About Collaborative Inquiry

Teacher Teams engaged in Collaborative Inquiry
The New York City Department of Education has engaged in a theory of action that situates the power of closing the achievement gap within a nested system of professional development that emerges from teacher teams engaged in a collaborative inquiry process. These teacher teams are well positioned to use a collaborative inquiry process to align their curriculum and assessments to the Common Core Learning Standards. By coming together on a regular basis to reflect on the tasks, tools, and structures developed during this pilot, teachers will develop, revise and/or enrich their instructional planning. In order to illustrate how teacher teams can use a collaborative inquiry process to engage in this work, we have provided a definition of collaborative inquiry as well as an illustrated diagram of the Collaborative Inquiry Process.

The NYC Department of Education has defined collaborative inquiry as a sustained process designed to empower teachers to support improved student achievement and to close the achievement gap. Inquiry is:
- Conducted by teams of teachers
- Guided by a systematic, data-informed approach.
- Focused on developing and deepening rigorous instructional strategies, frameworks and assessment tasks

Why Inquiry Matters
Bringing together teams of teachers around school-based inquiry:
1. **Empowers** teachers to make the decisions about how best to instruct their students and therefore be held **accountable** for the results.
2. Supports the development of **leadership** at all levels of the school organization.
3. Improves **learning** and **teaching** within schools.
This is the essence of the Children First reforms. It is the best strategy we have for quickly transforming the practices of 70,000 teachers and closing the achievement gap.

An inquiry approach improves student outcomes by:
- Focusing on how and what students are learning.
- Supporting teachers to study both quantitative and qualitative student data.
- Fostering collaboration around teacher practice to better reach students.
- Enabling teachers to surface trends across groups of students.
- Providing a deeper context for parent-teacher communication.

An inquiry approach builds teacher capacity and efficiency by:
- Helping reduce teacher isolation and minimize duplication of work, coordinating instructional planning.
- Creating a safe space for teachers to exchange constructive feedback.
- Enhancing the sharing of resources and effective teaching strategies.
- Encouraging teachers to identify and implement research-based instructional strategies.
- Building teacher confidence by experiencing success with a small group of students.

An inquiry approach builds school capacity by:
- Focusing teachers on aligning assessment, curriculum, instruction and professional development to create a coherent and efficient system.
- Creating a space for teacher teams to share best practices and implement system-wide improvements.
- Promoting shared responsibility for the learning of all students and teachers.
- Supporting the sharing of promising practices between schools.
The Collaborative Inquiry Process (Updated 11/6/09)*

1. **School Self-Assessment and Goal Setting**
   - Principal's buy-in and launch
   - Inquiry Teams Formation: vast majority of teachers on teams with regular meeting times

2. **Set-up**
   - Examine Teacher Work (including classroom visits)
   - Examine Student Work/Data

3. **Structured support for teacher team facilitators**
   - Define Instructional Strategies and set goals
   - Engage External Resources

4. **Instructional Inquiry Cycle (Multiple Teams)**
   - Monitor Student Progress with common assessments
   - Take action: implement instructional strategy
   - Revise and repeat inquiry cycle

5. **School-wide Inquiry Cycle**
   - Reflect on teacher teams’ results and consider for school-wide change (teachers assume a leadership role)
   - Take action to build teacher and school capacity
   - Analyze school system capacity and plan for school-wide change

6. **Share and Celebrate The Work**
Examine student work/data

Examine teacher work (including curriculum maps, teacher-made assessments, classroom visits)

Revise and repeat inquiry cycle

Engage external resources (CCSS, PD Books, Mapping Software, etc.)

Define instructional strategy and set goals

Take action: Implement instructional strategy

Monitor student progress with common assessments

The Instructional Inquiry Cycle
Possible ways Teacher Teams can use the Collaborative Inquiry Cycle for Supporting the Curriculum Mapping Process & Curriculum Alignment

(This is only for example)

