

TRAINING SESSION PLAN

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

Inquiry-learning is a type of project-based learning that's driven by questions and explorations.

MEETING GOAL: Staff understand steps in setting up inquiry projects, including guiding students in forming questions, creating learning activities, and strengthening children's abilities to question, research, and discover.

PREP: Copy the Palm Reading Map, one per participant.

MATERIALS:

- ☐ Palm Reading Map, page 4
- ☐ Handout: Questions for Inquiry-Based Learning, page 5, one per participant

STEP-BY-STEP

OPENER

5 MINUTES

Explain: Inquiry-based learning starts with questions and leads to explorations. This meeting is about using inquiry as a basis for projects.

Activity

- Distribute the Palm Reading Map.
- Tell participants to find a partner, and take a few minutes to read each other's palms.
- After a few minutes, bring the group together.
- Ask whether anyone has ever had their palm read. Were they able to do this? Did people like what they heard? What questions might they—or kids—have about this?
- List answers, which might include: (What kinds of fortune telling are out there? Who believes in what? Do different cultures have different beliefs about fortune telling? What does science say about what's true?)

INTRODUCTION

Explain: In this global economy, children and young people need to learn how to learn. They need to be able to ask questions, explore, find and use resources, analyze, and think critically. Inquiry-based learning is an approach that starts with a clear question and builds on the processes of answering it. The adults are not expected to know the answer. In fact, sometimes there is no single or definitive answer. The point is to learn to explore and dig into interesting questions.



Inquiry-learning can involve kids of all ages, levels, interests, and learning styles. It can weave together different subject areas, and get kids working together. Older kids can pursue more complex, longer-term projects. Younger ones can do smaller, shorter-term activities, such as figuring out which objects float.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

15 MINUTES

Explain: The way we ask questions shapes the types of answers we get.

Activity

- Have participants ask the person next to them about a recent movie or TV show they saw.
- Ask a few volunteers to share the questions they asked and the answers they got.
- Does any type of question seem to lead to more questions?

Explain: Good questions for inquiry generate more questions. “What is” or “Where is” questions end once the answer is given. Inquiry questions like “What will happen if...” or “Why are ...?” call for more exploration.

Ask and List

- Think back to the palm reading.
- Ask: What questions would be good inquiry questions?
- List questions.
- Distribute Questions for Inquiry-Based Learning to each participant. Review the checklist.
- In pairs, review and evaluate the questions on the handout. (Be prepared for some disagreement. It is not necessary to reach consensus.)
- Now look at the questions based on palm reading. Create four really strong inquiry questions.

Explain: Generating topics or areas of inquiry can come from your knowledge of children’s interests, local events, things that come up spontaneously (like stains on a carpet), or topics based on school work.

Kids themselves are the best sources. Listen and watch. You can also ask. Hold brainstorming sessions. Or put up a Question Wall where kids can do their own brainstorming, adding sub-questions and twists as they come up. Post blank question walls in areas where materials are available for experimenting, such as water, miscellaneous objects, flour, salt, and food coloring.



THE INQUIRY PROCESS

10 MINUTES

Explain: Questions are the first step. Next is to use resources to explore and find answers. Looking things up in books or on the web is one strategy.

Ask and List

- Ask participants how information can be collected.
- Create a list of Resources and Information. Possibilities include interviews, surveys, films, site visits, and experiments.
- Ask the group what resources they might suggest around the palm reading questions.

Explain: The next step is answering the question. Do the “inquirers” have enough information? Is it good information? Any gaps? Finally, how can kids show their learning? Think about presentations, Power Points, Web sites, photo journals, reports, or performances.

Review: 4 Steps in the process:

- (1) Identify the question
- (2) Get resources for information to answer the questions
- (3) Assemble, analyze, and pull it together
- (4) Share the learning

Ask: What demonstration could show the learning from a palm reading inquiry project?

PLANNING FOR ACTION

10 MINUTES

Explain: As in all learning activities, planning is key. Topics need to grab kids’ interests. Staff need to be able to point to resources to answer the questions. And you need to figure out program time to do the project.

