

Brentwood Elementary Book Club 2012/13

Inquiry Circles in Action, Comprehension & Collaboration by Harvey and Daniels

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We chose this book because it supports current practices in, Literacy for all Learners. Our primary goal was to help teachers move away from question/answer reading responses towards meta cognition strengths and inquiry. It was an opportunity for teacher collaboration and collegiality in a professional activity. This book club supported each of us in our ability to develop deeper understandings of reading comprehension, and the use of inquiry strategies with students.

We met in November, January, February, April and May for discussions about the nine chapters we read and how the ideas worked for us in the classrooms. As we had a large contingent of our staff participating it was wonderful to see how motivated everyone was to experiment with inquiry whether through new lessons, or entire teaching units.

Some of the key focus points of our discussions were:

*How do you go about setting up an inquiry?

*This inquiry focus is a group process, student driven, with choices for direction of their learning.

*The approach was different for intermediate and early primary. Older students read articles and books with photos and other features, as well as viewed videos and photos on websites. Beginning readers made inferences from non-fiction text features such as captions, diagrams and images, and also watched related videos. All age levels became better at asking questions requiring deeper thinking.

*Keeping the process child-centered. Students took control of their own learning and generated their own questions that drove their research

*Students learned skills for group work, and how to communicate if problems arose, or how to encourage contributions from each other.

*What are the benefits of the Inquiry Model? ie. engagement of students, meta cognition.

*We talked about using collaboration strategies.

*We highlighted websites for researching great questions.

*We used technology to enhance the process and made use of the computer lab. Older students would have liked to look up information on technology devices such as iPads, but there is no WiFi at our school.

*Students used sticky notes to ask questions and organize answers and many included them in an end product showing the process of their learning, They shared their learning with each other.

Teachers observed more student engagement and more thoughtful questions and understanding of research beyond facts.

Next year current and new Brentwood book club members would like to continue readings and discussions of the remaining book chapters.

Prepared by Donna Wende with input from book club members.