

A WELCOME FROM THE AUTHORS

Welcome Colleagues,

The video you are about to view was a delight to create, and we hope you enjoy watching it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Most of these classroom scenes were captured over two months at Burley School in Chicago. At Burley, Principal Barbara Kent and Assistant Principal Mary Beth Cunat have led a multiyear move toward inquiry learning in their building—and they also moved heaven and earth to help us document it. Victor J. Andrew High School also made it easy for us to capture sophomores doing inquiry work in the classroom.

Video producer and director Margaret Broucek of Heinemann put together an amazing group. Videographers Mike McEachern and Tim Plum gathered compelling pictures and sounds of kids and teachers at work. Their crews were so unobtrusive that kids forgot about the five extra people in the room, and simply did their inquiries, spontaneously and authentically. And Larry Mondi of Larry Mondi Productions served as our sage video editor and voiceover coach.

Thanks also go to the editorial and production team at Heinemann: publisher Kate Montgomery, designers Lisa Fowler and Jenny Jensen Greenleaf, and production editor Patty Adams.

Above all, our thanks go to the wonderful kids and the four amazing teachers who allowed us into their classrooms: Ben Kovacs, Nancy Steineke, Katie Muhtaris, and Sara Ahmed. When we first visited their classrooms, we were knocked out by their skill and commitment. Now that we have worked, planned, and thought together for almost a year, we have become lifelong fans and, we hope, friends. Thanks, guys!

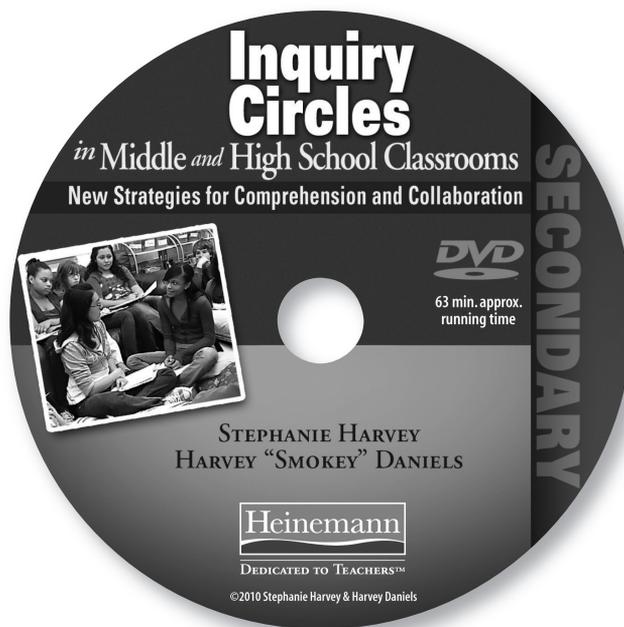
Steph and Smokey

New Strategies for Comprehension and Collaboration

Inquiry Circles

in Middle and High School Classrooms

STEPHANIE HARVEY
HARVEY “SMOKEY” DANIELS



DVD VIEWER'S GUIDE

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CIVIL RIGHTS CURRICULAR INQUIRY

Ben Kovacs, Sixth Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois



Think Through Text

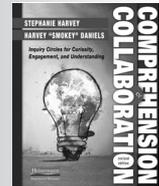
Putting a civil rights article on the screen, Ben draws kids' attention to the title and opening picture, and invites them to predict what the article might be about. In the first of several "turn and talks," kids bring their school and out-of-school background knowledge to the table, sharing ideas, first in pairs and then with the whole group. Next Ben shifts into a teacher think-aloud, where he models his own cognitive process as he reads. He stops on a key term—*migrant*—to show how proficient readers are always monitoring their comprehension, especially when they encounter unknown words. Kids suggest specific fix-up strategies that readers can use when encountering tough vocabulary. As Ben thinks aloud further, he poses broader, more interpretive questions for students to consider. In the final turn and talk, kids are adding their own thinking to the text, drawing inferences, and feeling empathy for the people they are studying.

QUESTIONS

- Ben opens the lesson by getting kids to think about the article's title and opening picture. Why do you think he makes this choice?
- What do you notice about the way that Ben's room is set up and how students live there? Why do you think he has arranged the classroom and the interactions in this way?
- The students have several ways of coping when they encounter unknown words in a text. How do you think the kids learned these strategies? How do you teach them?

