Do Dragonflies Breathe Fire?

Teaching Through Meaningful Inquiry the Engages Children

Suzy Potts and Jennifer Smith
Welcome!

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What is Inquiry?
Performance Expectations

● Help students form multiple answers to questions…
  ■ How is it different…
  ■ What if…
  ■ How is a….
Characteristics of High-Quality Inquiry

- Open ended
- Hands on
- Meaningful

Common Missteps
- Magic Trick Science
- Dusty Pine Cone Syndrome
- Letter of the Week Science
But what if...

- Teachers set the stage intentionally.
- Not just a block of time but integrated throughout the day.
# Studies vs. Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method of organizing skills to be taught around a topic or theme, making it possible to integrate content areas.</td>
<td>In-depth investigations to find answers to children’s questions about a variety of topics worthy of children’s time and energy.</td>
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## Studies vs. Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Themes often have these characteristics:</td>
<td>Good study topics have these characteristics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Too broad (transportation, animals)</td>
<td>- Address children’s interests of potential interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Too narrow (shapes, colors, apples)</td>
<td>- Relevant to everyday experiences and age-appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Removed from everyday experiences (rainforest, dinosaurs)</td>
<td>- Build on what children already know</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Fanciful (circus, teddy bears)</td>
<td>- Enable children to explore resources first-hand</td>
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<td>- Holiday-centered</td>
<td>- Involve resources readily available in and around the school</td>
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<td>- Can be explored over an extended period of time</td>
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<td>- Connected to what is learned in K-12 and worth investigating valuable class time and energy</td>
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<td><em>Isolated skill development.</em></td>
<td><em>Deep content knowledge. Strengthens children’s desire to be engaged in learning.</em></td>
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<td><em>Oral language and vocabulary are strongly supported because the content is worth talking about.</em></td>
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<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td><em>Fixed duration, usually a week or two.</em></td>
<td><em>Variable duration, usually about 5-8 weeks. Duration depends on children’s level of interest and engagement with the study.</em></td>
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## Studies vs. Themes

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<td>Series of activities, often not connected; many of the activities may be “cute” or “fun” but not particularly engaging, meaningful, or relevant to children.</td>
<td>Coherent, “spiral” approach in which children build on previous learning to understand new ideas and concepts. Follows these 3 phases: (1) Beginning of study (2) Investigations (3) Celebrating Learning</td>
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## Studies vs. Themes

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<th>Role in the curriculum</th>
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<td><em>Every skill to be learned is linked back to the theme.</em></td>
<td><em>Studies are not the whole curriculum; other skills are taught and learned that are not necessarily linked directly to the study.</em></td>
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Studies vs. Themes

Education is figuring things out that are meaningful... not creating copy and paste crafts that don’t mean anything.

ie - Penguins in Hawaii....
What Architecture Do You See?
What Happened?
Materials

The more you give children access to materials, the more children grow in their independence.
Collaboration

When we give more flexibility, we give more opportunity for children to collaborate and work on social skills.
Three Parts of a Study

1. Beginning of the Study
   - What do we know?
   - What do we want to find out?
   - A web of big ideas
     - Gives structure so that we can plan for the experiences so that it is incredibly intentional
Three Parts of a Study

2. Investigate the Topic
   - Allow the children to work on their process skills:
     - Observing and exploring
     - Connecting
     - Problem Solving
     - Organizing Information
     - Communicating and representing
Three Parts of a Study

3. Communicating and Representing
   - Displaying knowledge
   - Showcase to outsiders
Snow Study or Theme?

Doily Snowmen Craft

Make your own paper snowflake

A cute little snowman had a carrot nose. Always came a rabbit and what do you suppose? That hungry little rabbit looking for his lunch. He tried snowman’s carrot nose. Nibble, nibble, crunch.
Snow Study or Theme?
Always ask yourself...

What is my group of children going to get out of this experience?