

# Types of Inquiry

Teachers introduced to IDM are often relieved to learn that inquiry isn't a fuzzy ideal, but rather is a curricular device articulated with a defined vernacular: questions, tasks, and sources. It is not uncommon to hear teachers say, "Ah, now I know what inquiry looks like!" after working through their own blueprints.

Contentment does not usually last long though (teachers are persistently curious) and we have found ourselves inundated with questions that push our thinking around the blueprint. Teachers have wanted to know: How many times should I do inquiry in a year? When do students get to investigate their own questions? How can inquiry change over a year or course of study? Am I allowed to mess with/change/alter the blueprint?

These are all good and important curriculum questions. Inevitably, we have found that teachers want to move from an inquiry-based experience within a year (one blueprint) to inquiry-based experiences across a curriculum (multiple blueprints). But they are worried that there won't be enough time, that inquiry will become dull because the blueprint doesn't appear to vary, or that students never get to ask and answer their own compelling questions.

In this chapter, we begin tackling these questions by describing five different types of blueprints that build toward an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning social studies. In doing so, we are creating additional building blocks for teachers wanting to make inquiry the norm in their classrooms.

### **But First, A Look to Picasso for Inspiration**

We have been inspired recently by a set of eleven lithograph drawings by Pablo Picasso entitled "Bull" (1945-1946). In this series, Picasso visually dissects the figure of a bull by moving from a representative drawing to increasingly more abstract images until he whittles the bull down to its essence. (Figure 2.1 below presents a composite of these drawings.) Even as the drawings shed details

FIGURE 2.1: PICASSO'S REPRESENTATIONS OF A BULL



(Pablo Picasso, 1945)

such as the fur and muscles and begin to morph through Cubist and minimalist techniques, they retain the core elements of a bull and can be recognized as such.

In the process of playing with the figure and form of a bull, Picasso came to represent the bull in multiple ways. We think this same process can be applied to the IDM blueprint. Allowing the blueprint to expand or contract around the essential elements of inquiry or to be adapted and customized for student authorship provides teachers with more flexibility in implementation.

In Chapter 1 we outlined how the three elements of inquiry—questions, tasks and sources—work together within the IDM blueprint. In this chapter, we use these three elements to introduce five types of inquiry that teachers can use as the foundation for an inquiry-based curriculum.

### Building a Curricular House through Inquiry

Just as Picasso played with representing a bull through his series of sketches, we have played with representing inquiry through a series of blueprints. We suggest that an inquiry-based curriculum allows students to explore the foundational elements of questions, tasks, and sources through five different types of blueprints: structured, embedded action, focused, guided, and student-directed. Taken together, these configurations help teachers build out a variety of inquiry experiences for students to span a year, rather than as an isolated unit of study. In this way, these differentiated blueprints can help to define a curriculum around inquiry and be a cohesive part of it. In the following image (See Figure 2.2 below) and in keeping with our emphasis on construction and blueprints, we represent the relationship between these inquiry elements and inquiry types through the notion of a house.

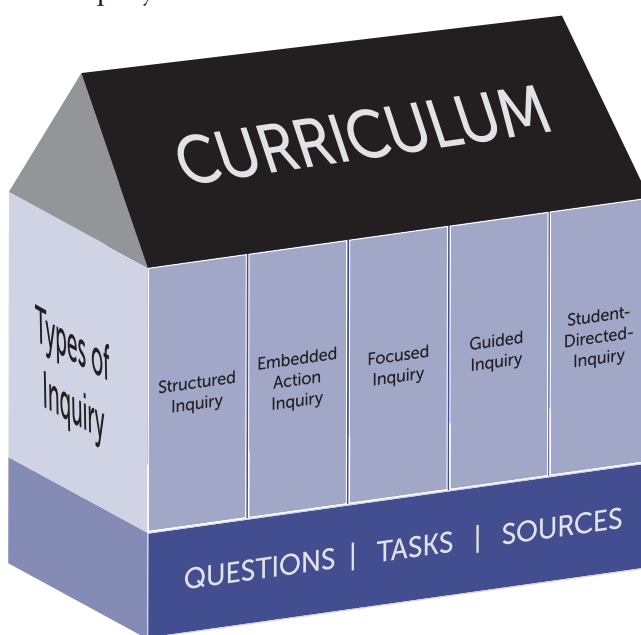


FIGURE 2.2: BUILDING A CURRICULAR HOUSE THROUGH INQUIRY

## Foundation

As we described in Chapter 1, the foundation of the house is comprised of inquiry's essential elements: questions, tasks, and sources. All inquiry blueprints have a compelling question as a starting place and supporting questions to scaffold the content of the inquiry. All inquiry blueprints have formative and summative tasks, which enable students to practice and demonstrate disciplinary and civic skills. And, last but not least, all inquiries ask students to use disciplinary sources as the building blocks of knowledge within an inquiry. These three components—questions, tasks, and sources—are both elemental and interdependent and, as such, are always present in an inquiry.

