Inquiry-Based Learning

Inquiry-based Learning is an instructional method that can enhance experiential learning by allowing youth to construct their own learning through using science process skills to explore and gather evidence about phenomena in an investigative manner.

Benefits of Inquiry-Based Learning

While engaged in inquiry-based learning, youth direct their learning in a way that is similar to how science happens in real-world situations. Students are able to identify their own areas of inquiry and engage in hands-on learning using science process skills to seek information. This results in increased ownership of learning and enhanced critical thinking skills, while creating a culture that values learners' ideas.

Facilitator's Role

Facilitators serve primarily as a resource for the students. In other instructional approaches, instructors generally direct the learning; however, in inquiry-based learning they guide the students through the learning process. Facilitators may establish content-based parameters for learning objectives, and then allow students to direct their own learning. The facilitator may also be a co-learner with the students as they engage with real-world questions.

Students' Role

Students direct their own learning within the parameters set by the facilitator. This ensures that learning objectives are met while allowing students to pursue their own specific course of inquiry. Throughout this process, students work in groups and learn from each other. Students are in charge of their learning and decide what they want to learn and embark on their own journey of discovery with the facilitator as a guide to redirect if needed.

Integrating Inquiry-Based Learning into the 4-H Model

Experiential Learning and Inquiry-based learning interface when the facilitator recognizes that within the learning experience the student becomes the facilitator of their own learning. Questions begin to formulate from the student instead of the facilitator. It is then the facilitator's role to provoke additional inquiry of the questions presented by the student. This specific phenomenon can happen within the experiential learning model context during the process, generalize, or apply stage of learning.

Reinterpreting Challenges

Inquiry-based learning can present challenges, but the "challenges" provide opportunities for enhancing learning.

- *Time-consuming* – More intense learning process
- *Messy* – More authentic replication of real-world situations
- *Loud and chaotic* – Students are more engaged
- *Unpredictable* –More meaningful teachable moments

Resources:

- Experiential and Inquiry-based Learning with Youth white paper (www.4-h.org/resource-library/curriculum/development/develop/) entitled "Experiential and Inquiry-based Learning"
- Training materials used at the 2010 National Science Academy, with specific attention to Session 1 Resources (www.4-h.org/resource-library/professional-development-learning/science-training-guides-resources/training-guides/default.aspx?id=3374)
- Enfield, R. P., Schmitt-McQuitty, L, & Smith, M. H. (2007). The Development and Evaluation of Experiential Learning Workshops for Volunteers. Journal of Extension [Online], 45(1). Available at: http://www.joe.org/joe/2007february/a2.php
- The Inquiry-based Learning Course: (http://4h.interactyx.com/pages/course/portal.aspx?courseid=6.)