INVITATIONS

- Instead of beginning with a textbook selection on civil rights, Ben starts kids on a short, current nonfiction article. Why do you think he makes this choice? How can you (or do you) incorporate such texts into your own teaching?
- The activity Ben is conducting is sometimes called a "shared reading" or an "interactive read-aloud," in which the kids and the teacher work together to make meaning from a text. Is this structure familiar to you? What value can you see in it for your own teaching?
- Ben's teaching relies heavily on the quick pair-sharing process called "turn and talk." Have you used this structure in your teaching? What does it take to set it up and how can you make sure it's beneficial to kids?



- **SEE CHAPTER 2**, *What We Know About Comprehension*, pp. 23–47.
- **SEE LESSON 4**, *Use Text and Visual Features to Gain Information*, p. 155.
- **SEE LESSON 6**, *Annotate Text*, p. 157.
- **SEE LESSON 15**, *Turn and Talk*, p. 166.
- **SEE Bullying**, pp. 253–261.

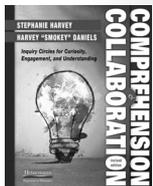


CIVIL RIGHTS CURRICULAR INQUIRY

Ben Kovacs, Sixth Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois

Read and Talk to Develop Research Questions

Now students choose from a range of articles about seven different contemporary civil rights issues. This text-set not only covers an assortment of issues but also a range of reading levels, so that every kid in the class can find a text they *can* read and *want to* read. Students form groups based on article choice and annotate the text, as Ben modeled earlier, paying special attention to the questions that pop up in their minds. After some work time, Ben drops by to see how one group is coming along, and helps them sort through the many questions they have encountered and flagged. Ben's conversation here with the group is a good window into the teacher's role in curricular inquiry circles: instead of telling and presenting, Ben serves as a coach, mentor, guide, advisor, facilitator—and as the room's most experienced researcher.



- **LESSON 6**, *Annotate Text*, p. 157.
- **LESSON 8**, *Ask Questions and Wonder About Information*, p. 159.

QUESTIONS

- Do your students use the active-reader strategy of annotation, leaving “tracks of their thinking” in texts? Are there some special markings or codes that you teach?
- What do you notice about the group discussion with Ben? The social skills kids employ with each other? How do they build upon others' ideas?
- As the topic gets more complex, and information gaps and misconceptions emerge, how does Ben mentor and coach the students?

INVITATIONS

- The previous two segments of Ben's lesson provide a classic example of “gradual release of responsibility” teaching, where the teacher begins by demonstrating a strategy, then invites students to try it with teacher support, and finally releases them to practice the strategy on their own, in groups or independently. What value do you see in this kind of recurrent, gradual release structure? Can you see ways to incorporate it into your own teaching—or share examples of how you are already using it?
- This lesson uses a set of seven different short articles on assorted civil rights topics. How do you imagine that Ben put that set together? What's been your experience gathering supplementary reading materials for kids? What resources and people can you draw upon?
- Ben uses a staged, by-birthday-month process for kids to select their chosen article that avoids congestion around the articles and allows him to spend time with kids who are still deciding. Do you have classroom procedures similar to this that helps move kids and materials around effectively?

CIVIL RIGHTS CURRICULAR INQUIRY

Ben Kovacs, Sixth Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois



Make and Use a Work Plan

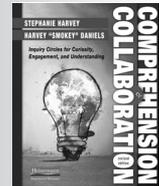
Long-term projects sometimes bog down under the drag of multiple tasks, or because of uneven participation by group members. Ben helps groups pursue their goals and keep organized as each team strives to become experts in their chosen subspecialty of civil rights. Beginning with a master list of all the tasks completed to date, Ben shows how to use a calendar to map out the remaining goals and presentation plans. But he doesn't assign jobs and dates: like every other stage of the inquiry circle process, scheduling is part of the kids' responsibility. So next, each group sits down to review their research findings so far, plot out tasks, and to assign roles to every group member. This illustrates the twin principles of group *and* individual accountability.

