



# INQUIRY-BASED Learning Services

## Overview

Inquiry-based learning (IBL) allows teachers and students to work together as they engage with authentic challenges, test ideas rigorously, make discoveries, and present solutions. IBL is not about memorizing facts or promoting unguided discovery—but rather, a student-centered approach that involves formulating questions and constructing resolutions to those questions through experience, discussion, and reflection. IBL can take many forms, including project-based, model-based, issues-based, design-based, challenge-based, and problem-based learning.

RTI International's approach to all forms of IBL blends support for technical implementation and culture-building, with an emphasis on student collaboration and cycles of structured inquiry. Workshops that focus on instructional design and implementation include hands-on, participant-centered training and immersive experiences. Our support also includes classroom coaching for teachers, master coaching for school- and district-based coaches, workshops for principals and other leaders, and facilitation of culminating exhibition events to increase community awareness and support. No matter the needs of the school or district, RTI ensures a customized approach for each client with tools to gauge progress on implementation.

## Inquiry-Based Learning Services



Fundamentals of Inquiry



Project-Based Learning (PBL)



STEM



## High-Quality Project-Based Learning (PBL)

High-quality PBL is an inquiry-driven approach to teaching and learning that has been shown to increase student engagement, improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and improve student academic outcomes.

For a more detailed description of RTI's approach to supporting high-quality PBL in schools, please see our white paper available at [rti.org/education-services](https://rti.org/education-services).

## Focus Areas



### Fundamentals of Inquiry

IBL support focuses on establishing a strong culture of inquiry. This includes establishing common language and instructional strategies, developing teachers as IBL facilitators, and designing instructional practices for an inquiry-based approach in everyday teaching and learning.



### Project-Based Learning (PBL)

PBL is an extended and often interdisciplinary approach to IBL. Our support services provide a foundational understanding of high-quality PBL, as well as tools and strategies to support design and implementation. Our approach focuses on authentic problems and products, public audience, real-world connections, and structured collaboration for student ownership.



### STEM

Support for STEM and STEAM instruction focuses on inquiry and the development of design mindsets to solve complex problems. RTI emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to STEM that includes applications across all content areas, as well as exposure to experts who are currently using STEM to address local and global challenges.

## Service Offerings

- **Foundational Workshops and Coaching**

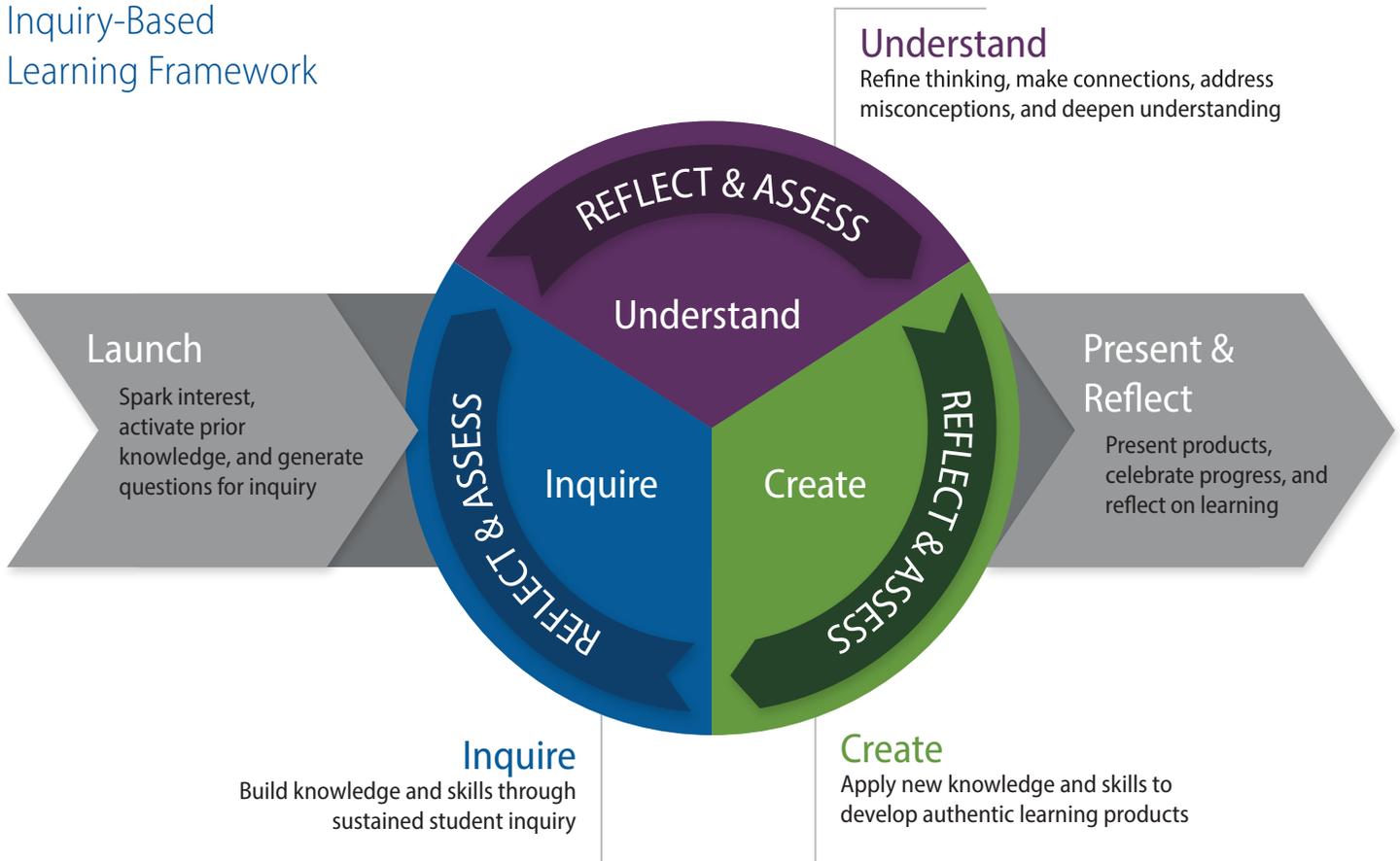
**Support:** Our foundational workshops include an immersive, inquiry-based experience and support for instructional planning. Teachers are introduced to the foundational characteristics of inquiry and specific inquiry-based approaches aligned with school and district priorities, including PBL. Experienced coaches provide expert planning and implementation support during workshops and follow-up coaching sessions.

