

# Creating effective inquiry questions

*creating effective inquiry questions to learn about people, events, and places in a community*

- Objectives:**
- understand what effective inquiry questions are and how they can be used to learn more about local histories
  - learn strategies for creating effective inquiry questions
  - appreciate the value of effective inquiry questions in helping us better understand local histories

**How can I create effective inquiry questions to help me learn about local history?**

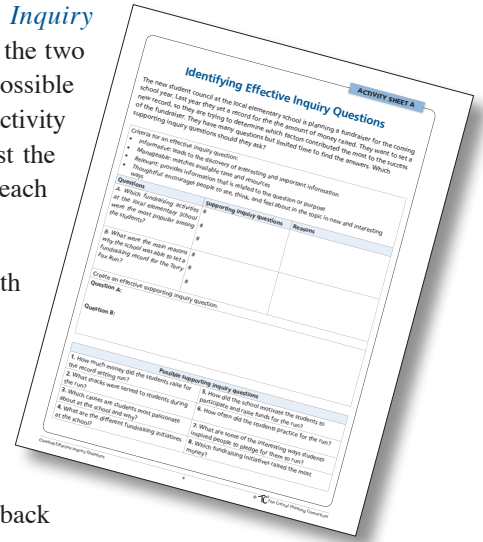
**Use the following activities to develop the strategy**

**Introduce the strategy**

- Organize students into pairs and ask students to imagine that they are trying to convince teens to regularly brush and floss their teeth. Ask students to decide which of the following two inquiry questions would provide the most useful information about the topic:
  - Question A: *What are the most significant effects on your teeth of eating too much sugar?*
  - Question B: *What is the most popular type of candy in Canada?*
- Invite students to share their decision and reasons with the class. As students share, explain that an effective inquiry question cannot be separated from the reason or purpose for the question; the purpose of the question must be known.
- Prompt students to work with their partner to describe the qualities of an effective inquiry question. Invite groups to share their ideas with the class. As students share, co-develop or present the following criteria for an effective inquiry question:
  - *Informative*: leads to the discovery of interesting and important information
  - *Manageable*: matches available time and resources
  - *Relevant*: provides information that is related to the question or purpose
  - *Thoughtful*: encourages people to see, think, and feel about in the topic in new and interesting ways
- Invite students to use the criteria to reconsider the questions posed at the beginning of the class. Help students see that while question B may be informative and manageable, question A is more directly relevant to the purpose of the task.
- Inform students that in this lesson they will learn how to create and use effective inquiry questions to learn more about the history of a local community.

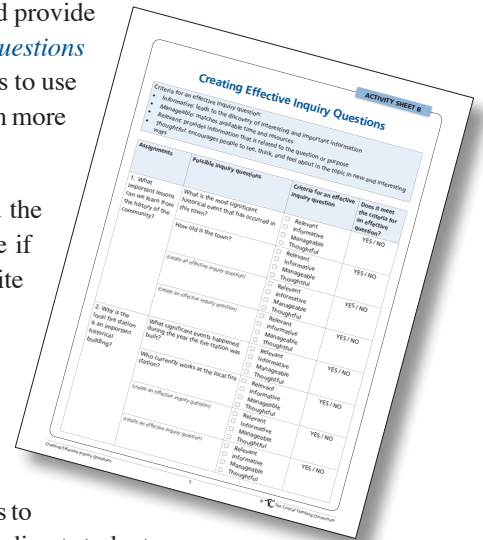
Practise the strategy

- Provide each student with *Identifying Effective Inquiry Questions (Activity sheet A)*. Draw their attention to the two example questions in the left-hand column, and the possible supporting inquiry questions listed at the bottom of the activity sheet. Explain that their task is to select from the list the three most effective supporting inquiry questions for each example question.
- Invite groups to share their decisions and reasons with the class.
- Direct students' attention to the bottom row of the chart. Instruct students to use the criteria to create an effective supporting inquiry question for each of the questions. Invite students to share their questions with a trusted partner, and to use the criteria to provide feedback on their partner's questions.



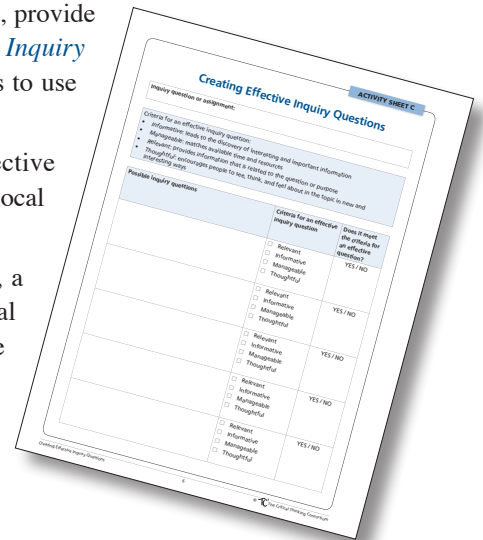
Reinforce the strategy

- Organize students into small groups (2-3 students) and provide each group with a copy of *Creating Effective Inquiry Questions (Activity sheet B)*. Inform students that the next task is to use the strategy to create effective inquiry questions to learn more about stories from a local community.
- Draw students' attention to the left-hand column and the two sample assignments. Prompt groups to determine if the possible inquiry questions meet the criteria. Invite groups to share their decisions with the class.
- Encourage groups to now create two effective inquiry questions for each of the sample assignments. Remind students to use the criteria to guide the creation of their questions. Invite groups to share their questions with the class. Alternatively, consider instructing groups to develop one question for each sample assignment, then direct students to work on their own to create additional effective questions.