QUESTIONS

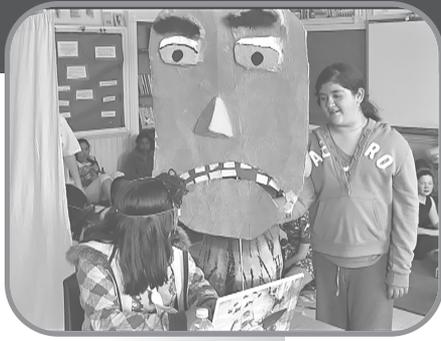
- As Ben introduces the minilesson, he recaps the many steps kids have already made in their civil rights inquiry circles. How does it strike you that this particular project is so extensive and complex?
- Ben is using an “anchor chart,” a tool for recording, saving, and later returning to thinking, co-created with a class. While these tools are common at the elementary level, they are less often seen in middle and high school. What are secondary teachers missing if they don't use anchor charts?
- This segment highlights the idea that inquiry circles are an alternative way to teach the same curriculum as might be mandated by a state or school district, but in a more engaged, experiential way. Does this seem realistic, sensible, and achievable in your own circumstances?

INVITATIONS

- What is the value of having students take more responsibility for planning, scheduling, and monitoring their own classroom activities? What are some possible pitfalls?
- A wide variety of work plan forms can be useful—some set up like calendars, others as lists with due dates. Have you experimented with some tools for helping kids to set and monitor their own goals? What successes and questions can you share?



- **SEE CHAPTER 3, *What We Know About Collaboration*, pp. 48–67.**
- **SEE CHAPTER 4, *What We Know About Inquiry*, pp. 68–97.**
- **LESSON 19, *Making and Using a Work Plan*, p. 170.**
- **SEE *Explorers and Explorations*, pp. 236–241.**
- **SEE *Kids' Choice Inquiry Projects*, pp. 295–307.**



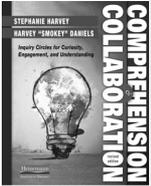
CIVIL RIGHTS CURRICULAR INQUIRY

Ben Kovacs, Sixth Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois

Share the Learning

For most of their investigations, Ben's kids simply share their inquiry circle learning with their classmates. Groups may partner up and present findings to each other; other times, the class may invite another sixth-grade group in to hear their outcomes.

But this time, since Ben's kids have been working with a master puppeteer from the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, they decide to use that medium to dramatize what they have learned. The kids plan a show for classmates and parents portraying the range of civil rights issues facing America today. Using stick puppets, stuffed puppets, masks, and costumed human puppets (with a little technology thrown in) the kids offer their take on some urgent issues of discrimination.



- **SEE LESSON 40**, *Share Options to Go Public and Take Action*, p. 191.
- **FOR MORE INFORMATION** on curricular inquires, see Chapter 9, pp. 210–244.
- **FOR A LOOK** at another extended curricular inquiry, see *Sugar and Civil Rights*, pp. 242–244.

QUESTIONS

- What did you notice about the kids' puppet performances, the civil rights topics they chose, or the stagecraft?
- How do kids seem to feel about being on stage (or backstage)?
- How could a teacher and her students assess this kind of performance?
- Do you think this kind of activity can help students to remember big ideas from a curricular unit?

INVITATIONS

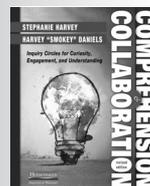
- In this lesson, the teacher encourages kids to specialize and go deeper into a single topic, rather than thinly "covering" a wide range of material. Does that dilemma present itself in your teaching? How have you addressed it?
- How "good" do student performances need to be to be valuable? What's the relative value of on-stage polish versus quality thinking during preparation?
- When we give kids a choice within a curricular unit, some will gravitate toward controversial topics, as happens here. How do we teachers respond, manage, or help when kids' questions are potentially worrisome to parents or school officials?

Nancy Steineke, *Sophomore English*, Victor J. Andrew High School, Tinley Park, Illinois



Build Group Collaboration Skills

Good groups are made, not born. When we carefully nurture positive social relationships from the beginning of the year, it pays huge dividends in student engagement, enjoyment, and responsibility. Here Nancy Steineke’s sophomores join in a recurrent collaboration-building activity called a *membership grid*. Choosing from a list of student-generated topics, the kids engage in five-minute conversations in their small groups. The emphasis is on active listening, asking good follow-up questions, and recording classmates’ answers on a simple note-taking form. The explicit purpose of these meetings is to build friendship, empathy, and support among all kids in the class. Everybody works with everybody in Ms. Steineke’s classroom—no exceptions. And just as you would never boo your own team at a football game, there are no putdowns allowed. In this classroom, everyone enjoys “Home Court Advantage.”



- **SEE CHAPTER 1**, *Kids Want to Know*, pp. 2–22.
- **SEE LESSON 16**, *Home Court Advantage*, p. 167.

