

Inquiry-Based Learning Opportunities

The purpose of this tool is to engage leaders in reflecting on the types of policies, procedures, and practices that might need to be reviewed when offering inquiry-based learning opportunities to students.

Examples of supportive policies, procedures, practices follow.

- **Professional development:** Teachers who wish to implement inquiry-based instruction will need support from their leaders and their peers, given the shift required of teachers for this kind of approach in the classroom. Teacher professional learning for an inquiry-based learning approach starts with the basics of an inquiry-focused classroom, deep subject-based inquiry, and tasks that foster inquiry into topics or issues. The teacher's role is focused on making resources available, modeling curiosity, and coaching students to collaborate, communicate, and use their critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Technology:** Schools should foster the use of technology by teachers and students in ways that develop competency with applying technology. Teachers and students can use various technology applications to plan, communicate, and collaborate on project design, development, and presentation.

Examples of potential challenges follow.

- **Curriculum:** Schools that use a curriculum that is overly prescriptive most likely will find it difficult to engender an inquiry-based learning approach in their classrooms.
- **Communication:** Few parents and guardians will have experienced inquiry-based teaching and learning during their school years. Poor communication about students and their projects might jeopardize progress, particularly in high school classrooms,

when graduation and college entrance loom. If parents and guardians are puzzled by the independence that learners have in an inquiry-focused classroom, they will need to be informed and then reminded of the important competencies that these learners are developing in an inquiry-based classroom.

Activity

Identify opportunities that support inquiry-based learning. Record them in the chart, Opportunities for Inquiry-Based Learning. Examples of policies, procedures, and practices follow.

- **Policy example.** To improve critical thinking, class periods include 10 minutes for open guided discussion/debate/reflection related to course content at end of class.
- **Procedure example.** Teachers work with district content-area leads to develop authentic case studies or issues. Content-area leads observe activities across schools once per month to gauge implementation efforts and provide support to teachers.
- **Practice example.** School leaders and content-area leads meet monthly to review student progress on deeper learning competencies (e.g., critical thinking), review student work samples, and set goals for strengthening implementation. District content-area leads develop a measurement tool and plan for full implementation across content and across schools.

Opportunities for Inquiry-Based Learning

Policies	Procedures	Practices

