INTRODUCTION

Humans are naturally curious and will take actions to understand the unknown. Jerome Kagan and Jean Piaget both noted the importance of curiosity in development; early childhood development is propelled by humans’ attempts to answer unanswered questions (Engels, 2011). This dynamic system (Rodriguez and Fitzpatrick, 2014) is a learning process that educators, students, and even all of society use recurrently; the inquiry process of learning. Inquiry learning is an effective strategy that is used in all classrooms today. Many educators use inquiry-based learning to teach specific content with meaning and relevance as an encouraging approach for students to engage in the learning process and feed their own curiosity.

Inquiry learning is a form of process-learning where students develop and utilize their critical thinking skills in order to answer important questions. This type of learning style has been the most effective when used in my classroom because it complements all learner types as well as places responsibility on the student to be involved and engaged throughout the entire learning process.

How does inquiry-based learning improve the overall learning experience for students?

FINDINGS

Observation #1- The learning process is a dynamic system that involves the phenomena of relationships the learner has with its environment (whether it be with teachers, peers, parents, etc.) and their prior knowledge. There are multiple factors that impact the brain. Essentially, the brain likes sequence and predictability. Once the brain has these two components; the brain begins to process multiple factors that are occurring in interactions with the brain’s environment. This is how the brain is dynamic. Rodriguez and Fitzpatrick compare how the brain processes a single phenomenon that is attributed to multiple factors similar to the cause of Diabetes. Not one single factor leads to Diabetes. It is a mix of factors like sedentary lifestyle, poor eating habits, stress, etc.

Observation #2-Scaffolding (whether it be hard scaffolding, peer scaffolding, etc.) throughout the inquiry-based learning process is a necessary component to the attainment of knowledge. Some inquiry-based scaffolding strategies that can be implemented are: 
- Teacher/student modeling
- Providing concepts to be learned as a guide
- Sharing of prior knowledge and past experiences
- Technological tools and other online resources
- Choice in projects/assessment

CONCLUSION

When you think about the learning process, what do you think about? In all learning scenarios and interactions, students play an important role in the learning process. Students are agents to their own learning experience and contribute to the process of learning greatly when relevance and meaning are present.

Inquiry-based learning is a learning strategy that can not only support students across all content areas, but it is an efficient strategy that incorporates relevance and meaning in the classroom. Inquiry-based learning promotes the learning process and is a part of the dynamic system that is seen in the classroom. Inquiry-based learning is also a concept used to promote higher critical thinking skills that can be used outside of the classroom.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

1. How can inquiry-based learning accommodate all learners in the classroom?
2. How can inquiry-based learning strategically incorporate prior background knowledge and the development of new knowledge on state content standards?
3. How can educators use their own prior knowledge to effectively model for students in the classroom to expand the knowledge of their students and themselves?

REFERENCES