peers? ● Are assessment criteria identified and understood by students? ● Have students participated in designing the criteria? ● Are assessment strategies linked to teachers' purposes? ● Are arrangements in place for teams of teachers to moderate students' work in order to assess understanding fairly?
Making a difference	Grouping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do students have the opportunity to act on what they have learnt? Are there avenues to act on their understanding? ● Have connections been made between the local and global spheres? ● How will the learning be celebrated and shared beyond the classroom? ● How will students be encouraged to reflect on what and how they have learned? ● How will students' personal goals be identified and met during this unit? ● Is the community or individuals within it, involved in this unit? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How and when will students experience collaborative learning during this unit? ● How will the unit allow for diverse groupings – individual, paired, interest based, friendship based, etc? ● Has time for reflection on group processes been factored into the unit? ● What measures are in place for individual accountability on group work?

INTEGRATED INQUIRY POLICY STATEMENT (Continued)

A basic overview of the inquiry process

Ongoing reflection	Selection of Topic	A generative topic that allows for the development of broad, overarching understandings, links learning areas, has relevance to students and lends itself to direct experience/first hand data. May be teacher selected or negotiated with students.
	Generative Question/s	What is the unit really about? What are the key ideas? What questions will guide the inquiry?
	Understanding, Skills and Values	What do we want students to understand by the end of the unit? What is important to know about this? What key skills and values will be enriched through this inquiry?
	Tuning In	Engagement and gathering prior knowledge, pre-assessment, questions for inquiry , goal setting. Sometimes students will require some immersion in the topic if little is known/experienced.
	Finding Out	Experiences and texts that add to the knowledge base . Emphasis on gathering first-hand data in a range of ways (usually shared experiences).
	Sorting Out	Organising, analysing and communicating the information gathered using a range of vehicles (eg through maths, Arts, English, Drama, Music or Technology).
	Going Further	Raising new questions, extending experiences, challenging assumptions . May be individually negotiated.
	Drawing Conclusions	Stating understandings. What do we do now? How do we feel? High-level thinking about the topic. Identifying avenues for action and application.
	Reflecting and Acting	Now what? Taking action. Reflecting on the unit and learning what, how and why learning has come about. What did I learn about myself? What should I do now?

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APPENDIX 1.

Cambourne's "Conditions of Learning".

From : A.R.A. Reading Around Series No. 4 Nov. 1988.

ESTABLISHING NATURAL LEARNING CONDITIONS

When planning learning challenges, teachers need to consider how the conditions of learning can be fostered. These conditions, as identified by Brian Cambourne (1984), need to be facilitated within every experience we provide for children.

- **Immersion**
- **Demonstration**
- **Expectation**
- **Engagement**
- **Responsibility**
- **Approximation**
- **Response.**

Immersion and Demonstration

In real life, learners are immersed in situations that pose challenges and require decisions to be made and problems to be solved. In the classroom environment, adults and peers need to model ways in which they explore and react to everyday challenges, and share with children strategies for problem solving.

Expectation

By establishing challenges in the classroom, teachers are communicating an expectation that children will investigate planned challenges. The learners have an expectation that they will successfully engage in the experience.

Engagement

Challenges would pose questions, stimulate creativity and initiate inquiry on the part of the learner. This fosters a desire to explore and so to engage in learning experiences. An aesthetically pleasing environment will promote the learner's willingness to engage in the tasks.

Responsibility

Learners have the responsibility to take from the experience that which is relevant to them. Challenges that are open-ended enable learners to select their preferred way of responding to the challenge. Children may choose to respond through experiences such as writing, reading, talking, taping, drawing, printing or constructing.

Approximation

The open nature of challenges enables children to interpret the task and approximate in a way that is appropriate to their individual level of development.

Response

Children's responses need to be valued and shared. Children are able to clarify what they have learned through discussion with an audience. This allows children to engage in self-evaluation, to refine and reflect on their own learning.

