INQUIRY
A collaboratively developed definition

The Creando Comunidades de Indagación (Creating Communities of Inquiry, or CCI) research initiative is a collaboration between Project Zero and the Innova Schools of Peru, with the aim of promoting inquiry-driven teaching and learning across Innova's fast-expanding and highly centralized K-12 school network. The following document was developed collectively by Project Zero researchers and Innova teachers, administrators, and leaders over the course of a two-year exploration. Inquiry-driven teaching and learning can mean different things to different people: to lay the foundations for meaningful change, it was important that a definitional framework be developed from within Innova.

At the same time, it is hoped that this document will be useful to other teachers and administrators. For example, it could help spark conversations about what inquiry-driven teaching and learning might look like in their own contexts, or the degree to which it is already taking place. It also shows how an organization might articulate and convey its core pedagogic values to the various members of its community.

In the complicated and interconnected world in which we now live, we need to support young people to develop the mindset and capacities for inquiry that they will need in order to engage with and thrive in it.

This is an aspirational document: it aims to articulate the most important principles of inquiry in the context of the CCI project and serve as a point of reference for all aspects of the project. It is meant to be relevant to adults playing all kinds of roles within an educational system, including teachers, administrators, coaches, curriculum designers, and parents. Other resources address how to promote or assess inquiry or provide concrete examples of inquiry in action.

WHAT IS INQUIRY?

The word 'inquiry' can be used in many different ways. For the purposes of CCI it means both a **stance** toward the world and a **process** for trying to understand and transform the world through asking questions, observing carefully, reflecting, experimenting, and developing ideas, products or solutions—with the overall goal of nurturing **critical, reflective, empathetic and empowered learners**. Inquiry involves both individual and collective learning within **learning communities**. Many strategies can be used to promote inquiry, including Project Zero thinking routines and the practice of documentation. However, inquiry involves far more than using a specific strategy; nor does the use of a specific strategy guarantee inquiry.

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For educators and educational administrators, developing an inquiry stance means:

BEING CURIOUS: Promoting curiosity, questioning and exploration

- Creating flexible pathways for learners to pursue curiosities and questions to maximize their engagement and opportunities for learning.

- Wondering and opening oneself up to being surprised or challenged in order to continue to improve one's understanding of a subject area and overall practice as an educator.

- Actively including as many learners as possible in the process of inquiry to generate more ideas and perspectives, thereby enhancing learning for everyone.

BEING ATTENTIVE: Engaging in careful observation and listening

- Slowing down to look and listen carefully in order to explore a topic, context, or process to move past first impressions and towards a deeper understanding.

- Attending to the perspectives, needs, and ideas of learners and colleagues to inform one's next steps and to broaden one's way of thinking about something.

- Strategically collecting and using documentation to understand the process of learning and inform one's next steps, as well as to make learning visible for all learners.

BEING REFLECTIVE: Reflecting critically on practice

- Reflecting on the learning and development of oneself and others, including making use of documentation to inform next steps.

- Examining and challenging assumptions and practices to move beyond engrained practices that might not be meeting the needs of learners.

- Responding flexibly to the evolving needs and interests of colleagues and learners to keep one's teaching engaging and learner-centered.

When educators and others within an educational system demonstrate these attitudes and behaviors, inquiry is promoted in students and the necessary conditions are generated for them to actively participate, explore, question and transform the world in which they live.

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