

Inquiry in Social Studies

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Time Frame 60-90 minute(s)

Essential Question(s)

How do we promote inquiry in the social studies classroom?

Summary

This activity will dive deep into encouraging inquiry and implementing inquiry-focused instructional strategies in the classroom. Participants will be actively engaged in a variety of strategies as facilitators model the implementation of these strategies.

Learning Goals

- Participate in strategies that promote inquiry and discourse in the classroom.
- Connect inquiry and discourse to social studies instruction.
- Model the implementation of strategies that engage students in inquiry and discourse.

Attachments

- Disciplined Inquiry Article—Inquiry in Social Studies.docx
- Disciplined Inquiry Article—Inquiry in Social Studies.pdf
- Gettysburg Address—Inquiry in Social Studies.docx
- Gettysburg Address—Inquiry in Social Studies.pdf
- I Think We Think Graphic Organizer—Inquiry in Social Studies.docx
- I Think We Think Graphic Organizer—Inquiry in Social Studies.pdf
- Infographic—Inquiry in Social Studies.pdf
- Inside Out Handout—Inquiry in Social Studies.docx
- Inside Out Handout—Inquiry in Social Studies.pdf
- Kick Me Name Tags & Groupings—Inquiry in Social Studies.docx
- Kick Me Name Tags & Groupings—Inquiry in Social Studies.pdf
- Presentation Slides—Inquiry in Social Studies.pptx
- Strategy Harvest Handout—Inquiry in Social Studies.docx
- Strategy Harvest Handout—Inquiry in Social Studies.pdf

Materials

- Disciplined Inquiry article handout (attached; one per participant)
- Gettysburg Address (attached, one per participant)
- Kick Me Name Tags & Groupings (listed; one per participant)
- I Think, We Think Graphic Organizer (attached; one per participant)
- Inside Out handout (attached; one per participant)
- Infographic (attached)
- Presentation Slides
- Pens/pencils
- Strategy Harvest handout (attached; one per participant)
- Sticky Notes

Engage

Presenter's Note

For a more in-depth look at discourse in the social studies classroom, check out Discourse in Social Studies.

Presenter's Note

For a smooth start to the session, make or print the attached **Kick Me Name Tags & Groupings** handout name tags prior to the session. The "Kick Me" icebreaker helps build a sense of community and introduces the group to relevant topics and vocabulary, laying the groundwork for continued discourse about inquiry as an effective teaching methodology.

As participants walk into the room, place a name tag on their shoulder. Instruct them not to look at their tag and tell them to not tell others what their tags say.

Display **slide 3**: Kick Me strategy.

Once participants are seated, explain that they will start the session with the Kick Me strategy, an activity designed to guide them to think critically and use vocabulary relevant to subject content to figure out which political figure they have been assigned. By asking only "yes" or "no" questions of different partners around the room, they are required to draw on prior knowledge and formulate only pertinent questions.

- Instruct participants to find a partner and ask them "yes" or "no" questions to help figure out the historical or contemporary figure they have been assigned.
- For time purposes, advise participants that each of them has been assigned a political persona, either historical or contemporary.
- Announce that once they have figured out who they are, they should "find a group."

There are three separate groups based on a relevant social studies theme. This portion of the exercise requires the participants use critical thinking to synthesize and draw inferences based on their assigned identities.

Once participants have grouped themselves, show **slide 4.** Invite them to think about ways this exercise can be used in their classes. Let them know that application strategies will be discussed as the lesson progresses.

Show **slide 5.** Ask what strategies they used to identify their personas and find their groups. Give participants time to discuss. Have participants share out their perceptions of the strategies they used with the whole group.

Show **slides 6** and **7**. Introduce the essential question and session objectives.

Show **slide 8**. Explain that the "Kick Me" strategy can be used to actively engage students with vocabulary in order to make connections with one another and with relevant content. At this point, have participants offer ideas for using this activity in their classrooms.

Presenter's Note

The "Strategy Harvest" introduces analysis and collaboration into the discussion. Use the icebreaker experience as the content for this activity.

Show **slide 9.** Explain that this activity grows from their discussions about the Kick Me activity. Pass out the attached **Strategy Harvest** handout to aid the participants in thinking through the strategies they used during the icebreaker. Encourage them to take notes. Ask participants to share out their responses to the following questions:

- How can this strategy help students identify themes and/or associations between the terms/people?
- How can this strategy prompt students to generate questions related to the terms that could be used in a research project?
- How could you use this strategy in your classroom to promote inquiry?

Ask one of the participants to take notes to share with the whole class.

Explore

Presenter's Note

Using the photo in **slide 10**, have participants complete the It's OPTIC-AL strategy.

Show **slide 10.** Give the participants a few minutes to look closely at the photograph.

Transition to **slide 11.** Ask participants to use the following questions to analyze the scene depicted in the photograph. You may choose to switch between slides 10 and 11 as participants analyze the photograph.

Share the following questions as participants write down their impressions about the photograph:

- What do you see or notice first? Share your observations about the image.
- Break the image down into parts. What is happening in each quadrant? What does the placement of objects or people in the photo tell you about the scene?
- What other clues in the photo help you understand the scene? How would you characterize the interrelationships depicted in the image?
- What is the image about? What is it an example of? Can you summarize the scene in one sentence?
- What would you title the image?

Show **slide 12**. Once everyone has shared out, explain to participants that the image is a photograph of a social studies classroom in an Oklahoma City school. Ask participants to share their responses to the following questions:

- How can this strategy help students analyze images and photographs?
- How can this strategy encourage students make observations and generate questions?
- How can you use this strategy in your classroom to promote inquiry?

