

# Fostering Curiosity in Students and Teachers

## Facilitation Guide

### What is it?

While understanding the benefits of curiosity in the classroom may be straightforward, it's not as simple to create the learning experiences that unleash it. Use this article featuring Harvard professor Karen Brennan's research on curiosity to have a discussion about some of the obstacles to curiosity and strategies for addressing them, as well as ways for teachers to foster their own curiosity.

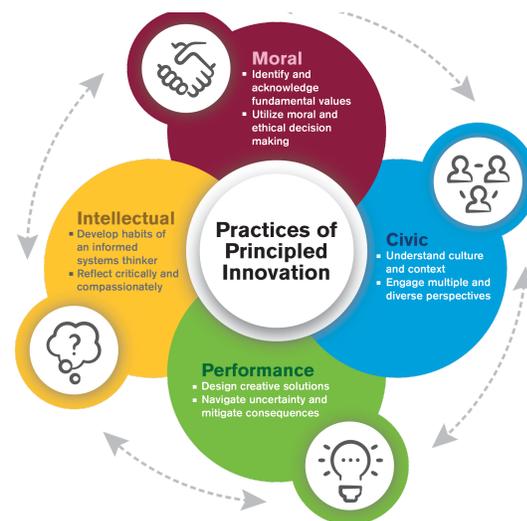
### Why use it?

It is not hard to see how sparking students' curiosity is a key to motivating their engagement and learning in the classroom. Teachers can encourage curiosity by asking questions that are important to students, by creating opportunities for students to pursue their interests, and by allowing students the flexibility to craft their own learning. Yet it is equally important for educators to cultivate their own curiosity as well—their curiosity about their students' perspectives, experiences and understanding, about their own professional practice or methods and strategies for teaching and learning, and about how the systems around them impact their classrooms on a daily basis. As educators, developing our own curiosity better positions us to find ways to improve those systems by creating more effective learning environments for our students.

The article featured in this activity provides a summary of useful research related to curiosity in the classroom, emphasizing both how to support student curiosity as well as the importance of teachers fostering their own curiosity.

### What you need

- Time: 30-45 minutes
- Reading: <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/55081/when-teachers-make-room-for-their-own-curiosity-they-defend-it-for-children>
- Class or small group
- Large paper and markers or whiteboard, etc. for recording group discussions as needed



# Instructions

## Step 1: Prepare

Prepare a handout of the article up to the point where the “case studies” are introduced. Prepare a separate handout with only the text of the case study scenarios. Also have available the full article (as a handout or link).

## Step 2: Situate

Situate the activity by leading a discussion about curiosity and what it means. Ask students to write their own definitions of curiosity (individually, in small groups or as a large group) and discuss examples of things they have been curious about and what they’ve done about it. Then provide the following definition of curiosity from the Principled Innovation framework:

*“Curiosity is the inclination to ask challenging questions of ourselves and others to better understand the world around us in order to make positive change.”*

## Step 3: Read and Respond

Provide participants with the handout of the article up to the case studies as well as the separate case study text. After providing a chance to read it, ask participants to discuss the two scenarios in small groups and brainstorm a few ways they might respond to the situations.

## Step 4: Discuss

Have the groups share their responses to the scenarios with the larger group. Then have them read the rest of the article or share verbally the responses suggested in the article.

Have a group discussion about how teachers can pursue and make room for their own curiosity. Consider using these questions:

1. What kind of topics might you as a classroom teacher be curious about within your own classroom and school? How might you follow your curiosity to learn more about these topics?
2. What are some ways that teachers can model being curious for students?
3. What do you think Dr. Brennan means in her closing advice when she said, “Find your own voice, find your own path, find your own creativity. And then be willing to stand up and defend it for students.” What might be ways that as an educator, you could “defend” your students’ curiosity and creativity? Why might this be necessary?