Discovery-based inquiry:

A guide to the planning process

# Purpose of planning:

* To identify student needs and interests as a basis for planning.
* To plan meaningful and challenging learning sequences based on students’ needs and interests. (With the understanding that individual teachers will need to make adjustments or plan further detail to meet the needs and interests of their cohort of students)
* To connect learning to the Victorian Curriculum and plan for authentic assessment.
* To further develop teacher expertise in learning and teaching by sharing and discussing effective pedagogical approaches.

# Role of the Facilitator:

* To engage all members of the team in discussion about the planning that is rigorous and student-focussed.
* To ask questions that requires the team to clarify purpose and relevance.
* To ensure that the planning moves along at a steady pace and the  discussion remains relevant to the planning.
* To ensure each step of the planning process is considered.
* To facilitate equitable delegation of tasks in both the preparing for  planning and follow up from planning- eg. Gathering of resources, booking of incursions/excursions, scribing of planning.

# Preparation:

To be fully prepared for planning the following actions need to take place prior to the session:

* Prioritise what you want to achieve during the planning session
* Decide upon a chairperson for the session
* Ensure planning documents are accessible and ready for use

## Planning for a new unit of inquiry

NB. Prior to this planning session teachers should have discussed the focus of the new unit and created a prior knowledge gathering activity that will have been conducted with their students and analysed.

## Process for ongoing planning sessions

Teachers should bring evidence of student thinking and wonderings to the session.

# Planning for a new unit of inquiry

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| Flow of planning | Notes |
| Invite team members to share prior knowledge gathering they have done with students. | * Team members should have looked at the information prior to planning and give a summary of what they have found out.
* Analyse the information: what do students already know, what misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge are evident, what are they really interested in?
* Review- what are the implications for planning?
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| Brainstorm possibilities for the unit taking into account student input through the prior knowledge activity. | * Record thinking (as a concept map)
* What are the possibilities? (Big ideas not activities)
* What connections can we make; across curriculum areas, to the community, to students lives/experiences?
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| Check in with the Victorian Curriculum. Identify the specific content and skills across related Learning areas. | * Add any new thinking to brainstorm
* Document curriculum links onto the planner
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| Identify no more than 4 key concepts from your brainstorm that will become lenses to focus your unit. | Concepts are big ideas, they are abstract, universal and timeless, they usually consist of one or two words, eg: change, diversity, sustainability |
| Use the concepts to develop understandings that will focus and clarify the intent of the unit. *(The understandings are a critical stage of unit planning and it is important to spend time getting this right.)* | Understandings are statements of deep knowledge or understanding not facts. They incorporate 2 or more concepts. Between 1-3 understandings per unit are ideal.  |
| Create big questions that will encourage students to be curious about, and explore the understandings.  | * Share the questions with the children not the understandings
* Questions should be provoking and in child friendly language
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| Identify whether the unit needs to be divided into smaller ‘chunks’ where each section builds on the understandings of the previous section | * Identify a rough timeline for the sequence
* Identify which understandings and questions will be explored in each section
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| Plan a strategic shared experience for each section that will immerse students in the big idea of the topic.  | * The purpose of the shared experience is to give students a first hand experience that will allow them to develop conceptual understanding and a shared vocabulary as a springboard for further learning
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| Plan the ‘preparing for the shared experience’ | * Preparation should be short and to the point.
* Consider only what is essential for students to know for them to be able to gain the most from the shared experience.
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| Plan meaningful ways of ‘unpacking’ the shared experience with students. This should include a literacy component to capture topic specific vocab students will need to be able to discuss their thinking, and ways of capturing their questions and interests. | * The literacy component could be a shared text using a text type you intend to use throughout the unit
* Student wonderings and interests need to be collected and recorded as soon as possible after the shared experience and will determine the way the unit evolves.
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| Identify connections to Discovery and plan stations/learning areas that will enable students to further explore content or concepts and practise/use skills and vocab introduced through the unit. | * What materials could we provide?
* What provocations could help make connections?
* Are there specific learning intentions that connect?
* How could we use introductions and share time to make connections explicit?
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# Process for ongoing planning sessions

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| Flow of planning | Notes |
| InquiryCheck in with all team members to establish how the unit is progressing, and where each teacher is within the learning sequence. Invite teachers to share the evidence of student thinking they have brought. | * How are the students moving towards the understandings?
* What are they interested in or curious about?
* What do they know now, or what are they confused about?
* What do the samples of student thinking tell us?
* What worked well, what didn’t?
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| Review and discuss the students’ wonderings/interests and questions to determine next steps. | * How can we incorporate student questions?
* Can some like questions be grouped together?
* What are the main threads coming through and how do they connect with our unit understandings?
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| Select questions that you will explore further as a group and determine whether these will become a whole class shared inquiry, small group guided inquiries, or whether students are able to pursue their own questions/interests independently. | * What processes and resources will we use to enable students to explore their interests further?
* How will we get them to articulate and record their thinking and learning?
* What authentic links to literacy/numeracy can we make, what skills might need to be explicitly taught, and how can we integrate these areas in a seamless way?
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| Plan a learning sequence to explore these questions/interests | * What levels of support will be needed for different students?
* Can we include opportunities for students to explore their personal interests further in Discovery if we plan for a whole class shared inquiry?
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| Identify learning activities that can be used to gather assessment information related to the understandings and the curriculum links identified. | * Are these assessment activities inclusive of all students?
* Do they allow students to demonstrate their thinking and understanding in different ways?
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| DiscoveryCheck in with all team members to establish how students are engaging with Discovery and what learning they see happening. | * What’s working well, and how do we know?
* What questions or concerns do we have regarding particular areas or students?
* What might we need to change or adapt to address this?
* What could we add to extend some of the interests and ideas the students are displaying?
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| Identify any further connections you can make between learning that is happening in different areas and Discovery and look for opportunities to practise and use skills that have been taught, or opportunities to explore concepts and content introduced.  | Think about connections with* Inquiry
* Literacy
* Maths
* RE
* Specialist areas
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| Identify learning intentions based on needs and opportunities you have identified for your students for the next couple of weeks, and plan possible focus for introductions  | * Remember to be flexible with your introductions and share times so you can respond to opportunities as they present themselves.
* Be specific and focussed and keep teacher talk concise, whenever possible make these interactive to ensure maximum engagement.
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| Identify ways of documenting learning for assessment purposes | * What are we looking for?
* How can we capture and record important moments?
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