## Rooms

With questions, tasks, and sources as the foundation for the house, we offer five different rooms or types of inquiry in the IDM Curriculum House:

- **S I** is what we like to call the “Coke Classic” or standard blueprint about which we have written extensively. In this type of inquiry, teachers develop a compelling question along with three to four supporting questions to guide the investigation. Students work through corresponding formative performance tasks and a summative argument task, an extension, and/or an action opportunity. Teachers select a series of disciplinary sources (typically 3-4 per supporting question) that allow students to explore the supporting question and complete the formative and summative tasks. We suggest that this type of inquiry takes three to ten instructional days or class periods and is developed by the teacher.
- **E A I** allows students to practice taking informed action as part of the academic inquiry. In this kind of inquiry, the compelling question is crafted so that students are addressing a social problem. The formative work (i.e., supporting questions, featured sources, and formative performance tasks) provides an instructional space so that students are understanding and assessing the social problem. Then, the summative argument task allows students to demonstrate what they know and how they might address the problem in a contemporary fashion. We suggest that this type of inquiry takes five to ten instructional days or class periods and is developed primarily by the teacher, although the students determine the issue they research and the action they take.

- **Focused Inquiry** allows teachers to collapse the inquiry experience into a one-to-two day lesson. In this blueprint, teachers develop a compelling question, but one that tends to be narrower in scope and, as such, necessitates only one to two supporting questions, which saves instructional time. The corresponding formative performance tasks are fewer, the summative argument task collapses to a single claim and/or counterclaim, and the end of the blueprint features either an extension or action opportunity, but not both. Lastly, teachers typically select fewer sources for students to explore, thereby further contracting the instructional time. A focused blueprint allows teachers to zoom in on a particular skill or piece of content. We suggest that this type of inquiry takes one to three instructional days or class periods and is developed by the teacher.
- **Guided Inquiry** provides students with an opportunity to become more independent within a teacher-developed inquiry. In these blueprints, teachers construct the compelling and supporting questions as well as the corresponding formative and summative tasks. But, they craft at least one independent research opportunity within the formative work. Within the research experience, students might be asked to find the sources that would help answer the supporting question. Because of this additional research time, this type of inquiry may take a bit longer than a structured inquiry. We suggest that teachers plan for five to ten instructional days or class periods.
- **Student-Developed Inquiry** occurs when students take on the development of the blueprint by defining the compelling and supporting questions, the formative and summative performance tasks, and the disciplinary sources for their inquiry. In this type of inquiry, teachers act in an advisory capacity nudging students' thinking about a topic, offering guidance about their investigative paths, and providing assistance in locating sources for their inquiries. Because students are working more independently around their own questions, tasks, and sources, we anticipate that this type of inquiry may take a while and suggest a two-week window of instructional time.

These descriptions of each type of inquiry are intended to be a short introduction so that our inquiry curriculum house makes sense. In the subsequent chapters in the book, we deconstruct each of these blueprints in greater detail providing multiple examples of each plan at representative grade levels—elementary, middle, and high school.

## Roof

As teachers plan for these different types of blueprints over a course, a curriculum or roof emerges on our inquiry house. In the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for State Social Studies Standards* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), we defined an Inquiry Arc that helps students, “ask good questions and develop robust investigations into them; consider possible solutions and consequences; separate evidence-based claims from parochial ones; and communicate and act upon what they learn.”<sup>3</sup> But we didn’t stop there. We assert that students must be given opportunities to take on the inquiry reins:

And most importantly, students must possess the capability and commitment to repeat that process as long as is necessary...in order to traverse successfully the worlds of college, career, and civic life.<sup>4</sup>

As questions, tasks, and sources become the foundation of the curricular house and we populate the house with rooms representing different inquiry types, we become more cohesive and intentional about the larger social studies curriculum. That is, instead of a shed outside the house where students infrequently gather tools, inquiry becomes essential for holding up the curriculum.

