


Family and Consumer Sciences: Inquiry–Based Instructional Units for the Career and Transition Courses



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Reason for Career and Transition Courses

- ❑ To help students transition successfully from middle school to high school and from high school to a future through post-secondary education, career and family life.
- ❑ In Family and Consumer Sciences it is our goal to build strong families and individuals who support their family members at home and in the workplace.
- ❑ One of the major concerns among educators and legislators is the high dropout rate at school transition points and the number of students not academically prepared for continued education.
- ❑ The significant shift in expectations at these transition points is why this course focuses on what it takes for students to be personally and academically successful.
- ❑ This course contributes to the school reformers call for rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Career and Transition Courses

Levels:

- ❑ Middle School (grade 7 & 8) - introductory
- ❑ Ninth Grade – intermediate
- ❑ Senior - advanced

Standards:

- ❑ Manage Personal Transitions
- ❑ Build Relationships
- ❑ Design a Career Blueprint

Relationships, Talents, and Skills by Level and Unit Title

Transitions and careers – Grade 7 or 8

- ❑ **Dr. Knowitall Knows It All:** Achieving Success
- ❑ **Which Way to Stop the Drama?:** Conflict Resolution
- ❑ **Friends, How Many of Us have Them?:** Relationships and Friendships
- ❑ **Look Who's Talking:** Communication
- ❑ **Aliens and Assets:** Career

Career Search I – Grade 9

- ❑ **Survivor: Freshman Edition:** Achieving Success
- ❑ **Print the Peace:** Conflict Resolution
- ❑ **He Said, She Said:** Communications, Relationships and Friendships
- ❑ **Is Anybody Paying Attention?:** Career Issues
- ❑ **Amazing Race to a Career Space:** Career

Career Search II - High School Juniors and Seniors

- ❑ **Ts for you and Me:** Communication and Relationships
- ❑ **Hire or No Hire:** Career (with or without mentorship)

The Purpose, Intent in Using an Inquiry Approach

- ❑ Engage students in meaningful, authentic, intellectually engaging, purposeful, worthy work.
- ❑ Respect and cultivate the dispositions students bring to assignments.
- ❑ Respect the ability of students to think with all their intelligences.
- ❑ Help students discover things that have been hidden to them due to culture, background and experience.
- ❑ Make schools an intellectually exciting place where learning is fun when the work is hard.
- ❑ Make students and teachers co-inquirers.

Inquiry Unit Key Characteristics

- ❑ Task/Project/Hook is a project-based interest approach that sets the stage and builds and sparks student interest, poses “real” questions or problems students want to know about.
- ❑ Essential questions drive or guide the unit inquiry.
- ❑ Uses problem solving, management, advocacy and group skills as key FCS learning processes. Integrate grade level academic content standards.
- ❑ Identifies resources to get started on the inquiry.
- ❑ Provides procedures to manage the inquiry units so that students asking questions and seek answers to authentic situations and problems.
- ❑ Encourages collaboration in teams, peer reviews, with external specialists.
- ❑ Assessment (rubric) of a final project sets the standard for the project, shows what students know, and is viewed and/or evaluated by an authentic audience. It shows that students meet the FCS standard.
- ❑ Reflection on the project method. Reflection and connection to personal goals and desires related to the FCS standard.

Hook/Project/Task

- ❑ The project-based assignment creates a need to know about an authentic situation or problem.
- ❑ Projects guide students to achieve FCS standards and integrate the academics.
- ❑ Interest established by the project acts as the build-up to the project to create anticipation of the inquiry.

Critical/Essential/Driving Questions

Essential questions:

1. are provocative and drive "student interest",
2. are compelling and can be raised in many ways,
3. allow students to explore their connections with each other, their learning community and the world,
4. emerge from engaging the students' imagination,
5. are open-ended, feasible but not leading to an answer imagined by teacher,
6. go to the heart of the topic, discipline, and/or problem,
7. challenge and encourage students to confront difficult issues,
8. arise from real world dilemmas that "students find interesting",
9. are consistent with the FCS and academic standards,
10. are not too personal to the student so that focus goes beyond them, and
11. stir the curiosity and intrigue the student.

FCS Process Skills

- Integrate life management skills,
- Think and reason critically (practical problem solving),
- Develop leadership and advocacy, and
- Build interpersonal and collaborative skills.

