



St. Martin de Porres School

Avondale Heights

INTEGRATED INQUIRY POLICY

RATIONALE

The inquiry approach to learning and teaching supports contemporary learning theory and is built upon the idea that students are actively involved in learning and continually reconstruct understandings in the light of experience. It encourages students to participate in active investigation and to integrate, rather than separate knowledge, as they move from acquisition of facts to the development of deep understanding.

At St Martin de Porres school, Kath Murdoch's Integrated Inquiry model, in which a sequence of activities and experiences is developed to build on and challenge students perceptions, forms the basis of inquiry.

"This sequence is inquiry-based in that it begins with students' prior knowledge and experience and moves through a deliberate process wherein that knowledge is extended, challenged and refined."

Kath Murdoch, Classroom Connections, (1998, p.5)

This model encourages the grouping of activities and learning experiences under the following broad headings: Tuning in: Finding out: Sorting out: Going further; Making conclusions: Taking action. The teacher makes deliberate links between planning and practice and uses a wide range of strategies to help learners build the connections and develop understandings, skills and values.

Links are established between literacy, numeracy, technology, the Arts, the Sciences, the Humanities and general learning about the world. A set of 'Throughlines' (big-picture ideas) have been developed and are used to guide planning via the General Capabilities – 'Critical & Creative Thinking,' 'Personal & Social Awareness', 'Intercultural & Ethical Understanding'. Under the umbrella of rich concepts/big ideas, the students are encouraged to generate and design the questions they want to investigate and subsequently investigate in an active way.

Units of work have been across three areas of the school P-2, 3-4 and 5-6 in a two year cycle. Each unit of work's broad planning reflect the big question, throughlines, abstract, host curriculum areas and related areas. Professional learning teams then further develop these units using school based proformas.

AIMS

At St Martin de Porres we aim for the students to:

- ◆ develop their understandings of their world and beyond;
- ◆ develop and deepen knowledge of how the world works;
- ◆ develop communication skills through a variety of media;
- ◆ become critical, creative, reflective and lateral thinkers;
- ◆ engage in the inquiry process learning developing skills relevant to inquiry;
- ◆ be able to make connections from their learning;
- ◆ develop the strategies they need to inquire, locate information and make links between understanding/experience of the real world;
- ◆ expand their worlds: knowledge; values; understandings
- ◆ learn how to learn;
- ◆ develop independence and co-operation;
- ◆ know and understand that they can make a difference.

We support the philosophy expressed by Murdoch and Hornsby, Planning Curriculum Connections, 1997, that:

All students should understand:

- ⇒ the systemic nature of the social, physical, biological and technological worlds;
- ⇒ the relationships between the person and the planet;
- ⇒ the extent of each individual's potential;
- ⇒ that their world view is not universally shared;
- ⇒ the range of cultures and what they have to offer;
- ⇒ global conditions, trends and developments;
- ⇒ issues concerning justice, rights and responsibilities;
- ⇒ the implications of present choices and actions;
- ⇒ the need for action skills necessary for participation in a global society.

OBJECTIVES

At St Martin de Porres, professional learning teams work and plan together in an endeavour to :

- ◆ provide a programme rich in experiences;
- ◆ give students opportunities to work cooperatively;
- ◆ give students opportunities to develop independence and individuality;
- ◆ provide authentic and purposeful activities and learning experiences;
- ◆ allow students to further their knowledge through inquiry;
- ◆ engage students in a variety of ways to enhance their learning;
- ◆ provide opportunities to present information in different ways;
- ◆ ensure all students experience success;
- ◆ cater for needs of all students and provide experiences that promote and develop differing learning styles;
- ◆ build on students' prior knowledge;
- ◆ help students realise that they can make a difference.

In order for these objectives to be achieved, effective integrated inquiry curriculum plans need to :

- ⇒ provide opportunities that focus on skills, strategies, values and understandings within a meaningful framework;
- ⇒ be flexible enough to allow divergent inquiry;
- ⇒ connect to rich concepts/big ideas and no isolated facts;
- ⇒ be inclusive of content areas and show links to specialist programs where possible;
- ⇒ demonstrate depth and development;
- ⇒ be reflective of students' interests and backgrounds;
- ⇒ show links to local and global events and be relevant to the school community;
- ⇒ use effective and relevant resources including incursions/excursions and different media;
- ⇒ be evaluated regularly;
- ⇒ foster cooperative team planning;
- ⇒ develop shared understandings;
- ⇒ show accountability to standards and frameworks.