This house metaphor has helped us break out of the initial blueprint box to include other types of inquiry that help animate the aims of the C3 Framework. In the following table, we distinguish the five types of inquiry as they relate to the foundational elements of inquiry (Questions, Tasks, Sources) and two curriculum variables, agency and time. (See Table 2.1.)

As we have in previous books, we add a disclaimer: We are sure that there are more than five types of inquiry out there, and as such, we know that there are exponential ways to alter a blueprint. We trust teachers’ intuitions, knowledge and experiences and offer these five pathways as a starting place for teachers who are thinking about using a blueprint to differentiate the inquiry experiences of their students.

An additional question raised by teachers is whether we intend the curriculum house diagram to suggest a pecking order with student-directed inquiry representing the highest form of inquiry. We hedge a bit on that question as we see the unique value of each type of inquiry. However, all types of blueprints from structured

	Focused Inquiry	Structured Inquiry	Embedded Action	Guided Inquiry	Student-Directed Inquiry
Description	The teacher develops the inquiry but focuses on a particular disciplinary skill and piece of content (e.g. causation, map work, research).	The teacher develops the blueprint to scaffold the disciplinary and civic outcomes of the inquiry.	The teacher develops the inquiry, but focuses on structuring the Taking Informed Action (understand-assess-act) sequence into the core of the blueprint.	The teacher develops the inquiry but there are dedicated spaces in the formative work for students to conduct independent research.	The student develops the blueprint on a question that he or she is interested in and plans the inquiry using the blueprint.
Example	Did the attack on Pearl Harbor unify America? Middle School Pearl Harbor Blueprint	Do we ever get what we need and want? Elementary School Needs and Wants inquiry	Why is the Affordable Care Act so controversial? High School Public Policy Blueprint	What made nonviolent protest effective during the civil rights movement? High School Civil Rights Blueprint	What makes a movement successful? High School LGBTQ Blueprint
Blueprint	<a href="http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/TPS-Pearl-Harbor-05-16.pdf">http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/TPS-Pearl-Harbor-05-16.pdf</a>	<a href="http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NewYork_K_NeedsandWants.pdf">http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NewYork_K_NeedsandWants.pdf</a>	<a href="http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NewYork_12_ACA.pdf">http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NewYork_12_ACA.pdf</a>	<a href="http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NewYork_11_Civil_Rights.pdf">http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NewYork_11_Civil_Rights.pdf</a>	<a href="http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Kentucky-12-movement_successfull.pdf">http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Kentucky-12-movement_successfull.pdf</a>
Teacher to Student Driven	Teacher-developed	Teacher-developed	Teacher-developed	Teacher- and Student-developed	Student- developed
Questions	The teacher develops the Compelling and Supporting Questions	The teacher develops the Compelling and Supporting Questions	The teacher develops both the Compelling and Supporting Questions. The Compelling Question typically is created so that it explores a social problem.	The teacher develops the Compelling Question but 1-2 Supporting Questions are deliberately structured so students are investigating a broad question.	The student develops the Compelling and Supporting Questions with guidance from teacher.
Tasks	The teacher develops the Summative and Formative Tasks.	The teacher develops the Summative and Formative Tasks.	The teacher develops the Summative and Formative Tasks, but some of the Formative Tasks might be structured so that students are researching a supporting question.	The teacher develops the Summative and Formative Tasks, but 1-2 Formative Tasks are structured so that students are researching a Supporting Question.	The student develops Summative and Formative Tasks with guidance from the teacher.
Sources	The teacher selects a small collection of sources.	The teacher selects sources.	The teacher selects most of the sources, but students might select some sources as they relate to the research opportunity.	The teacher selects some sources, and students select some sources as they relate to the research opportunity.	The student selects sources with guidance from the teacher.
Time	1-2 days	3-10 days	5-10 days	5-10 days	2 weeks



to embedded action to focused to guided to student-directed are curricular scaffolds for students learning through inquiry.

The nature of scaffolds is that they are ultimately removed so that a structure can stand independently. The pedagogical nature of curricular scaffolds follows that same aim. As the scaffolds for questions, tasks, and sources are removed and students work more independently to create their own questions, to find their own sources, and then to create their own meaning and answers to questions, we see a dynamic and meaningful inquiry arc take shape in social studies classrooms.