Apply the strategy to learn more about a local history

- At appropriate times over the ensuing several weeks, provide students with a blank copy of *Creating Effective Inquiry Questions (Activity sheet C)*, and encourage students to use the strategy in a variety of situations:
  - Invite students to develop three to five effective questions that they might consider while visiting a local historic building or important cultural site.
  - Provide students with a local history topic (e.g., a significant individual, local landmark, or historical event) asking them to develop three to five effective questions they would use to learn more about the topic.
  - Provide students with a headline from a local news story asking students to develop effective questions to guide further inquiry into the story.



**Assess student understanding**

- Encourage students to use *Assessing My Understanding: Creating Effective Inquiry Questions* (Assessment Material) when self-assessing their use of this strategy.
  - Allow students opportunities to apply the strategy two or three times without assessment.
  - Guide students in interpreting and using the rubric to assess their own responses.
  - Encourage students to use the rubric whenever they use this strategy.
  - To use the rubric for teacher assessment of student work, remove the first person (student) reference from each descriptor.

**ASSESSMENT MATERIAL**

**Assessing My Understanding: Creating Effective Inquiry Questions**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Use the scales below to assess your understanding of the strategy for identifying and creating effective inquiry questions. Include examples to show how you have met the success criteria. Remember to describe the next steps in your learning.

**Success criteria**

**I clearly understand what effective inquiry questions are.**

How am I doing? 1 2 3 4 5

Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

Next steps (i.e., use criteria, ask for help): \_\_\_\_\_

**I can effectively use criteria when identifying and creating inquiry questions.**

How am I doing? 1 2 3 4 5

Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

Next steps (i.e., use criteria, ask for help): \_\_\_\_\_

**I can use effective inquiry questions to learn more about communities and their histories.**

How am I doing? 1 2 3 4 5

Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

Next steps (i.e., use criteria, ask for help): \_\_\_\_\_

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## Identifying Effective Inquiry Questions

The new student council at the local elementary school is planning a fundraiser for the coming school year. Last year they set a record for the the amount of money raised. They want to set a new record, so they are trying to determine which factors contributed the most to the success of the fundraiser. They have many questions but limited time to find the answers. Which supporting inquiry questions should they ask?

Criteria for an effective inquiry question:

- *Informative*: leads to the discovery of Interesting and important information
- *Manageable*: matches available time and resources
- *Relevant*: provides information that is related to the question or purpose
- *Thoughtful*: encourages people to see, think, and feel about in the topic in new and interesting ways

Questions	Supporting inquiry questions	Reasons
A. Which fundraising activities at the local elementary School were the most popular among the students?	# # #	
B. What were the main reasons why the school was able to set a fundraising record for the Terry Fox Run?	# # #	

Create an effective supporting inquiry question.

Question A:

Question B:

Possible supporting inquiry questions	
1. How much money did the students raise for the record setting run?	5. How did the school motivate the students to participate and raise funds for the run?
2. What snacks were served to students during the run?	6. How often did the students practice for the run?
3. Which causes are students most passionate about at the school and why?	7. What are some of the interesting ways students inspired people to pledge for them to run?
4. What are the different fundraising initiatives at the school?	8. Which fundraising initiatives raised the most money?

## Creating Effective Inquiry Questions

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Assignments	Possible inquiry questions	Criteria for an effective inquiry question	Does it meet the criteria for an effective question?
1. What important lessons can we learn from the history of the community?	What is the most significant historical event that has occurred in this town?	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	How old is the town?	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<i>(create an effective inquiry question)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<i>(create an effective inquiry question)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
2. Why is the local fire station an important historical building?	What significant events happened during the year the fire station was built?	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	Who currently works at the local fire station?	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<i>(create an effective inquiry question)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<i>(create an effective inquiry question)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO

## Creating Effective Inquiry Questions

Inquiry question or assignment:

Criteria for an effective inquiry question:

- *Informative*: leads to the discovery of Interesting and important information
- *Manageable*: matches available time and resources
- *Relevant*: provides information that is related to the question or purpose
- *Thoughtful*: encourages people to see, think, and feel about in the topic in new and interesting ways

Possible inquiry questions	Criteria for an effective inquiry question	Does it meet the criteria for an effective question?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Informative <input type="checkbox"/> Manageable <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful	YES / NO

