Reflection on Inquiry-Based Learning



Year 6 has provided me with many opportunities to engage in personal inquiry related to teaching. As this is still fairly new to me as an educator, it was a valuable experience to be able to practice this form of learning in a school setting. It has provided me with many ideas for bringing inquiry-based learning into the classroom.

Through year 5 and 6 of the program, I have learned that the process of inquiry needs to be taught and that it can be messy. For students that are used to being fed information and not working independently, inquiry can be a scary realm to delve into. For this reason, there needs to be a gradual release toward independence. With class-based, then group-based and finally individual-based projects, students can gain the confidence to work independently on an inquiry project.

It is equally important that the teacher does not just step out of the way for the whole process. The teacher takes the role of the mentor to make sure that students are not getting too far off track and making suggestions as to places to look. While our inquiry projects were very short, typically classroom inquiry projects will be lengthy to allow the students to fully investigate their question and prepare it for presentation in the chosen format.

Personal inquiry allows for students to investigate something they have a passion for and to celebrate that with their peers. Learning from one's peers is a great way to encourage student engagement in the process. While students may want to "tune out" an adult, they will actively listen to their friends and classmates.

The best part about inquiry-based learning is that it is authentic learning.

Students are not regurgitating information fed to them by teachers and textbooks,
but they are putting together many pieces of information gathered from a multitude
of sources.