Academic Content Standards

Review and integrate at grade level:

- Social Studies
- Math
- Science
- Language Arts

Selecting and Using Resources

- Establish criteria to select reliable resources
 - Authors credentialed in the field in which they are writing.
 - Up-to-date.
 - Can be cross referenced to validate the information.
 - No conflict of interest with sponsor, site, funding, etc.
- Make a select number of reliable resources available for students to continue to ask questions and begin and sustain the inquiry.

Procedures to Manage Inquiry Unit Activities

- ❑ Getting started: Talk about the upcoming projects way ahead of time; prepare a rubric and share expectation/outcomes.
- ❑ Promoting thoughtful work: Each group creates a plan, meet privately to make sure on a productive track; with frequent checkpoints about completed portions of the product each work session.
- ❑ Culture of student self-management: Teach how to manage time, how to learn content, don't make decisions for students projects but help them decide what it will look like.
- ❑ Student work expectations: Scaffold assistance through coaching and mentoring. Use previous student work when available.
- ❑ Managing groups: Assign students to heterogeneous groups, use jigsaw and develop experts to support each group; deliberately work to get students back on track; regularly process group work to get full participation.
- ❑ Tracking group progress: frequent short conferences; use planning sheets and group folders; make progress public to celebrate not denigrate.

Procedures to Manage continued

- Coordinate outside Classroom: Inform parents early, involve parents in the projects; work out feasibility of working with external partners; partners have greatest impact when the students need them; train students to work with partners.
- Using technology: Develop criteria to choose reliable sources, thinking critically about web information; students need to master complex technology before incorporating it in a project; partner with technology experts if needed.
- Assessment: Use both individual and group grades; students need own performance rewarded as well as the group; assess in a variety of ways; use self, peer, teacher, and partner assessment.
- Troubleshooting: Debrief and reassess direction when needed; intervene with mid-course direction such as class lecture, direct instruction, reading assignment, etc.; stop and teach/practice group and/or interpersonal skills; monitor progress with eye toward glitches and discuss the problem with the class.
- Project Feedback: Collect formative evaluation about the project from the students - How is it going? What is its value to students and to the community? How can project be improved?

Collaboration: Student Teams and Internal/External Partners

- ❑ Two students per group is more productive than five or more. The size of the group has to do with the size of the inquiry so that everyone feels the need and desire to work.
- ❑ Identify and arrange for internal and external partners to collaborate with student teams.
- ❑ Teach, practice, monitor and give feedback on interpersonal and group skills to build relationships student-to-student and student-to-external partners; process group work.
- ❑ Expect groups to monitor and support their own work, share and ask for assistance from other groups.
- ❑ Use cooperative learning structures to develop positive interdependence and individual accountability.
- ❑ Develop group skills to solve conflicts and achieve goals and maintain relationships.

Final Inquiry Project Assessment

- ❑ Students self-assess and grade each other.
- ❑ Outside experts participate in project learning and its assessment.
- ❑ Use quizzes and essays to check understanding along the way and establish learning goals.
- ❑ Use individual (all students need to know everything) assessments as well as group.
- ❑ Develop an audience of experts for project exhibition – onsite or online.

Reflection after Inquiry

Culminating/Presentation Event

- ❑ Students are encouraged to take what they have learned and reflect on this information to personalize the learning.
- ❑ Students are asked to judge the quality of their work.
- ❑ Students give feedback about the value and worth of the assignment to improve the inquiry unit.

Key Stages of Implementing an Inquiry Project

- **Opening Event**
 - Create excitement around the project prior to the opening of the unit and the day of the opening
 - Ask questions to construct what they know and need to know

- **Investigate and Become Informed**
 - Find relevant resources
 - Contact experts in the field to coach and mentor
 - Interpret Information, make sense of multiple pieces of information
 - Integrate academic content standards
 - Track and manage student progress

- **Culminating/Presentation Event**
 - Construct and show learning by developing the project
 - Display and report learning through project event
 - Assess the knowledge learned, benchmarks toward standards
 - Personalize new knowledge

<http://www.youthlearn.org/learning/activities/howto.asp>

<http://www.project-approach.com/strategic/events.htm>

<http://www.galileo.org/tips.html>

Best Wishes

- ❑ Share with your colleagues in your school and your district your success and the ways you believe the inquiry units can be improved.
- ❑ Reflect on the assignments each time and keep notes to improve your work with the students.
- ❑ Use the diversity in your classroom to enhance all students understanding of differences.
- ❑ Find ways to continue to push all students beyond what they think they can do.

Key References

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