

Foreword

Learning through inquiry has been, and continues to be, a much debated topic. One way to encapsulate the controversy surrounding this issue is to ask, “What would inquiry learning look like if I were to encounter it in a classroom?” The compilation of articles edited by Richard Audet and Linda Jordan in *Integrating Inquiry Across the Curriculum* provides valuable insights that explore and help to answer this confounding but significant question.

As one becomes immersed in this engaging book, the question posed in the provocative title of Chapter 3—“Science Inquiry: Is There Any Other Way?”—provides a powerful stimulus for addressing the myriad aspects of inquiry learning. Substitute any other content area for science, and this cross-cutting query retains its relevance. One comes away from the first section of the book wanting to take the question a major step further by asking “Inquiry: Is There Any Other Way to Better Learn Anything?”

What becomes clear as one delves deeply into the material of this book is that many of our current assumptions about education demand serious reconsideration. In contrast to the lingering past emphasis on “what we know,” the rigors of living in today’s modern society stress “how we come to know.” A quote attributed to Jerome Bruner in the English Language Arts chapter points out that literature should involve “trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties.” This type of instructional approach leads to discourse about literature that is dialogic and invites and allows for multiple student perspectives. Material in the book’s second section emphasizes the important responsibility for creating classroom conditions that make such opportunities for inquiry available to all students.

The numerous vignettes and research-based examples found in *Integrating Inquiry Across the Curriculum* strongly support the

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argument for applications of inquiry across the entire curriculum. As discussed, geography standards propose that students learn content through the similar processes and tools of inquiry used by historians and social scientists. These same standards argue that problem-based or issue-based geographic inquiry offers the best chance for inspiring students to assume social responsibility and take action as citizens of the world. Another chapter indicates that the nature of history lends itself to inquiry and exploration, and encourages thinking, reflection, revision, and recognition of unfinished stories. In effective history learning, students “do history.”

Jennifer, a student referred to in the geography chapter, who asked, “Is it possible to teach all subjects using an inquiry approach?” raised the central question explored in this book. Her question was reminiscent of decades of collegial discussions about inquiry that I have enjoyed with colleagues. I was not surprised to read that her fellow students’ responses to Jennifer’s question mirrored commonly expressed views in the ongoing debate about the efficacy of learning through inquiry.

Although consensus about the merits of inquiry as a means of supporting both effective instruction and meaningful learning may never be fully reached, *Integrating Inquiry Across the Curriculum* will contribute to thoughtful dialogue about this topic. The essential message that this well-researched and well-written book conveys is that students can and do learn about subjects in teacher-centered classrooms, but they learn best in a learner-centered environment that emphasizes inquiry. This book should be high on every educator’s reading list and is destined to become an important reference for anyone who is seeking a fuller understanding about the nature of classroom inquiry.

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