### **A Look Ahead**

The next five chapters in this book are dedicated to breaking down the structure of the five blueprints outlined above. We begin with a structured blueprint, then we turn our attention to the embedded action, focused, guided and student-directed blueprints in subsequent chapters. In each of the five chapters, we use one educational design concept to anchor the blueprint's unique composition.

In Chapter 3, we highlight the backward design planning process as a central feature of the Inquiry Design Model. Although backward design applies to all five blueprints, we highlight the concept in this particular chapter because it seems like an important starting place in understanding the IDM approach generally, and the interaction of the blueprint components specifically.

In Chapter 4, we examine civic action as described in the C3 Framework. Taking Informed Action is an essential element of every blueprint type, but it is particularly important to the embedded action inquiry. Action often scares teachers the most. But action opportunities can occur across a long continuum of possibilities that vary greatly in location and complexity. In this chapter, we present a model for thinking about action that accommodates all kinds of classroom constraints.

In Chapter 5, we unpack a focused inquiry by zooming in on the tangled relationship among content, concepts, skills, and disciplinary sources. Focused inquiries require an additional level of clarity around the core purpose of the inquiry and it seemed appropriate to kick this chapter off with an understanding of how these elements interact within a blueprint to provide the focus of the inquiry.



In Chapter 6, we discuss the guided inquiry blueprint. As an initial starting place for this chapter, we show how the blueprint becomes a curricular scaffold for inquiry. We make the distinction between hard and soft scaffolds, and then curricular and instructional scaffolds. These distinctions exist in all blueprints, but seem particularly important here as teachers give additional attention to the instructional scaffolds present within an inquiry.

Lastly, in Chapter 7, we introduce the student-directed inquiry blueprint. In this chapter, we begin our discussion by defining student agency and its role in all blueprints. Student agency takes on an elevated importance when students develop their own questions and tasks and locate and adapt disciplinary sources for the inquiry. Again, student agency is present in all of the blueprint types, but especially pronounced in a student-directed inquiry.

Ultimately, we see these blueprints and IDM as a way of thinking about good social studies. Inquiry is not the latest fad or simply another teaching strategy. IDM allows us to incorporate the broader educational lexicon under one umbrella of meaningful and effective social studies instruction. Our hope is that like-minded educators use the IDM approach as a vehicle to teach about curricular design, assessment practices, use of disciplinary sources, civic agency, student research, argumentation, and disciplinary literacy. This book continues to connect some of these important concept dots, so that IDM becomes a productive way of thinking about the foundations and implications of a strong social studies education.

In a recent article, Walter Parker talks about inquiry experiences as the spine of the curriculum (and yes, this might be the fourth metaphor used to describe inquiry in this chapter alone!). Parker posits that when inquiry-based projects are the spine of a course, they are systematically sequenced so that they provide the substance of the course and thereby drive deeper learning. But then he zeroes in on the core role of curriculum:

The Inquiry Design Model aims in the same direction by organizing curriculum around the foundational elements of inquiry—questions, tasks, and sources. By collapsing or expanding and, in some cases, shifting the authorship of a blueprint, we illustrate how the IDM can operate as a curricular framework that flexes to meet the contextual needs of teachers.

In the next several chapters, we dive deeply into the five types of inquiry by providing multiple examples of each and walking through the affordances and constraints of each approach. Additionally, we provide design guidance for each type and outline how the design process might change from inquiry type to inquiry type.

## NOTES

1. S.G. Grant, K. Swan and J. Lee, *Inquiry-Based Practice in Social Studies Education: The Inquiry Design Model* (New York: Routledge and C3 Teachers, 2017); K. Swan, J. Lee and S.G. Grant, *Inquiry Design Model: Building Inquiries in Social Studies* (Silver Spring, MD: National Council for the Social Studies and C3 Teachers, 2018).
2. K. Swan, J. Lee and S.G. Grant, "Questions, Tasks, Sources: Focusing on the Essence of Inquiry," *Social Education* 82, 3 (May-June 2018), 142-146.
3. National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013), 3.
4. *Ibid.*
5. W. Parker, "Projects as the Spine of the Course: Design for Deeper Learning," *Social Education* 82, no. 1 (January-February 2018), 45-48 at p. 48.