QUESTIONS

- What strikes you about Nancy’s classroom arrangement, materials, structures, and procedures?
- How would you characterize the kids’ interactions with each other? Do they seem like “normal” teenagers? Would your students take this kind of discussion seriously? If not, why not?
- What specific skills of small-group collaboration do you see students using?
- Is it worth investing time and effort in such acquaintance-building activities? What trade-offs and pay-offs can you see?

INVITATIONS

- How much time do you spend on explicit community building and maintenance in your own classroom? What are some of your favorite activities?
- Do you engage your kids in much small-group work, and what factors determine the extent and intensity of this work?
- Try to adapt the “membership grid” activity seen here to your students. Try it out and share the results with colleagues.

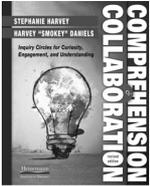


SHAKESPEARE CURRICULAR INQUIRY

Nancy Steineke, Sophomore English, Victor J. Andrew High School, Tinley Park, Illinois

Annotate Text and Synthesize Ideas

Before they gather in groups, kids work independently, selecting specific lines from *Othello* they can recommend when groups meet. This exemplifies individual accountability within a collaborative structure. Part of each member's responsibility is to arrive at each group meeting with plenty to contribute. Next, kids select lines from the play they want to work with, and try to transform their message into a blues verse. Some groups try to construct their lyrics with direct quotes from the play, while others branch out, creating their own lines that capture the attributes of certain characters. Notice how kids divide up airtime, listen actively, and build on each others' ideas. Also, working on their Home Court, they are having fun!



- SEE "Off-Task" Behavior, p. 62.
- SEE LESSON 6, *Annotate Text*, p. 157.
- SEE LESSON 14, *Synthesize Information*, p. 165.
- SEE *Bullying*, pp. 253–261.

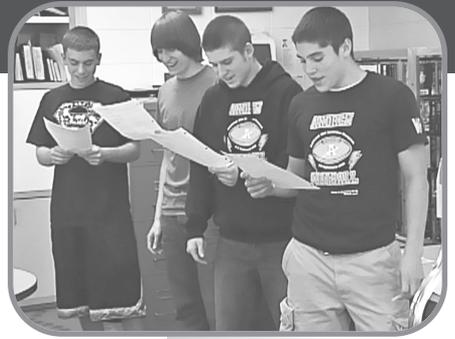
QUESTIONS

- Have you taught your students to mark up or annotate text? What successes, problems, or questions do you have about this active-reader strategy? Are there any special codes or marks that you teach?
- What different roles does Nancy take as she sets up and monitors the individual and small-group work?
- Nancy writes and sings a few blues verses before asking kids to do so. Teacher modeling is the first step in "gradual release of responsibility" teaching, where the teacher begins by demonstrating a piece of her own thinking, then invites students to try it with teacher support, and finally releases them to practice the strategy in groups or independently. What value do you see in this kind of recurrent, gradual release structure in the secondary classroom? Can you see ways to incorporate it into your own teaching—or share examples of how you are already using it?
- What range of dynamics and social skills do you notice among the different student groups?

INVITATIONS

- Using music as a way for kids to "show what they know" has become very rare in our schools, especially with older students. Yet we realize that a whole different set of kids will "shine" when we open the door to other art forms. What other ways of representing learning have you tried or would you like to experiment with?
- Do you think this kind of activity actually increases kids' knowledge of the play? Nancy says she wants them to remember at least a few immortal phrases—do you think they will?
- During this activity, Nancy's classroom is highly "decentralized," with groups of kids taking responsibility, working autonomously, and having fun. What are some of the structures and conditions that make this possible? What can you "borrow" from Nancy's classroom to enhance your own?

Nancy Steineke, *Sophomore English*, Victor J. Andrew High School, Tinley Park, Illinois



Perform Learning as a Team

Now, student groups take turns performing their Othello tunes to an appreciative audience. (In this segment we see short excerpts from three different classes.) Nancy doesn't just accompany the singing, but encourages budding musicians in the class to help out and show their stuff. Later, all kids could complete an assessment rubric—a detailed one on their own performance and a simpler version for their classmates' verses. What's important here is not the songs themselves, but that the kids have dug around seriously in key scenes of "Othello," discussed and debated interpretations, come to consensus, and then placed their ideas on the floor for further discussion.

