

(353 words)

In Search of the Shared Foundation EXPLORE

By the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force

Download the AASL Standards Framework for Learners at www.standards.aasl.org.

We are born explorers; from infancy we are curious. Learning is intriguing, and the world is filled with wonder! Consider reflecting on those moments when you review the EXPLORE Shared Foundation in the AASL Standards Framework for Learners. One of the competencies states, “Learners display curiosity and initiative.” In reflecting on your earliest learning experiences, consider ways to recreate that inspiration for the learners in your library.

Opening minds to new learning experiences can be as simple as asking students, “What makes you curious?” when they view a compelling image, a caption, the first few sentences of a primary document, or a book cover. “What makes you curious?” is a question that is at the heart of the EXPLORE Shared Foundation. It requires critical thinking because learners must first observe the image or read the text, then filter the content that captures their interest. What is new? What is interesting? How does it connect to my previous experience? Ian Leslie, in his book *Curious*, discusses the most salient, consistent element of curiosity: it is a *gap* between what we know and what we do not know. If the gap is too big, the prompt loses our students’ interest; if it is too narrow, if all of the information is revealed, then there is nothing about which to wonder. Curiosity lives in the gap between what is known and what is unknown.

Providing entry points for young children and teens to experience and express wonder creates a rich environment in which all learners make personal connections to content. How will you start your next lesson? How might you ground it in the spirit of EXPLORATION? What do your students wonder? Encouraging learners to be curious is a simple, yet powerful entry point into exploring upcoming units and content. Try it! For an added bonus, listen to or read their questions and you will have completed your first formative assessment—their questions will reveal the gaps in their background knowledge.