Presenter's Note

If you are working with a specific content group, consider changing the image to one that directly relates to the content, such as an image of troops storming Normandy Beach (US History) or an image of a Carnivale celebration in South America (geography).

Explain

Presenter's Note

Present the Inside Out strategy initially through an examination of a primary document: the Gettysburg Address. Ask participants to practice the strategy by completing the inside circle with what they know initially (prior knowledge) about the document. After each individual has filled in the inside circle, they will work with one other participant and complete the second circle, blending their knowledge. They will then fill in the outside circle after a careful review of the actual text.

Use this activity as an introduction to the concept. It is not necessary to spend a lot of time on the practice analysis of the Gettysburg Address. Their analysis of the article on Disciplined Inquiry and their conclusions about the value of inquiry in the classroom should take up the lion's share of the "Explain" section.

Show **slide 13.**

Give participants the **Inside Out** handout and a copy of the **Gettysburg Address**. Briefly review the information on slide 13 to ensure that participants understand the inner/outer circles concept.

Show **slide 14**. Have participants write down everything they individually know about the Civil War and the Gettysburg Address in the inner circle. What were the causes of the war? What were the outcomes after the war ended? What was the theme of Lincoln's address? What was the purpose of the Gettysburg Address?

Next, have participants pair with an Elbow Partner. Ask them to share their prior knowledge from the innermost circle with one another. If their partner shares anything that they have not already written down, instruct them to write this new information in the middle circle.

After the partners have completed their knowledge circles and have read the Gettysburg Address, have them assemble in larger groups and complete the outside circle. Have participants discuss how the exercise influenced their understanding of the Civil War and share with the whole group.

Show **slide 15**. Distribute a second Inside Out handout and a copy of the **Disciplined Inquiry** article (see Attachments). Have individuals write their prior knowledge about disciplined inquiry in the inner circle. Ask them to discuss their prior knowledge with their Elbow Partner and fill in the middle circle.

Give participants sufficient time to read the Disciplined Inquiry article. Have them return to their larger groups and write down new knowledge in the outermost circle. Ask participants to share out their understanding of inquiry with the whole group.

Show **slide 16**. Once partners have shared, discuss the following elements of inquiry:

- Centered on students
- Driven by questions
- Engages students
- Explores sources of information
- Gathering resources
- Investigating and discussing
- Connecting ideas

Ask participants to share out their responses to the following questions:

- How can this strategy encourage students to analyze documents and connect to information they already know?
- How can this strategy help students build on information?
- How can you use this in your classroom to promote inquiry?

Extend

Presenter's Note

Depending on the amount of time remaining in the session, there are two options for the Extend activity.

If you have plenty of time left, consider **Option 1**: I Think/We Think.

Ask participants to think about the following question:

How can you incorporate inquiry into your classroom?

Show **slides 18-19**. Using the back of their Strategy Harvest handout, ask them participate in an I Think/We Think strategy. On the right side of the page, ask them to write down how they can incorporate inquiry in their classroom.

Once participants have written their thoughts, have them discuss their ideas with a partner. As they discuss, have participants write down their joint ideas on the left side of their paper.

Have partners share out their "We Think" ideas with the larger group.

If you have only a little time remaining, consider **Option 2**: Think-Pair-Share

Show slides **21-22**. Ask participants to consider the following question individually: How can you incorporate inquiry into your classroom? Once participants have thought about the question, have them turn to their Elbow Partner and discuss their thoughts.

If time permits, have partners share out their Think-Pair-Share ideas with the larger group.

You may want to ask one of the partners to take notes during the whole group share out.

Presenter's Note

Consider taking a couple minutes to discuss with participants how either of these strategies could be done with specific content.

Explain to participants that the strategies (I Think/We Think or Think-Pair-Share) are designed to encourage observation, guided inquiry, and discourse. Ask participants to share out their responses to the following questions:

- How can this strategy help students pick out things they already know and understand about a topic?
- How can this strategy help students generate questions or identify important information related to a topic?
- How can you use this in your classroom to promote inquiry?

Evaluate

As the session comes to a close, show **slide 23**. Ask participants to create an Exit Ticket on a sticky note by answering the following question: How will you promote inquiry in your classroom?

Follow-up Activities

Consider keeping the Exit Ticket sticky notes to evaluate the participants' takeaways. Based on their responses, it might be helpful to host a follow-up session where participants discuss their successes and struggles with promoting and incorporating inquiry instructional strategies in the classroom.

For a related session, consider presenting the Discourse in Social Studies activity.

Research Rationale

Authentic learning—exploring meaningful concepts, their relationships, and real-world context—is inherent to disciplined inquiry and complex understanding. Rule (2006) noted that rich problems adhere to principles such as "personal meaningfulness to students; construction, refinement, or extension of a model; self-evaluation; documentation of mathematical thinking; useful prototype for other structurally similar problems; and generalization to a broader range of situations."

Unsurprisingly, these traits are similar to the traits of good essential questions. There are a number of academic benefits for students and teachers that can be accomplished easily by budgeting time and space in the classroom for students to have conversations. When student conversation is an integrated part of the learning, students get practice working with one another, they get practice being accountable to others, listening, sharing their ideas in ways that others can understand, and working together to make decisions (Gillies, 2016; Resnick, Michaels, & Connor, 2010; Gibbs, 2006).

Learning that results from student conversations increases student motivation, self-esteem, and problem-solving outcomes. For teachers, giving students a space to speak gives insight into how students are organizing their thoughts and can serve as formative assessments of what students are learning over the course of a lesson.

Resources

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