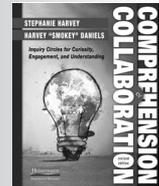
QUESTIONS

- How would you describe the attitudes of the student performers on stage?
- What behaviors did you note among the audience members?
- There are several self-chosen single-gender groups. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of giving kids this choice?
- What can you say about Nancy's role during the performances?
- Why do you think Nancy uses class members to play along with her on guitar?

INVITATIONS

- As Nancy says, these kids are taking risks to stand up in front of peers and perform, even with these short pieces of work. What are some ways we can enhance kids' confidence in front of classmates—and also help them be better audiences?
- What kinds of performances do you use in your own classroom? What new ones might you try? Are you ready for the blues?
- How might a teacher and her students assess performances like these?
- How "good" do student performances need to be to be valuable? What's the relative value of on-stage polish versus thinking during preparation?

* Nancy Steineke has written a wonderful book about these performances called *Assessment Live! Ten Real-Time Ways for Kids to Show What They Know—and Meet the Standards* (Heinemann, 2009).



- **SEE LESSON 40**, *Share Options to Go Public and Take Action*, p. 191.
- **SEE** *Explorers and Explorations*, pp. 236–241.
- **FOR MORE INFORMATION** on curricular inquires, see Chapter 9, pp. 210–244.
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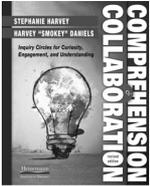


LITERATURE CIRCLE INQUIRY

Katie Muhtar, Fifth Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois

Join in a Book Club Meeting

In Katie Muhtar's classroom, literature circles are a kid-favorite activity throughout the year. Here, we dip into three different book club meetings, two with the kids working on their own, and a third where Katie joins in. Notice the students' use of the social skills that Katie has been explicitly teaching all year: taking turns, listening actively, building on the ideas of others, and especially, disagreeing agreeably. Listen for language like "I agree with," "going back to what you said," "to build on that question," "what is the other side of this story?" and "so our two questions would connect." You can also notice the teachers' role in literature circles is one of observing, facilitating, and occasionally, steering group meetings.



- SEE LESSON 24, *I Beg to Differ*, p. 175.
- SEE *Frog and Toad and Friendship*, pp. 251–253.
- SEE *Civil Rights Literature Circles*, pp. 261–267.

QUESTIONS

- We see parts of three literature circle meetings here. What do you notice about the kids' interaction in each one?
- What kind of thinking language and vocabulary do you hear the kids using as they discuss? What reading strategy instruction do you think they have had?
- What specific social skills do you see kids using in their book club meetings?
- What is the role of the teacher during a round of literature circle meetings (or any well structured small-group work time)?
- Notice that the students draw extensively from notes and their books. How do you help kids capture their responses while reading and to use them during later discussions?

INVITATIONS

- What has been your own experience with book clubs or literature circles? What successes, problems, or questions can you share?
- Many teachers have commented on the intensity of kids' conversations in this segment. What factors do you think have led to that level of engagement? What habits, skills, and procedures has Katie built in her classroom?
- Can you see your own students having these kinds of academic discussions? What would it take for them to do so—or for them to reach an even higher level of thinking and sharing?

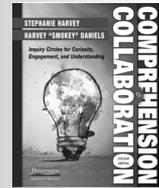
LITERATURE CIRCLE INQUIRY

Katie Muhtar, Fifth Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois



Identify and Investigate Lingered Questions

In traditional literature circles, teachers often have kids do end-of-book projects like putting on a skit, writing a missing scene, or creating a diorama. But that's not what lifelong readers do. When we finish a good book we usually have more questions than we started with, and we want to know more. Katie helps her kids carefully surface those lingering questions so they can delve more deeply into them. Here, we focus on one group that has read Christopher Paul Curtis' *Bud Not Buddy*, as kids create a long list of questions about the Great Depression. Next, they set out as inquiry circles, pursuing answers to their list of questions. Katie works with groups and individuals as they investigate and research, using a variety of text and media.



- SEE LESSON 30, *Explore and Use Multiple Sources*, p. 181.
- SEE *Bullying*, pp. 253–261.
- SEE *Civil Rights Literature Circles*, pp. 261–267.

QUESTIONS

- What specific social skills can you identify happening in this group meeting?
- Notice that kids are using a small whiteboard to record their thinking. What could be the advantages of this simple tool in small-group work?
- How do you assess the level or sophistication of kids' questions about the Great Depression?
- What do you notice about the room's resources for research?

