

Community of Inquiry

Community of Inquiry (COI) is an innovative teaching and learning strategy that has been implemented in the Middle School curriculum at Aspley State High School. COI is an exploration of a set of ideas that leads to questioning, exploring concepts and values, and posing problems.

The focus is on listening, thinking, challenging and changing viewpoints within a safe environment in which students can take risks in their thinking. The phrase COI was originally used to describe interaction among scientists.

A COI is effectively a group of individuals who use dialogue to search out the problematic borders of a puzzling concept. COI promotes critical and creative thinking and encourages an obligation to respect the views of others. It attempts to address the challenge of education to produce better thinkers and more caring members of society.
Classroom culture

For classes utilising the COI approach, the classroom culture is based on thoughtfulness and respect rather than evaluating and judging people. Regular practice fosters classrooms where students feel safe to put forward ideas and they learn to agree and disagree without taking it personally.

These classes also foster environments where ideas and questions are given rigorous consideration. If students think of an idea on their own it is very easy to retain biases, mistakes and errors. When a student thinks with others the limits to thinking are quickly noticed.

The input of the group helps the student improve their thinking processes and to consider their ideas in more depth.
Powerful teaching strategy

COI is certainly a powerful teaching strategy. It promotes:

- a sense of community through communication, friendship, care, compassion, cooperation, acceptance, belonging and sharing,
- understanding of values and purposes,
- inquiry based learning focused on thinking,
- reflective thinking,
- higher order and complex thinking in the search for meaning,
- dialogue about key common contestable concepts,
- teacher and students learning together,
- ethical reasoning, and
- understanding of different perspectives and different points of view.

Aspley is a leading high school in Queensland in the area of COI and the implementation of this strategy is reflective of our commitment and determination to curriculum innovation and excellence.

"I think Community of Inquiry is very good because we hear about other people's opinions," - Jade Yr 8.

"I think it is good because you get to voice your opinion," - Jade.

"I like Community of Inquiry because it increases the self-confidence of my students. Some won't say anything at the beginning of the year but by the end of the year they feel comfortable putting forward their ideas. It can be used for a lot of topics as an introduction or revision activity. This semester I used it in my Aspleyville Horror and Power of One units," - Ms Bleakley.