

Inquiry By Design Elementary School Curriculum Overview

At elementary school, each Inquiry By Design course of study is made up of six units featuring detailed, flexible lesson plans aimed at building critical, standards-aligned literacy skills. Each unit is built around challenging, grade-appropriate texts and spiraling cycles of work marked by reading, writing, and collaborative small-group and whole-class discussion.

Teacher Focus	Creating a Text-Based Culture	Reading and Writing About Informational Text	The Novel Study: Thinking With Literature	Reading and Writing About Literature
Grade 3	Setting Up the Literacy Studio: An Elementary Investigation	Unearthing Pompeii Animal Communication	The Stories Julian Tells	Folktales and Messages Messages Within and Across Folktales
Grade 4	Setting Up the Literacy Studio: An Upper Elementary Investigation	Push and Pull of Immigration Analyzing Main Ideas	The Tiger Rising	Thinking Through Big Ideas and Themes in Literature Big Ideas and Themes Across Texts
Grade 5	Reading, Writing, Wolves, and Whales: Further Developing the Literacy Studio	Pioneers Analyzing Main Ideas: Tuberculosis	M.C. Higgins, the Great	Themes in Literature One Author, Two Texts: Big Ideas and Themes Across Texts

Creating a Text-Based Culture

These introductory units help teachers create rich, inquiry-based classroom cultures by establishing the essential rituals, routines, tools, and practices around independent reading, shared reading, and literacy notebooks. At each grade level, self-selected reading and writing projects intertwine in ways that increase engagement and provide intensive practice in reading, writing, and text-based discussion.



Reading and Writing About Informational Texts

Using engaging, grade-appropriate readings in social studies and science, students learn to determine and analyze the development of central ideas and arguments in informational texts. After guiding students through cycles of comprehension and analysis work marked by reading, writing, and collaborative discussion, each unit culminates in scaffolded opportunities to compose explanatory essays.

The Novel Study

Designed around three engaging novels, these units take students into texts, tasks, and topics worthy of sustained attention. Cycles of reading, comprehension tasks, and small- and large-group discussion scaffold grade-appropriate writing projects.

Reading and Writing About Literature

The first unit of this series guides students through cycles of comprehension and analysis work necessary to determine, analyze, and write about themes in literature. In the second unit, students continue reading, writing, and collaborating, this time applying their work with themes across two texts. Both units culminate in supported opportunities to compose explanatory essays.