



OPTIONAL HANDOUT

THE INQUIRY CYCLE

The cycle of inquiry (or scientific method) is a thinking tool—not a specific activity. This tool helps us go through the process of questioning, exploring, predicting, discussing, and observing something of interest. Rather than focusing on learning scientific facts, when we take the time to observe things in our environment we become curious and begin to ask questions. Curiosity and asking questions (inquiry) is what helps children learn about the world around them. Inquiry builds critical thinking skills and supports problem solving across the domains of learning and development, which is key to children’s school readiness and independent learning throughout life.

The inquiry cycle is not always straightforward. We move back and forth through the steps because we might notice something new or realize we have a new question after exploring more. Encourage parents to practice asking questions with their child to help them learn about their world. Use the questions in the green bubbles to get started.

- Have parents encourage children to ask questions in their tribal languages whenever possible. Parents can also provide visual aids that children can use to communicate their thinking.
- Help parents adjust their questions to match their child’s current language abilities in their tribal languages and English, when possible.
- Encourage parents to allow children to communicate in the languages in which they feel most comfortable to support curiosity and questioning. Encourage them to use their tribal languages whenever appropriate.
- Children develop their comprehension and communication skills as they make predictions, plan explorations, describe findings, document observations, and explain their reasoning (“Why did it happen?”). They also learn how to engage in small group conversations.