INVITATIONS

- Think of a book or article that you have read lately. What were some of *your* lingering questions? How might you go about seeking answers to those questions? If you go ahead now and try it, you can model the process for your own students.
- Replay the segment, watching for the ways in which kids build upon and connect to each others' ideas. What words and phrases signal their collaboration?
- If you were going to adapt this new version of literature circles to your own classroom, what steps would you need to take in terms of resources, training students, and developing new roles for yourself?

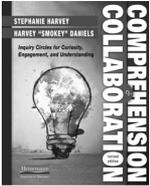


LITERATURE CIRCLE INQUIRY

Katie Muhtar, Fifth Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois

Share the Learning

There are many ways to share learning, from dramatic performances to extended, formal pieces of writing. But this time, for Katie's *Bud Not Buddy* group, it's a simple out-loud, in-class conversation. With the teacher and half dozen classmates as the audience, the researchers take turns reporting on what they learned about the Great Depression. Each student has specialized in a specific historical topic (the underpayment of black schoolteachers, riding the rails, the physical appearance of "Hooverville" towns where unemployed people built shacks, and more). In closing, the kids testify how their lingering questions always seemed to lead to more questions.



- **SEE LESSON 30**, *Explore and Use Multiple Sources*, p. 181.
- **SEE LESSON 40**, *Share Options to Go Public and Take Action*, p. 191.
- **SEE** *Bullying*, pp. 253–261.
- **FOR MORE INFORMATION** on literature circle inquiries, see Chapter 10, pp. 245–272.

QUESTIONS

- The *Bud Not Buddy*/Great Depression group reports their learning quite informally to a small audience—the teacher and part of the class, while the rest of the kids have been pulled out for “specials.” How does this strike you as a sharing opportunity? What other formats can kids use to show what they know?
- As you can see, each student in the group has developed a special sub-topic to investigate. Which of these stand out, and what do you notice about kids’ findings? To what extent are they building a more accurate and mutual understanding of the Depression?
- When Katie asks “does this process (of having and pursuing questions) ever really end for us?” the kids reply with a resounding “no.” Why do you think they seem so sincerely enthusiastic?

INVITATIONS

- What can you infer about the kinds of sources and technology students consulted during their research? In your own teaching situation, would you be able to supply these same resources? What might you need to grow or add?
- If you have previously done literature circles or book clubs, can you now see the value of having kids identify and research lingering questions versus doing more traditional after-the-book projects? What would help you to try the inquiry circle version next time?

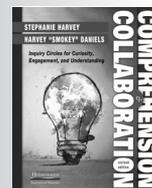
OPEN INQUIRY ON CONEY ISLAND

Sara Ahmed, Seventh Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois



Start with Kids' Questions

Open inquiry circles begin not with the next unit of the curriculum, but with kids' own burning questions and hot topics. Sometimes we teachers kick it off by modeling our own personal curiosities, and inviting kids to do the same. But other times, great inquiry questions just pop up in our classrooms—surprising us with their urgency and attraction. How great when teachers can say: “What a cool question—let’s find out!” Here, seventh grade teacher Sara Ahmed explains how her students got interested in Coney Island at the turn of the twentieth century. Sara is not an expert on the topic that kids have picked, but she gives us a window into her thinking and planning process. She jumps in with both feet to learn right alongside the students. As a curious person and experienced researcher, Sara knows how to begin—by asking friends and family, searching the Internet, and reading some trustworthy articles. Then, she picks some text that’s just right for her kids, brings it to class, and “it just rolls from there.”



• SEE CHAPTER 11, *Open Inquiries*, pp. 273–315.

QUESTIONS

- What is your own prior knowledge about Coney Island?
- What do you notice about Sara’s thinking and planning as a teacher? What’s her attitude toward a subject in which she is not an expert?
- Sara mentions “think aloud” and “read aloud” structures. What does this terminology suggest about her seventh-grade classroom?
- What steps did Sara take to prepare kids for their chosen topic? (You may wish to re-view the last minute of the segment.)

INVITATIONS

- Coney Island—does this seem like a trivial or tangential topic to you? What learning standards might kids meet even when they investigate a topic that appears nowhere in the curriculum?
- How do you feel about giving kids an open choice of what to learn at some point(s) in the year? How can we make time for this? What’s the value if we do?
- Sara says some words to her students that most teachers dread uttering: “*I don’t know.*” What would be the challenges or possible rewards of leading kids in an inquiry where you are not initially knowledgeable?