- **Advanced Special Topics:** Our advanced special-topics workshops are developed in partnership with school or district leaders and focus on needs discovered through the needs assessment process. These highly customized sessions build on an existing foundation to strengthen and deepen instructional strategies. Topics might

include Interdisciplinary PBL, Assessment for Learning, Facilitating Productive Group Work, Scaffolding and Differentiation, and more.

- **Support for Coaches:** Workshops for coaches support these instructional leaders in understanding the characteristics of inquiry-based approaches and how to support successful implementation of various approaches, including PBL.
- **Leadership Support:** These workshops help school and district leaders understand the characteristics of inquiry, what it looks like in the classroom, and how to lead successful implementation of various approaches, including PBL. The workshops focus on understanding this instructional method in the context of change management and on tools and strategies to build capacity for long-term success.

## Inquiry-Based Learning Framework



# Spotlight: Elkin City Schools



## Implementing District-Wide Project-Based Learning

### By the Numbers

**20** teachers  
**3** schools (one elementary, one middle, and one high)

**1,100+** students

**Challenge:** Elkin City identified 20 teachers for their first PBL cohort. This cohort attended a series of professional learning sessions followed by individual, on-site coaching sessions to support planning and development of PBL units. Virtual coaching supplemented the on-site visits for ongoing support, and RTI worked with Elkin City to develop a PBL Expo to share student achievements across the district and with the wider community.

**Results:** After just one semester of PBL implementation, principals in the district stated that teachers were trying new things, including cross-disciplinary planning. Even teachers outside of the first cohort were discussing the impact of PBL on students.

### Teacher Comments

- The workshops allow us to experience the activities and understand what it is like to be in our students' shoes.
- I love our presenter and find the template and models very helpful.
- I enjoyed the entire workshop, and I really enjoyed the part of getting to plan my unit around inquiry-based learning.
- Our facilitator is fabulous at facilitating and offering suggestions and feedback.
- Excellent!!!

## Learn More

All children deserve a quality education that empowers them to thrive. However, each day educators are faced with new challenges driven by the accelerating pace of change. The need to perceive, understand, and act on emerging trends and practices creates added complexity and can strain capacity. At RTI, we're partnering with educators to change that.

Rebecca Stanley, PhD  
Education Services  
rstanley@rti.org  
910.398.3432

Frank McKay, MS  
Education Services  
fmckay@rti.org  
919.541.7344

[www.rti.org/Education-Services](http://www.rti.org/Education-Services)

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