

Roger Gurganus
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In this course we have been baptized into this idea of inquiry and how inquiry is the tool that will open up our eyes to true learning. In education teachers have had their eyes shut for some time now and I can say this because I have witnessed and lived it. Through my undergraduate classes that I took at Wayne State University in order to become a "certified" teacher I was never introduced to the concept of allowing myself or students for that matter to learn through the use of inquiry. I was taught that everything was black and white. I was trained to teach my students in a way that can bring them in to the lesson but was never given the training to not only bringing them in to the lesson but to have them get something out of it as well that is meaningful to them. It wasn't until I stepped foot into my own classroom and tried to teach 30 very unique and different eighth grade students a concept the same way. I did not allow my students to learn on their own and but instead force feed them the concept and objectives and expected them just to grasp them and memorize them for a test that we would be having later. I know now that the way that I was teaching was not the best approach. If I would have known about inquiry like I know now then those 30 students in my class would probably today know how a cell changes because they could have made that connection of learning on their own and through their own way made the learning and process meaningful to them. I was in reality holding them back. I was not allowing them to take their hand off the pillar and find out on their own that it wasn't a pillar at all but really a leg of an elephant. In education we don't give our students a chance to find a connection and to find their place in their own learning. Growing up I was schooled in a way like the young princess in the colorless Kingdom was. Everything was like I stated before black and white. Teachers taught me that I needed to take what they said and memorize it because it will be assessed later. I didn't know why I was learning this and for the most part didn't care because it had no connection with me. To me everything that I was learning was just learned to pass a test or to get a large red "A" on my paper. I wasn't given a chance to see my education at an early age in all spectrums of color. It wasn't until my master's classes and learning on my own in my very own classroom that my "kingdom" began to take form and color and turned in to a wonderful and meaningful place for me and my students. I finally understood the concept of inquiry this school year back in September of 2010 when I received a new job teaching 2nd grade. I was introduced to this concept of Guided Reading. In this concept I work with small groups of students

that are all on the same level in Reading. In these groups we discuss and explore concepts and objectives in Reading that fit their learning. Like we all know, no one is created the same and the thought behind this concept is; why are we trying to teach the same way to different students. Inquiry to me was something that consumed me first and then once I was consumed then started to share it with my students. In this area of Guided Reading there is no manual to help you by showing you what to do here and there and what to do if a child asked you this or what to do if something is not working. In Guided Reading I am given a group and with that group we take a journey to become better Readers. At the start I was very nervous because I was stuck in the old ways of just doing everything the same. I learned along the way with my students. I tried different things and if something didn't work I tried something different and did this often until I found a fit. Everyday I learn something new either about my student or myself through my teaching. For example I have a group that reads at a beginning of first grade level and they are in second grade. I had to learn why they are behind and what gaps they have in their reading strategies; this was all done through inquiry. I would look at the areas that I see struggles in and I would inquire on how they missed that or why they missed that and then would try new things and strategies to help. Sometimes these new ideas worked but other times these new ideas didn't work, and that is what inquiry is all about. Through my new job I was blessed with being able to learn things on my own, because now here 8 months later I know new strategies and ways to take a low reader and give them tools that will help them catch up to where they need to be. In my new job I was given a toad in a jar when I woke up. Noone stepped in and tried to say, "Well this worked for me!" or "Try this, I found this workbook at the bookstore". I woke up and asked myself a million questions and through my hard work answered many of them and if I was wrong in my thinking I found the right idea and my eyes were opened to why this toad is sitting by my bed. What I have learned on my own along the way this year is very beneficial for me and for other educators out there. Everyone is looking for the "How to" guides to get them through a project or from place A to place B. When in reality you are that guide and your thoughts and ideas are better then any book that you can buy at your local bookstore. In education if we as educators sit back and see that if we take the roll of teacher as more of a tour guide instead of a map then we allow students to discover their way in a more beneficial and meaningful way. Students will want to learn and want to discover things because they themselves found that self-gratification. I have now because of inquiry been able to teach other teachers within the district the concepts and ideas that I have come up with. When I speak with them about why my students are so successful they always begin by asking me if they can borrow things that I have come up with. I

allow them but always put the disclaimer of that this works for my students but may not work for yours because they are different and so are you. I wish someone in my early learning career let me take my own path; instead I was just led like a blind horse to water. I strongly believe that inquiry is the best method of teaching and feel even stronger in allowing yourself and those you teach to learn along the way. We do this in many aspects of life such as when we get lost driving to a new place, when we burn our hands as children on the stove and when we shed a tear to our parents to get some attention. Individuals can learn things on their own and as instructors as I stated before we need to be tour guides showing them around and giving them guidance toward the correct path of understanding.