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**Planning powerful units of inquiry. Text slides from presentation.**

kath@kathmurdoch.com.au

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**Standing on the shoulders of giants...**

- Guy Claxton
- David Perkins
- Ron Ritchhart
- Art Costa and Bena Kallick
- Karen Gallas
- Yoram Harpaz
- Jamie McKenzie
- Debbie Miller
- Carol Dweck
- Brooks and Brooks

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**NSEW – post its**

- North: What do we **need** to know?
- South: what **suggestions** do we have for the day?
- East: what are we **excited** about/looking forward to?
- West: what are **worried** or concerned about?

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- Inquiries are made more powerful when students are given some **choice and voice** in the journey. Empowered students make for powerful learning.
- Purpose + autonomy + mastery = motivation (Daniel Pink)

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### Why student voice?

- In a traditional classroom, the teacher ‘determines what is to be learned, how it is learned and the pace and rhythm of the learning. The learner, to a large degree, loses control. With someone else in charge, personal growth (and motivation) diminishes
- (Brooks and Brooks 1999:46)

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### Attending to the foundations

- Community
- Choice and voice
- Building learning power

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***“ We are all responsible for our own learning. The teacher’s responsibility is to create educational environments that permit students to assume the responsibility that is rightfully and naturally theirs.”***

*Brooks and Brooks 1999: 43*

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### What makes a successful learner in a professional development workshop?

A. Seeks connections between ideas presented and own context.	B. Maintains an open mind – willing to review/change thinking	C. Willingly participates in tasks
D. Makes clear notes for future reference	E. Ask questions for clarification	F. Avoids distraction and stays focussed
G. Offers ideas and suggestions to the group	H. Makes a plan for immediate and future use of new learning	I. Seeks feedback and suggestions for growth/improvement

### Getting learning power...

- “ good learners...also need to be aware of how their learning is going, and make strategic decisions about it...Good learners like taking responsibility for planning and organising their learning...they also monitor themselves - they have that ‘little voice of self awareness that keeps their goals in mind”
- (Guy Claxton: 2002, Building Learning Power, p 33)

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### Skills for the inquiry tool kit

I can <b>think</b> logically, creatively, empathically and reflectively.	I can <b>research/ investigate</b> in many different ways.
I can <b>communicate</b> effectively to others	I can <b>cooperate</b> with others and work effectively in a <b>team</b>
I can <b>manage</b> my own learning and behaviour and work independently	

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### Teaching for mindfulness

- **Mindfulness** is a deliberate, inner awareness of what one is thinking, feeling and experiencing. (Mindfulness) enables students to focus on themselves and their learning and to become more aware of their own thinking. Effective inquiry is enhanced by such self-awareness. (ref Sprenger, 2009:35)

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### Teaching for transfer – the ‘split screen Classroom’ (Claxton)

<p>Conceptual understanding</p> <p>What am I learning? What connections am I making? What do I understand about the way the world works?</p>	<p>Building “Learning muscle”.</p> <p>What am I learning about learning? What am I learning to do and be as a learner?</p>
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## Foundations of inquiry

- Do your students inquire into learning?
- Do they have the language to converse about learning...to set goals and to reflect?
- How can we help them understand themselves as learners?

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## Preparing to act

- "A great piece of art is composed not just of what is in the final piece, but equally important, what is not," It is the discipline to discard what does not fit – to cut out what might have already cost days or even years of effort – that distinguishes the truly exceptional artist and marks the ideal piece of work, be it a symphony, a novel, a painting, a company or, most important of all, a life....we spend too much time on addition and not nearly enough on subtraction. **Yet it's only by taking away what doesn't matter that allows us to reveal what does matter.**
- **Daniel Pink**

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## Revisiting the essence of inquiry?

- Connect
- Extend
- Challenge

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## Re-considering contexts for inquiry...

What makes a worthwhile context?  
How can we diversify our concept of a "Unit of Inquiry"??

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## What's worth inquiring into?

- Who's got the **power**?
- What makes a great **community**?
- How and why do people's bodies **change** over time?
- Why can't we **survive** without invertebrates?
- Where do I **belong**?
- Does **history** make us who we are?
- Do people **need** heroes?
- What does it mean to make a healthy **choice**?
- What makes it **move**?

