Examining Teacher Practices Through Inquiry
Resource Bundle

I. Developing an Inquiry Plan Resource

II. References
Teacher Inquiry: An intentional, systematic, cyclical process that teachers use to examine their own practice and its effects on student learning. The aim of teacher inquiry is to improve the teacher’s professional knowledge and skill in order to reach more equitable outcomes for students.1

Step 1: Identify a Problem of Practice or Wondering

**A problem of practice** is an issue, dilemma, or tension a teacher is facing with student learning as it relates to his/her personal practice (Dana, 2013). **A wondering** is a teacher’s ponderings or curiosity around a new idea or practice they may have seen or heard and how it directly relates to their current classroom practices (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). The problem of practice or wondering is the purpose for engaging in an inquiry project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to identify a problem of practice or wondering:</th>
<th>Examples:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Review pertinent informal or formal classroom data</td>
<td>• Students in my classroom tend to give up easily when faced with more difficult or complex academic tasks.</td>
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<td>• Talk with colleagues and other stakeholders</td>
<td>• I haven’t tracked who participates in my classroom discussions and I’m not sure how effective classroom discussions really are.</td>
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<td>• Personally reflect on what you believe to be a problem of practice or a wondering</td>
<td>• A colleague was telling me about something called Writer’s Workshop. I’d like to learn more and try it out in my classroom.</td>
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<td>• Review professional materials and literature to explore new ideas</td>
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Step 2: Create an Inquiry Question

**An inquiry question** asks how any proposed action done within the class may impact the identified problem of practice or other aspects within the classroom like student achievement or classroom culture. It helps focus the teacher’s efforts by driving the entire inquiry process (Dana, 2013). Identifying and clarifying possible actions that you may take in the classroom is an important part of creating an inquiry question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources to help determine actions to take:</th>
<th>Four criteria for creating an effective inquiry question:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Current research</td>
<td>• Ask questions you don’t already know the answer to</td>
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<td>• Observations of experienced colleagues and school leaders</td>
<td>• Ask questions that go beyond yes/no answers</td>
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<td>• Conversations and collaborations with other teachers</td>
<td>• Don’t use jargon</td>
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<td>• Footage of Classroom instruction (e.g. self, colleagues)</td>
<td>• Avoid value-laden words</td>
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1 Clarke and Ericson, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana, Gimbert & Silva, 1999; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Hubbard & Power, 1993
### Step 3: Collect Data

**Collecting data** is where the teacher gathers relevant information related to the problem of practice or wondering in order to answer the inquiry question\(^2\).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use these questions to create a plan for data collection:</th>
<th>Some common forms of data collection:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What information do I need in order to answer the inquiry question?</td>
<td>• Audio or video recordings</td>
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<td>• How could I get that information?</td>
<td>• Surveys</td>
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<td>• How much of that information do I need to confidently answer the inquiry question?</td>
<td>• Student work or student achievement data</td>
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<td>• Feedback from colleagues and instructional leaders</td>
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<td>• Reflective journals</td>
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<td>• Interviews</td>
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### Step 4: Analyze Data

**Data analysis** is the systematic sensemaking of the data collected by the teacher. The purpose of data analysis is to draw conclusions about what the data is showing. It is also used to see whether you can answer your inquiry question and resolve your problem of practice (Dana, 2013; Pine & Bruce, 2003; Shagoury, 2011; Shagoury & Power, 2012).

**Suggestions for analyzing data:**

- Take notes on what you believe the data is showing you. Document anything that particularly stands out.
- Examine and interpret the data multiple times even if you don’t like what you are seeing/learning.
- Organize the data in a way that may aid in your meaning making. This can be done according to the type of data it is (transcript vs. student work), when it was collected, etc.
- Step back and give yourself some time away from the data.
- Talk with others about your data.
- Finalize your findings and conclusions. Ensure you have evidence to support your assertions. (Anderson, 2004; MacLean & Mohr, 1999; Pine, 2009; Rust & Clark, 2010).

### Step 5: Revise and Share

**Revise and share** means that teachers make improvements to their current practices based on what they learned from collecting and analyzing data. Teachers can also share what they learned with colleagues. Furthermore, if teachers were unable to resolve their problem of practice or adequately answer their inquiry question, they can revise their inquiry question, the intervention they implemented, and/or their problem of practice to re-engage in another inquiry project (Anderson, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009; Cullen, Akerson & Hanson, 2010).

**Use these questions to revise your plan:**

- What information from your conclusions can you immediately adopt into your regular practices?
- What elements of your inquiry question remain unanswered?
- What aspects of your problem of practice persist?
- What other aspects of your wondering would you like to explore?
- Has anything arisen or come to your attention that could be considered a new problem of practice?
- How could you share what you’ve learned with the local and larger education community?

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\(^2\) Dana, 2013; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; MacLean & Mohr, 1999; Pine, 2009; Shagoury & Power, 2012