- As a team, analyze school-wide data, record trends, align instructional objectives to the Common Core, and ensure your map aligns to power standards, assessments and big ideas, and is mapped backwards from your instructional goals.
- Team creates grade level and/or content map.
- Use goals to help articulate the “big ideas” and “essential questions to help design the unit of study.
- Check to if students are on the correct trajectory as articulated in the Common Core Standards.
- If a student or cohorts of students are not exhibiting what they “need to know and be able to do”, teachers and/or teacher teams may need to revisit their curriculum maps—revise/modify and/or enrich as necessary—and then repeat the inquiry process to ensure all students are moving along the developmental continuum for college and career readiness.
- Teacher Teams continue to study student work to review and revise their curriculum maps— including classroom pedagogy, selected texts, assessment tasks systematically throughout the year—address gaps and redundancies.
- Using periodic assessments, common classroom-based assessments and student work/student data to review and assess (see also Examine Student work/data)
- Compare student work/progress to instructional goals.
- Use student data to revise, upgrade and/or enrich the curriculum maps.
- Look at grade-level/curriculum map and share with other grade or discipline teams.
- Collaboratively align curriculum maps horizontally and vertically for instructional coherence and continuum of learning.
- Change/enrich/expand teacher pedagogy to align with the new maps and assessments.
- Explore new teaching methods.
- Enact instructional “next steps”, etc.
- Study common grade and cross-grade curriculum maps—look for progressions, gaps and redundancies.
- Study teacher designed units of study.
- Study teacher designed classroom-based assessments—look at DOK levels and how assessments are “mapped” and scaffolded within and across units.
- Study individual maps, lesson plans, classroom-based data.
- Visit colleagues’ classrooms.
- Lesson study, moderation studies.
- Work on “mapping” the assessments to ensure increase in cognitive demand and complexity.
- SED State standards and CCLS.
- DOE’s Instructional Bundles.
- Content and Professional standards.
- Other curriculum maps on CCLT.
- Use Professional Books and/or articles.
- Materials developed by PD Partners and posted on CCLT.
- Look at other schools’ curriculum maps to surface innovation and opportunity.
- Look at sample CCSS aligned assessment tasks as models for their curriculum-embedded assessments.
- Use web-based curriculum mapping tools.

- Examine student work, student data to identify trends and patterns in student learning.
- Examine teacher work (including curriculum maps, teacher-made assessments, classroom visits).
- Engage external resources (CCSS, PD Books, Mapping Software, etc.)

- Monitor student progress with common assessments.
- Revise and repeat inquiry cycle.

- Take action: Implement instructional strategy.
- Define instructional strategy and set goals.
- Examine teacher work (including curriculum maps, teacher-made assessments, classroom visits).
- Examine student work/data.

Note: This diagram illustrates how the collaborative inquiry process and the curriculum mapping process are interdependent where there is a systematic study of teacher work and student work/data.

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**Teacher Teams can use the Collaborative Inquiry Cycle With CCLS aligned Performance based Assessments to inform pedagogy and curriculum/assessment upgrades**

- **Define instructional strategy and set goals**
- **Take action: Implement instructional strategy**
- **Monitor student progress with common assessments**
- **Examine student work/data**
- **Revise and repeat inquiry cycle**
- **Examine teacher work (including classroom visits)**

**Possible ways**

- **Examine student work and student data that align with these performance-based assessments**
- **Check to see if students work produced in response to the Common Core reach the trajectory as articulated in the Common Core standards.**
- **If a student or cohorts of students are not exhibiting what they “need to know and be able to do”, revisit their PBAs- and revise/modify and/or enrich as necessary- and then repeat the inquiry process as necessary to ensure PBAs are aligned with the CC.**

**Use classroom-based assessments and student work/student data to review and assess using rubrics (see also Examine Student work/data).**
- **Compare student work/progress to your instructional goals.**
- **Study the assessments and the resulting student work.**
- **Look at grade level/content map and develop and share performance-based assessments in other grades or discipline teams.**
- **Create assessments that align with curriculum map.**
- **Administer the PBAs in a small set of classrooms and at different schools.**
- **Check for assessment validity and inter-rater reliability.**
- **Change, enrich and/or expand teacher pedagogy.**

- **As a team, analyze school wide data, record trends, align instructional objectives to the Common Core, and by using an Understanding by Design (UbD) model, make sure the performance-based assessments align to “power standards”, the “BIG IDEAs” and/or Habits of Mind articulated in instructional goals.**

- **Examine Common Core Learning Standards**
- **Access resources on the Common Core Library**
- **Study and “deconstruct” the DOE Instructional bundles**
- **Use DOK as a lens to discuss cognitive demand and rigor**
- **Study other performance-based assessments.**
- **Use Karin Hess’ Task Validation tool to “assess the assessments”**
- **Review professional books.**
- **Study other cities’ assessment systems to surface innovation and opportunity.**

*Note: This diagram elaborates on a component of the inquiry process illustrated on the previous page. This helps to illustrate how teachers engaged in a collaborative inquiry process can study performance based assessments to highlight student understanding, places to coach and/or intervene as well as ways to consider curriculum and task revisions. This only serves as a model.*

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