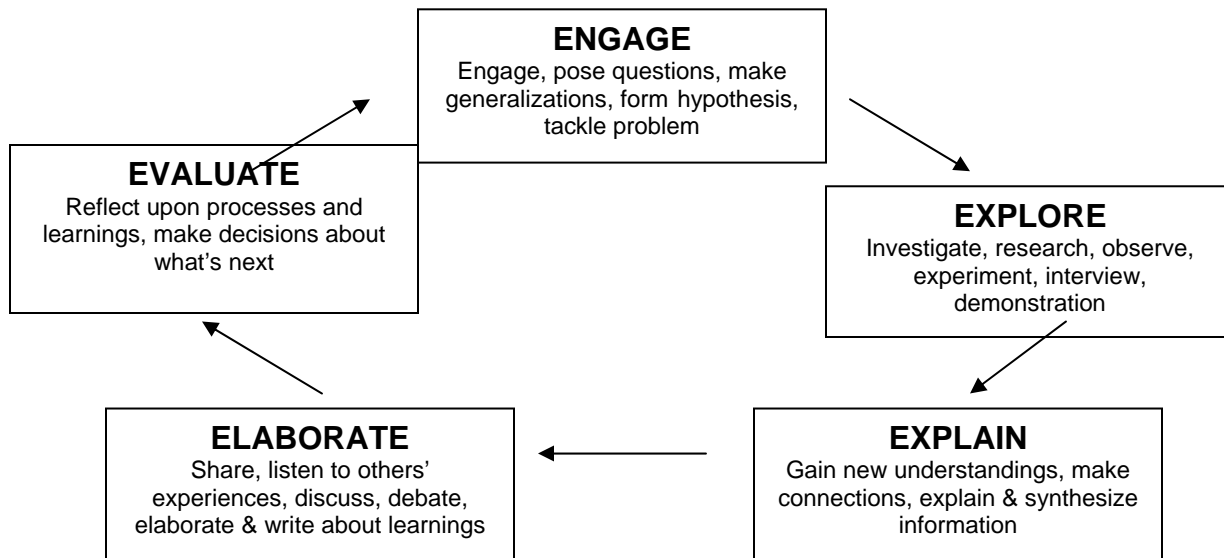


## GUIDED INQUIRY AT QUEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Hilton Central School District

Inquiry is a cyclical learning process that begins with **engaging**. Students actively engage in thought, wondering and wandering, pose questions, make generalizations, tackle problems and form hypotheses based upon background knowledge, which may be newly acquired. They then **explore**, which can include investigating, researching, observing, experimenting and interviewing. Students then **explain** new knowledge. They gain understanding, make connections, synthesize and construct knowledge. Students **elaborate** by listening to each others' experiences, discussing their new learnings, and communicating about what they have gleaned. Next they **evaluate** upon the process and reflect upon the new learnings. This can lead to new decisions and wonderings. Thus, the cycle continues.



We believe that inquiry based learning is important because it allows us to:

- Gain a better understanding of the world
- Promote higher level thinking skills
- Meet a variety of student needs
- Engage and motivate students
- Create independent thinkers as opposed to dependent learners

In an inquiry based classroom, the teacher is not the presenter of information. The teacher is the facilitator of the process as well as a learner. The teacher creates an environment that supports inquiry, models and encourages questioning, makes resources available, and assists the students in becoming skillful with the inquiry process. The student in an inquiry-based classroom is an independent worker as well as a collaborator. Like the teacher, the student is a thinker, an explorer and a risk-taker. He/she is curious, engaged, motivated and open-minded.

At Quest Elementary School, as you move from room to room, from level to level, you will see many similarities and some things unique to individual classes. The curriculum, concepts, skills and strategies will be the same, as well as the roles of the teachers and students. You will notice students working independently, in small groups or whole class. On the other hand, things will be unique due to the students' background knowledge, experiences, individual learning plans and modifications. You may see differences in their resources, questions and presentation of products. Regardless of these variations, it is clear that all rooms are student-centered, engaging and collaborative.