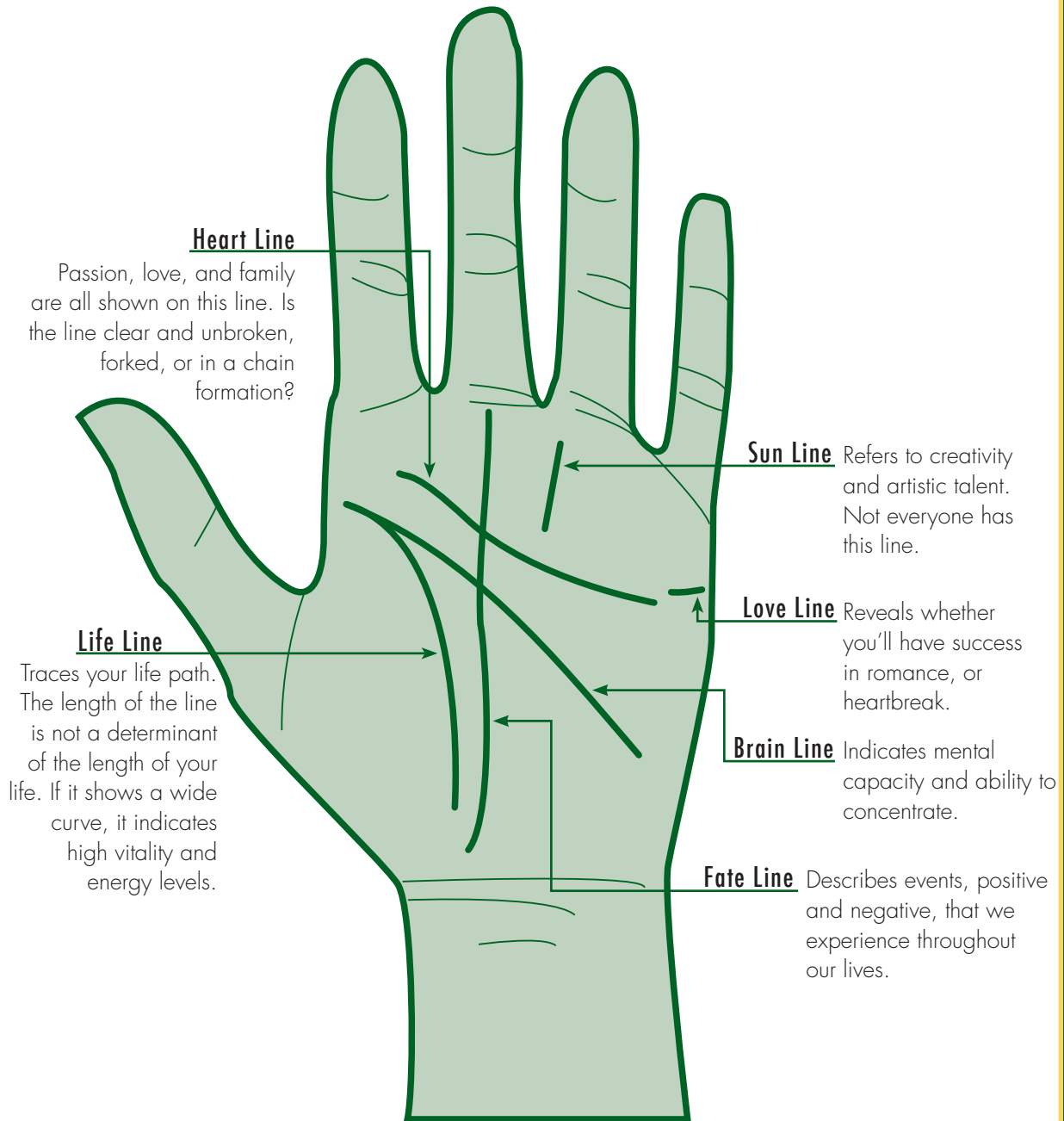
Discuss: In teaching pairs or small groups, pick two or three inquiry project ideas and run them through checklist.

- What would it take to set up and do them in terms of time, schedule, materials, and resources?
- How can kids be involved in creating inquiry projects?
- What challenges do you face in trying to do inquiry projects? What supports would you want?

* For more information on Inquiry-Based Learning, go to www.youthlearn.org



PALM READING MAP



QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

CHECKLIST

	Yes	No
Is the question something kids really care about?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the question require more than just looking up a simple fact?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the answer something kids already know?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the question objective, is there more than one possible 'right' answer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

DO THESE QUESTIONS MAKE THE CUT?

- ☐ Where is Chicago?
- ☐ How do they get the toothpaste in the tube?
- ☐ How much does a car cost in Japan?
- ☐ Why did Dr. Seuss write The Cat in the Hat?
- ☐ What is text messaging?
- ☐ Is R&B more popular than rap?
- ☐ How many people live in New York City?
- ☐ Why does the grass turn brown in the summer?
- ☐ Is the price of gas the same in Montana as it is in New Jersey?
- ☐ Should the Bible be taught in school?
- ☐ What are the arguments for and against teaching the Bible in school?

THE FOUR STEPS TO THE INQUIRY PROCESS

- (1) **Ask Question:** Probe kids to get to the "real" question they want to ask.
- (2) **Get Resources:** Help kids find resources to answer their question. Encourage kids to question whether or not the information is valid or good information.
- (3) **Apply Information:** Help kids decide if the information is useful or answers their question.
- (4) **Report Findings:** Encourage kids to create their own way to show what they learned.