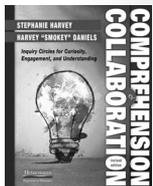


OPEN INQUIRY ON CONEY ISLAND

Sara Ahmed, Seventh Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois

Investigate and Make Midcourse Corrections

This project extended over several weeks with each group working on their own self-chosen topic: the Brooklyn Bridge, Roller Coasters and Parachute Jumps, Midway Freak Shows, the Boardwalk, Theodore Roosevelt’s Hunting Adventures, and the subsequent invention of “Teddy Bears.” With kids crafting across many media—text, art, performances, and podcasts—Sara knows that organization and timeliness will make the difference between satisfying learning and energy brownouts. She helps kids stay on track by showing them how to make midcourse corrections along the way—just as any savvy researcher would do. As kids meet to review their progress, Sara sits with two groups—one which needs little additional help and another where Sara takes a more active role. Notice how kids offer to help each other, reflecting the collaborative climate built all year long.



- **SEE LESSON 23**, *Midcourse Corrections*, p. 174.
- **SEE LESSON 33**, *Choosing Topics to Investigate*, p. 184.

QUESTIONS

- In the minilesson, Sara helps kids list ways to monitor themselves as they work in teams. Which student comments stood out for you?
- Sara uses an “anchor chart” in this lesson as a tool for recording, saving, and later returning to class learning. While such charts are common in elementary grades, they are rarer in secondary. Do you use—or could you use—such a tool?
- As they meet in teams, what are kids’ attitudes toward their group partners? How well are they balancing individual and group accountability?
- What range of roles does Sara play during this lesson? Why do you think her involvement varies in the two groups she visits?

INVITATIONS

- Do you use a lesson along the lines of “Midcourse Correction” when your students are working on long-term projects? What are some variations that might be valuable?
- Sara’s room set up may seem quite “elementary” in look and feel. Why do you think she arranges things as she does?
- These students show a high level of responsibility. Can you see your students operating at this level of autonomy? If not, what would help them to become more reliable collaborators?

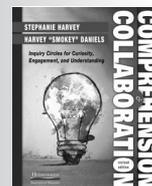
OPEN INQUIRY ON CONEY ISLAND

Sara Ahmed, Seventh Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois



Gather Information with Interviews

Needless to say, written text, whether printed on paper or digitized on the web, is a go-to source for researchers. But talking to knowledgeable people or experts can also provide a wealth of information—as well as bringing our questions alive, face to face. But you can't “wing” an interview. It takes practice and preparation, so Sara takes a stepwise approach. First, she supplies kids with the text of an interview with Barack Obama in *Rolling Stone* magazine. From this sample, kids try to infer “what works” in an interview. Next, Sara has two kids conduct a live fishbowl interview, with the interviewer trying to implement key strategies and structures. Next, kids practice interviewing each other in pairs, applying all they have learned about the attributes of good interviews. After all this practice, each group of kids prepares to interview an expert they have chosen. Finally, we watch the Coney Island Boardwalk group conduct a well-structured phone interview with a volunteer from New York City.



- **SEE LESSON 37**, *Demonstrate and Practice Interviewing*, p. 186.
- **SEE LESSON 38**, *Co-construct Interview Guidelines*, p. 189.
- **SEE Kids' Choice Inquiry Projects**, pp. 295–307.

QUESTIONS

- What are some attributes of good interviews that the kids found in the Barack Obama article?
- What were you thinking or feeling during the two girls' fishbowl interview? What did you notice about the audience during the interview?
- When the kids interview each other in pairs, how successful are they at using the principles from the minilesson and the anchor chart?
- What did you notice about the kids and Sara during the telephone interview?

INVITATIONS

- There is a high level of trust in this classroom. What have you seen so far that helps explain the level of risk-taking and sense of community we see here?
- Sara offers kids three kinds of interviewing practice before they ever pick up a phone. What's the value of all this preparation?
- Have you had kids interview experts or specialists as part of conducting research? If so, how have you organized and managed it? What problems and successes can you share?
- Sara uses students as models, not just herself. This reminds us that models needn't always be paradigms, just examples. Can you think of other ways to enlist students as demonstrators of thinking?