IMPLEMENTATION

After the unit of work has been planned, careful consideration must be given to implementing the unit :

- ◆ Classroom environment should reflect planning and this will be evident visually.
- ◆ The works of the student at various stages of the inquiry process will be displayed.
- ◆ Students will be immersed in the unit of work through the displaying of factual charts, information and visually stimulating artwork.
- ◆ Work in groups will be promoted and so the layout of the classroom will be conducive to co-operative learning.
- ◆ Computers will be found in all classrooms as an integral part of the inquiry process.

Class programmes are then implemented which:

- ⇒ expose the students to various learning styles
- ⇒ use ICT in the learning process
- ⇒ accommodate a variety of learning styles such as those reflected in Gardner's 'Multiple Intelligences'
- ⇒ are well resourced
- ⇒ use cooperative and flexible groupings
- ⇒ use multi modal methods
- ⇒ promote higher order thinking skills and utilise programmes such as De Bono's 6 thinking hats
- ⇒ are hands on, engaging and inclusive
- ⇒ demonstrate a wide range of ways of presenting learning
- ⇒ include an extensive range of skills and practices such as brainstorming, mind mapping, interviews, questioning, topic wheels, graphic organizers, asking an expert, involvement in excursions and experiments, letter writing, observing, researching, multimedia presentations, graphing, oral presentations, PMI's (Plus, Minus, Interest to see), discussion/dissection and action plans.
- ⇒ Foster the development of skills, understandings and concepts where students are actively engaged in relevant, open-ended tasks in which the student is responsible for his/her own learning.

ASSESSMENT

An essential element of planning for integrated inquiry is planning for assessment as part of the teaching and learning cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring, assessing and evaluation. There is a need for the collection of data and analysis of information about students' learning, including both the 'what' (what they have learned) and the 'how' (how they have learned). The central purpose of assessment in the Integrated Inquiry model is to improve student learning, and planning within the model is informed by assessment information. The data collected assists teachers to modify their plans and allows them to tailor their work to suit the needs of individuals and the group. As much as possible, students are involved in planning for assessment such as selecting responses to particular learning experiences and preparing and designing demonstrations of understanding. The use of rubrics can also assist in making expectations clear and explicit.

ASSESSMENT (cont.)

Integrated inquiry requires :

- ◆ a focus on assessment of learning in context.
- ◆ a variety of demonstrations of understanding – not just those of reading and writing but embracing other ways of presenting learning – use of ICT, performance, displays, construction, oral presentations.

Therefore the assessment process must:

- ⇒ track learning progress – for students, teachers, parents;
- ⇒ inform parents of expectations how these are met by the students;
- ⇒ be on-going including pre-assessment/prior knowledge; during unit; after unit;
- ⇒ include student self assessment;
- ⇒ incorporate multi-modal forms;
- ⇒ include a wide range of assessment tasks;
- ⇒ be linked to outcomes;
- ⇒ be evident in the planning proformas used by all year levels;
- ⇒ be explicit in classroom programmes.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is critical to the ongoing development and refinement of an integrated program. Taking time to review those things that worked well, together with those things that need improvement, the process of evaluation will improve subsequent planning and teaching. Time needs to be allocated to the task of evaluation throughout the unit of work and for a team to discuss the unit before planning for the next one. Evaluation is the process through which teachers reflect on the success of their programs, including resources, teaching strategies and content in order to inform future planning. Assessment of student learning informs the evaluation of teaching and can be facilitated by record keeping (anecdotal notes/portfolios/checklists). Another indicator of the success of integrated inquiry curriculum will be the response given by the students. Questions to guide evaluation of units of work :

- ◆ Have the aims/objectives been achieved?
- ◆ Were the methods used appropriate and successful?
- ◆ Have ideas for improvement been discussed and documented?
- ◆ Have rich concepts/big ideas and through lines been developed?
- ◆ Have the students discovered?
- ◆ Have the students self-evaluated the unit?
- ◆ Has student feedback been permitted in various forms?
- ◆ Have the units been evaluated individually by teachers and collectively by PLTs?
- ◆ Do the student portfolios reflect growth in skills, understandings and values?

References

- Murdoch, K. (1998) Classroom Connections, Strategies for Integrated Learning. Eleanor Curtain Publishing, Armadale.
- Murdoch, K., Hornsby, D. (1997) Planning Curriculum Connections: Whole – School Planning for Integrated Curriculum, Eleanor Curtain Publishing, Armadale.

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