



CETL TIPS: What does it mean to Learn through Inquiry?

A Clark University education has three signature components—Make a Difference, Experience Diverse Cultures, and Learn through Inquiry. It is this last signature that is the focus of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Over the next semester, you will notice many changes to the website related to Learn through Inquiry, but in the meantime take some time to ponder the Learn through Inquiry approach.

"Humans are born inquirers. You can see it from the moment of birth: Babies use all of their senses to make connections with their environment, and through those connections they begin to make sense of their world. As children discover objects and situations that are puzzling or intriguing—things that provoke their curiosity—they begin asking questions and looking for ways to find answers, all in an effort to understand the world around them. This is the essence of the inquiry process."

—National Science Foundation

About the Learn through Inquiry approach

"Learn through Inquiry describes Clark's commitment to hands-on learning and problem solving. The skills needed for problem solving in the discipline are developed sequentially, through a pervasive pedagogy of engagement. Throughout their Clark experience, students learn by actively working through real problems, issues and questions, mastering modes of inquiry, and acquiring the knowledge base required to ask and to answer important questions. Each student has an opportunity to participate in a culminating discipline-based experience in the context of senior seminars, research, or other capstone experiences."

—**Clark Signatures** (<http://www.clarku.edu/Departments/cetl/aboutclark/signatures/>).

Some general strategies for encouraging Learning through Inquiry in the classroom:

- Design activities for in class exploration of course material. This allows students to engage in inquiry in groups, and work with the material in more meaningful ways than passively listening to lectures.
- Design assignments that allow students to explore their own interests. Students are much more engaged and interested when they are allowed to explore their own interests in relation to the course material.
- Be clear about instructions for activities and assignments. Group activities can be very frustrating for students when your expectations are unclear.
- Share your goals for each activity and assignment with students. Not only does this help to clarify your expectations, but students feel like you are invested in their learning the material.
- Vary assignments and assessment and presentation methods. Since no two students learn alike, varying assignments, presentations, and assessments allows each student the opportunity to thrive in at least some of the exercises.

To think about

How do you already incorporate Learn through Inquiry in the classroom? If you would like your answer to this question included on the CETL web site, please send it to cetl@clarku.edu (<mailto:cetl@clarku.edu>).

More Resources:

POGIL: Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (<http://www.pogil.org/>).

Clark University
950 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01610
508-793-7711 | [Webmaster](#)

University Policies · © 2021 Clark University

[Campus Map & Directions](#) | [Visiting Clark](#) | [Office Directory](#) | [Safety](#)