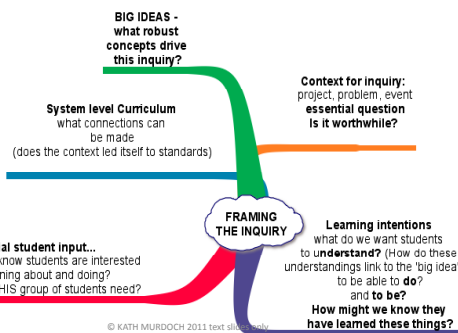
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## Scaffolding tasks toward deeper understanding

- *A model is not a recipe! It is a framework. It provides a general guide for planning, teaching and –most importantly – **thinking** about how to construct a journey of inquiry with and for students.*
- Arrange the tasks in the envelope in a way that best 'makes sense' to you – and resonates with your framework or model for a unit of inquiry...

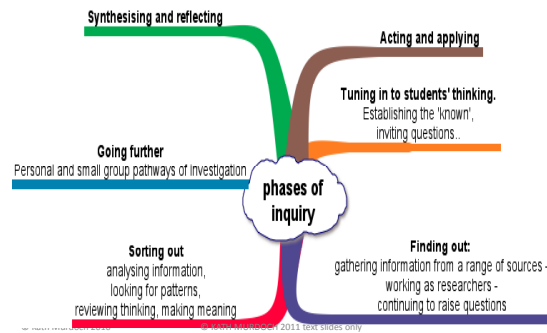
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## A model for inquiry based planning



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## Sequencing the inquiry



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### Planning powerful units – keys to success

- Getting off to a good start. “Tuning in”...
  - To the known...
  - To the students...
  - To the big idea...

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### “Conceptual congruence”

- BY taking the core concept within the central idea and asking students to transfer it to other experiences/instances they know about...we help take thinking beyond the topic.

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### Strategy...

How does this connect to me?  
What else is this like?  
Where else can I find it?

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### Co construct success criteria that can then be drawn upon when students make their own choices

- Build a bank of criteria for students to access
- The criteria can be built upon over the year and from year to year

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### For example...

- What makes a good survey?
- What makes a good interview?
- What makes a successful poster?
- What makes a successful powerpoint?
- What makes a successful oral presentation?

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Give students opportunities to share the way their thinking is changing. Allow students to construct and reconstruct their own understanding...

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- Over its “life” a good inquiry teacher supports students in synthesising their thinking...on both a ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ scale...

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### Unit long “Looping”

- “ Skilled teachers give an investigation a life course. There is a mutually constructed improvisation. In this improvisation, teachers keep questions alive through long stretches of time, they come back to them days even weeks after they have been asked.”

- Palmer, 1987:5

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### Thinking through the journey of inquiry...

- Journeys are the midwives of thought. Few places are more conducive to internal conversations than a moving plane, ship or train. There is an almost quaint correlation between what is in front of our eyes and the thoughts we are able to have in our heads: large thoughts at times requiring large views, new thoughts new places. Introspective reflections which are liable to stall are helped along by the flow of the landscape. The mind may be reluctant to think properly when thinking is all it is supposed to do.
- Alain de Botton

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### Helpful hints for making it work...

- Remember the 'cycle' is a **flexible framework – not a rigid recipe.**
- Many strategies can be used **across phases and can be adapted to meet different purposes**
- Different contexts will demand **different approaches to the cycle**
- **Learning to learn** should accompany every cycle
- The cycle is recursive – it moves forwards and backwards...

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### ...and all this needs

- TIME
- Human beings learn best at 'the speed of life' taking time to think, reflect, and see the bigger picture. We're losing those slow, open conversations in which new ideas are born' (Wheatley, 2002)

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- In an inquiry classroom there is a "commitment to readjusting the power asymmetry of the classroom by maintaining a modicum of silence...so we can **hear children's native theories and uncover their deeper questions.** If we make space... we begin to hear children's thinking" (Gallas, K. 1995:100)

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## Making it happen – and sticking with it

- Focus on the classroom – support teachers in the practices of quality inquiry (modelling, coaching, sharing strategies)
- Team based planning and reflection structures
- Create supportive whole school frameworks... menus/continuum of skills and strategies, planning proformas, big ideas/throughlines

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- **Build shared language** across the school – common model, common understanding
- Share process with **parents** –through portfolios, visual environment, newsletters and community connections
- Use **teacher inquiry** as a form of professional development
- **Gather data** from students - ask them for feedback on and understandings about the program you provide

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