Inquiry – Theory to Practice

HANDOUT

What is Inquiry?

Science is, by its nature, inquiry-based. Inquiry is an approach to learning that utilizes the rational powers and scientific thinking processes to explore and learn knowledge and skills. In order to achieve this, facilitators of learning must create an environment rich with experiences that allow learners to use their rational powers in a coordinated way. Such experiences will help develop children's logical thinking abilities.

A description of inquiry implies action on the part of the learner: a ***search*** for information; a ***pursuit*** of knowledge; the ***exploration*** of phenomena in order to better understand the world. To accomplish this, learners need experiences with objects, phenomena, and/or nature that will stimulate thinking and raise questions.

Thus, inquiry-based learning requires:

- Learner-centeredness;
- Active, open questioning;
- Opportunities for active investigations that include the acquisition of knowledge and skills through observing and manipulating (mentally or physically) objects, phenomena, and/or nature.

"The critical element to inquiry is that the child seeks answers to questions and is not given answers" (Marek & Cavallo, 1997, p. 22).