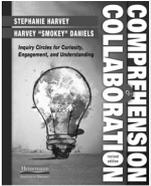


OPEN INQUIRY ON CONEY ISLAND

Sara Ahmed, Seventh Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois

Synthesize the Learning

Now kids must put it all together, everything they have learned about their chosen Coney Island subtopics. In keeping with the open inquiry model, kids must take full responsibility for all the steps that real researchers take to get their work ready for public scrutiny. Around the room we see kids working on recordings, posters, instructions, tickets, and costumes. With the big Explore More day just a few days off, co-author Harvey “Smokey” Daniels joins the group that’s creating an audio tour which will be the backbone of the whole exhibit. Smokey also talks with Sara and technology coordinator Carolyn Skibba about how they work as partners to support kids’ technology use in projects. Finally, as kids start getting anxious about the Big Show coming up, Sara rallies the troops. “We’ll get there together,” she promises.



• SEE LESSON 36, *Organize Group Findings*, p. 187.

QUESTIONS

- What roles does Sara take as she confers with the Freak Show group?
- How well does the Audio Guide group do in explaining their presentation plans to Smokey?
- How do Sara and Carolyn work together to enhance the kids’ technology use in these inquiry projects?
- How do the kids seem to feel about their upcoming presentations? Why do you think Sara needs to rally the troops with her “We’ll get there together” speech at the end of the segment?

INVITATIONS

- When you engage kids in long-term research projects, do you have all the technology equipment and support you need? What else would you need to maximize the opportunities for kids?
- What do you notice about kids’ level of collaboration at this stage of the inquiry circles?

OPEN INQUIRY ON CONEY ISLAND

Sara Ahmed, Seventh Grade, Burley School, Chicago, Illinois



Take Learning Public

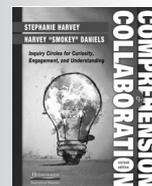
Using their interview results, and all the other information they've gathered over several weeks, the Coney Island inquiry groups now share their learning at Burley School's "Explore More" day, a yearly event where parents and community members come to see and celebrate the kids' work. At the ticket booth, visitors receive a warm welcome and an iPod containing an audio tour of all seven Coney Island exhibits. In-person guides alternate with the iPods as visitors work their way around the gym, transformed for the day into a replica of the amusement park. At each station, the kid experts offer some kind of performance or dramatization, explain one or more key artifacts, and answer questions from curious tour groups. Looking back on the day and on the multiweek open inquiry process, Sara reflects on the ingredients of success. Finally, Chicago Public Schools Chief Academic Officer, Barbara Eason Watkins, explains how everything the kids have done in their self-chosen open inquiries backmaps directly to the city's learning standards—and is a model for other schools to emulate.

QUESTIONS

- What strikes you about the kids' projects and presentations? The ways students interact with adults? Answer questions?
- In some ways, "Explore More" day looks like a traditional science fair. What similarities and differences do you notice?
- Sara says that the ability of kids to take on extended inquiries like these stems from "feeling safe." How do you interpret that statement and in what ways does it connect with your own learning and teaching?
- How well do the kids explain their inquiry circles to Chief Academic Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins?

INVITATIONS

- This lesson is an example of kids specializing and going deeper into a single topic rather than thinly "covering" a wide range of material. Does that dilemma present itself in your teaching? How have you addressed it?
- Burley's "Explore More" day invites crowds of parents, community members, and local dignitaries into the school to see kids at work. In your experience, what are the plusses and minuses of such public learning fairs or events? How do you weigh the inevitable pressure on kids and teachers versus the opportunity to build understanding and support in the community?
- Administrator Eason-Watkins gives a strong endorsement of inquiry circles as a way for kids to learn the required curriculum. Do you enjoy that kind of support in your own department, school, or district? What would be some good ways for school leaders to learn more about such progressive practices?



- **SEE** *Culminate the Year with Capstone Projects*, pp. 76–77.
- **SEE LESSON 40**, *Share the Options to Go Public and Take Action*, p. 191.
- **SEE** *Capstone and Senior Projects*, pp. 309–312.
- **FOR MORE INFORMATION** on open inquiries, see Chapter 11, pp. 273–315.
- **SEE CHAPTER 12**, *Assessment and Evaluation*, pp. 316–331.
- **FOR A LOOK** at another extended open inquiry, see *Kids' Choice Inquiry Projects*, pp. 295–307.

