Case Closed: Studies in Developing Reflective Explorers and Innovators

Discover how school librarians support knowledge creation by developing curious, innovative, collaborative, and reflective learners. Each case study connects to relevant scenarios and activities contained in the Developing Reflective Explorers and Innovators Activity Guide. Visit standards.aasl.org/project/explorers.

Summary

Lindholm said it best, “Deep curiosity is an essential factor as a driving force for societal and scientific growth, and to maintain its development and well-being throughout childhood in science education is an urgent task.”

“Curiosity is a wonder of the human mind.”

Suggested Activities

Uncover to Discover

- Learner/Create Activity 2: Moving Beyond the Page
- Learner/Share Activity 2: Creating a Teen Conference
- Learner/Grow Scenario: The Science Fair

Summary

Inquiry-based approaches can help learners explore. This 2019 District Administration article explains that when instruction focuses on observation of natural phenomena, learners’ curiosity is heightened. When taking on an inquiry approach, learners take the lead by asking questions and discovering the answers themselves.

Bendict, R. (2019). “Curiosity Drives Phenomena-Based Learning.” District Administration. (Fall)

“Educators know most students bring with natural curiosity and a desire to make sense of the world around them.”

“I like to think of phenomena as bread crumbs that teachers are going to use to guide students along learning paths,” says Ted Willard, assistant director for science standards for the National Science Teachers Association. “Unlike in a traditional teacher-led lesson, students lead by asking questions, collaborating, discovering connections, designing models, and ultimately, making sense of what they observe.”


Create to Innovate

Summary

A school library’s focus on providing student access to technology makes it a great place for learners to explore. This 2019 Knowledge Quest article details one school librarian’s experience as she used the Shared Foundation of Explore to advocate for the inclusion of a 3-D printer in her school library for her learners.


“Investing in technology for the school library ensures that all students, regardless of their achievement on standardized tests, will have access to innovative tools to learn digital skills necessary to thrive in 21st-century college and career environments.”

“In a 2019 case study, a maker space with a 3-D printer helped bridge the digital divide and significantly improved students’ ability to narrate their own story.”

Suggested Activities

- School Library/Create Scenario: Effectively Growing a Makerspace
- School Library/Share Activity 2: Promoting Professional Networks to Strengthen Competencies
- School Librarian/Create Activity 3: Scavenger Improvement Lab

Free to Lead

Summary

Leaders who develop personal integrity, efficacy, and agency are empowered to explore. This 2017 Knowledge Quest article details how school librarians can enable learner agency through a variety of strategies and structures including providing reflective feedback, affirming learners’ personal integrity, and encouraging choice in recreational reading.


“Students with agency are powerful learners who are prepared to engage with the world with sustained, courageous curiosity.”

“School libraries play a powerful role in enabling, informing, and sustaining student agency, and nothing engages and motivates students more deeply than enabling them to become the active agents in the process of learning.”

Suggested Activities

- School Librarian/Create Scenario: The Reading Adventure Continues
- School Librarian/Share Activity 1: Organize a Group Think Committee
- School Library/Grow Activity 3: Develop a Growth Mindset

“‘Our task as educators is not to tell [learners] what to think but help reveal their thinking by reflecting back to them what we are observing and noticing, and naming their acts of problem solving.”

Through instructional design and their commitment to access for all students, school librarians play an essential role in encouraging their learners’ curiosity and helping learners develop a sense of agency.