

What does Investigative Learning look like? Vignettes

The following vignettes provide specific examples of the variety of Investigative Learning experiences that can be designed by students and teachers.

INSPIRE = Theme defined by teacher + predefined end goal

These experiences work within the core curriculum to inspire students in a new way. Exploring the scientific method, students investigated the concept of insulation by designing ice houses. The teacher selected goal of holding and keeping an ice cube from melting was explored as children built their own ice houses. Teachers defined the boundaries, limited only to safety and size, and encouraged children to investigate and explore.

EXTEND = Theme defined by teacher + exploration defines the goal

Extend experiences expand a topic in a new way. The science concept of “Sink or Float” was introduced by the teacher and aligned with grade level standards. The students delved deeper into the theme by creatively constructing a boat. Children followed their interests in the type and purpose of the vessel. As prototypes were tested in a variety of water trials, new goals and additional questions emerged. These interests led to in-depth explorations of speed, distance, navigation, and characteristics of bodies of water.

CAPTURE = Theme defined by students + predefined end goal

Capture experiences leverage student interest by applying a student-driven topic to an established learning goal. A *Stellaluna* read aloud sparked an intense excitement about bats. Students recorded questions in their idea journals, which are routinely used to jot down curiosities while studying a variety of topics. The teacher recognized an authentic learning opportunity and developed a research project focused on the students’ passion. After researching in small groups and hearing experts on bats, students presented information they had learned to their classmates.

CATALYZE = Theme defined by students + exploration defines the goal

Catalyze experiences capture student interest and allow students to engage in exploring a question that is authentic and relevant to them. Using an inquiry circle model, students completed an interest survey to determine fields of study. In groups, students explored their areas of passion, ranging from blood to sewing to horses. Through an extensive research process, students generated questions to further explore their area of interest. The teachers provided a range of materials including subject-area experts who worked with groups either on campus or in the field in response to student inquiries. As they were deeply vested in the exploration, children enthusiastically represented their knowledge in a variety of ways including multi-media presentations, skits, posters, and other student-generated ideas.