

Inquiry By Design Middle School Curriculum

At middle school, each Inquiry By Design course of study is made up of seven units featuring detailed, flexible lesson plans, challenging texts, and spiraling cycles of work marked by reading, writing, and collaborative small-group and whole-class discussion.

Teaching Focus	1—Creating a Text-Based Culture	2—Introduction to Argument: Writing About Literature	3—Reading and Writing About Informational Texts	4—Reading and Writing About Literary Nonfiction	5—Analysis, Explanation, and Argument: Reading Nonfiction Like a Detective	6—Writing Across the Types: Narrative, Exposition, and Argument	7—Reading and Writing About Poetry
Grade 6	Introduction to the Reading and Writing Life	Introduction to Interpretive Work (Bambara and Baxter)	Story and the Brain	Dealing With Difficulty (Doyle and Dickinson)	Reading Nonfiction Like a Detective	Reading and Writing Fairy Tales	How Poems Are Built
Grade 7	Exploring the Reading and Writing Life	Introduction to Interpretive Work (Hughes and Jackson)	Addicted to Screens: Analyzing a Debate	Dealing With Difficulty (Cummings and Dillard)	Investigative Report Writing: Explanations and Arguments	Growing Up: Thinking With Literature	Creating Characters in Poetry: A Study of Two Poets
Grade 8	The Habits of Lifelong Readers and Writers	Introduction to Interpretive Work (Walker and Rivera)	Superstitions, Patterns, and Control	Dealing With Difficulty (Reed and Thomas)	Metaphorically Speaking: Reading Nonfiction Like a Cognitive Linguist	Faces of the Essay: An Orientation to the Form	Poems as Puzzles: A Pair of Poets Study

Creating a Text-Based Culture

These foundational studies establish classroom routines that support students in developing the habits of lifelong readers and writers. Topics include setting up literacy notebooks, establishing independent reading projects, and exposing students to the problem-solving strategies and practices of avid readers and accomplished authors.

Introduction to Argument: Writing About Literature

These introductory studies provide students with an in-depth orientation to the development of text-based arguments about literature. Students engage in carefully sequenced cycles of reading, writing, and discussion that culminate in formal, written arguments about engaging short fiction.

Reading and Writing About Informational Texts

Students work with thematically linked pairs of complex informational texts to determine the central ideas, how they unfold, and the methods writers employ to develop content. Students experience sequences of reading, writing, and discussion that culminate in formal informational/explanatory writing tasks.

Reading and Writing About Literary Nonfiction

Students work with complex literary nonfiction to develop the skills, tenacity, and mindset that can only be acquired through thoughtful encounters with difficult texts. Students end the study with the confidence and skills to make formal written arguments about challenging texts.

Analysis, Explanation, and Argument: Reading Nonfiction Like a Detective

These units invite students to craft, test and refine “reading below the surface” theories for reading nonfiction. Driven by detective fiction and award-winning reportage, students read and write about texts in ways that push beyond superficial comprehension into the realm of inference, analysis, and inquiry.

Writing Across the Types: Narrative, Exposition, Argument

These writing-intensive units invite students to participate in “conversations” about ideas that matter—whether it’s wrestling with questions about why fairy tales matter, exploring how other people’s stories can shape their own experience of growing up, or investigating how and why authors might choose to reveal or obscure their voice in a text. In addition to text-based argument tasks, students also take on significant writing projects in each study.

Reading and Writing About Poetry

These units center on clusters of poems from different times and traditions. The studies feature sequences of work designed to stimulate collaboration, while, at the same time apprenticing students to the close reading of poetry. In addition, students practice writing text-based arguments about literature and take on poetry writing tasks where they try writing poems like those written by the poets they study.

Inquiry By Design High School Curriculum

At high school, each Inquiry By Design course of study is made up of six units featuring detailed, flexible lesson plans aimed at building critical, standards-aligned literacy skills. Each unit is built around challenging, grade-appropriate texts and spiraling cycles of work marked by reading, writing, and collaborative small-group and whole-class discussion.

Teaching Focus	1—Introduction to Argument: Writing About Literature	2—Reading and Writing About Informational Texts	3—Reading and Writing About Literary Nonfiction	4—Reading and Writing Across Multiple Texts	5—Reading and Writing Reports of Information	6—Retellings: Analyzing Stories Across Time
Grade 9	Foundations for Inquiry (Jen and Canin)	Reading Intelligence	Dealing With Difficulty (Church and Tocqueville)	Borderlands: Theories and Stories	Tracing Cultural Influences: A Study of Research-Based Report Writing	The Icarus Tales
Grade 10	Foundations for Inquiry (Baxter and Didion)	Language and Thought	Dealing With Difficulty (McPherson and Plato)	Language Matters: Essays and Arguments	Models and Methods for Research	The Demon Lover
Grade 11	Foundations for Inquiry (Jones and Hempel)	Bias and Assumption in Research	Dealing With Difficulty (Winthrop and Ross)	Writing to Witness, Writing to Testify	Spreading Innovations: Study and Research	Interpreting Tennessee Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire
Grade 12	Foundations for Inquiry (Lahiri and Gordimer)	Science Writing for Lay Audiences	Dealing With Difficulty (Orwell and Montaigne)	Being and Unbeing: A Study of Four Poets	How We Learn: Research-Based Writing Projects	Shakespeare at the Movies: Much Ado About Nothing

Introduction to Argument: Writing About Literature

After establishing the routines to support an independent reading initiative that will guide students' self-selected reading over the year, these units move into an introduction (or review) of argument and interpretation. Students wrestle with short fiction as they revisit the practice of crafting text-based arguments distinguished by clear claims and supported by compelling explanations anchored in specific evidence from the text.

Reading and Writing About Informational Texts

Students work with thematically linked pairs of complex informational texts to determine the central ideas, how they unfold, and the methods writers employ to develop content. Students experience sequences of reading, writing, and discussion that culminate in formal informational/explanatory writing tasks.

Reading and Writing About Literary Nonfiction

Students work with complex literary nonfiction to develop the skills, tenacity, and mindset that can only be acquired through thoughtful encounters with difficult texts. Students end the study with the confidence and skills to make formal written arguments about challenging texts.

Reading and Writing Across Multiple Texts

Whether writing their own "borderlands" stories, tackling their own documentary project, or locating themselves in the bilingualism debate or the arguments poets make across clusters of poems, students engage in text-based discussions about complex issues and then compose a variety of papers that permit them an active, "insider's view" on the topics. All studies are marked by sequences of close reading, collaborative discussion, and culminate in significant writing projects.

Reading and Writing Reports of Information

Students read and study texts by some of today's smartest and most engaging report writers before tackling substantial and carefully scaffolded research-based report writing projects where they "try out" the methods, style, and structure observed in the models.

Retellings: Analyzing Stories Across Time

This series is designed around that notion of retellings—the idea that authors draw upon and transform stories that have already been told and, in the process, create new meanings. The work sketched out in these units is inquiry-based and places a strong emphasis on re-reading, writing, discussion, and collaboration.