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| Speaker 1: | Ready to go. Are the lines, the lines good for this one, |
| Speaker 2:  [00:00:30] | Half of me in the middle where you weren't feeling comfortable? I think so. Yeah. It almost hit your mouth. I think. So it's kind of, kind of to like, I guess it shouldn't be pointed. It shouldn't be pointed. It's like about three or four inches in front of your mouth. Yeah, that's perfect. Okay. We're rolling. So, um, |
| Speaker 3: | Right. I want you to just take 20 seconds, um, do same thing, pretty deep sort of reset refocus. |
| Speaker 2: | It's going to be okay. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:01:00] | To be quite honest. This feels what school is normally like. Yeah. Like you had this plan and now you have to move it over here because a bomb went off behind you. |
| Speaker 2:  [00:01:30] | Yup. Yup. It's more, I just don't rush this. I want you to think deep thoughts. Okay. I'm listening. No, you're not listening. Awesome. |
| Speaker 3: | All right, Ryan, I want you to start by telling me who you are and you know, something like my name is Ryan new. Um, I'm a social studies teacher and also the department chair here at Woodford County high school. Okay. Sure. |
| [00:02:00]  Speaker 1: | Uh, my name is Ryan Lewis and I am a social studies teacher here at Woodward County high school and the department chair. And I'm currently going into my 12th year as a teacher here. |
| Speaker 3:  [00:02:30] | Did I just call you Ryan [inaudible] locust? Cause that was good. Um, so tell me a little bit about your journey to become a teacher. Um, you know, when did you decide to become a teacher or how did you know, tell me about your journey and if you say, I think it's okay to put in here the university of Kentucky mic program, that kind of thing. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:03:00] | Sure. So my journey to becoming a teacher was kind of interesting. Um, it wasn't something that I had planned. Um, I had gone to undergraduate, uh, to be, uh, an anthropologist. I wanted to study anthropology and I took a couple of years, um, off from school, uh, to just kind of figure out what I wanted to do. Um, at the time I was, I was actually working at the, of Kentucky, uh, at a desk job, um, and was really kind of dissatisfied with the level of, uh, I guess, meaning or purpose for my life. Um, and so I just began to kind of, you know, poke around and see like, what is it that I really enjoy doing? I started tutoring. Um, some ESL students on the side really liked working with students. Uh, I really liked working, um, uh, helping students kind of figure out different things. |
| [00:03:30]  Speaker 1:  [00:04:00] | And so I said, well, maybe I'll, I'll take a few extra classes. And so I had a couple of conversations with some people who pointed me to the, the mic masters with the initial certification program. And then, and then I think before I knew it, I was sitting in front of a TA and they were asking me, so you want to be a public school teacher. And I just kind of like nodded my head and said, yeah, I guess this is what I'm doing. Um, and, uh, before I knew it, I was signing up, I was interviewing and I got the call that I was accepted and I said, all right, here we go. Um, and from that moment on, I kind of just began to embrace what it meant to be a social studies teacher in the public school setting. Um, I was really, really fortunate to have a lot of really positive experiences early on. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:04:30]  [00:05:00]  [00:05:30] | Um, my student taught, um, kind of in an urban setting and then was, uh, my second placement was in where I'm at here, which is a more rural, suburban, um, uh, setting and really just fell in love with this building fell in love with the teachers. Uh, I was fortunate enough to have, um, a teacher retire the year of my student teaching and was able to be hired on here. And so I've really never looked back. Um, I've always enjoyed working with students. Um, I F I have felt from very early on that there was something about, um, the social sciences that, um, not only spoke to me as important, but I think that deep down there's something about social studies that speaks to other people too, not just students, but people in general, and I really enjoy or have enjoyed, I should say, um, figuring out ways to kind of help people figure that out for themselves to understand what it is, those questions inside them are, um, pulling it out into the open and just kind of exploring it. And so that's really where I'm at as a, as a teacher right now is, um, just kind of continuing this journey, looking to see what's next, um, going on my, I guess my own path of inquiry, if you want to think of it that way. Um, but that's kind of where I'm at at the moment. |
| Speaker 1: | I saw a picture very recently of me, um, my first year teaching. And I was like, I was thinking, Holy heck, like that, that's what, that's what walked in, uh, and, uh, decided to do whatever this thing is that we're doing now. So yeah, it was a good year. |
| [00:06:00]  Speaker 3: | Oh, I said to, I said to Callaway and Gates yesterdays, it was talking about somebody else, but I said, it's, you know, it's a different thing when you start measuring your life in decades, you know, instead of just years. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:06:30] | Yeah. Well, I remember, um, I think Liza was your TA at that point and she was super peppy. Uh, and I remember sitting at the desk and she was asking me, she was like, so you want to be a public school teacher? And I was just kinda like, yeah, I get, I mean, I guess so, uh, cause I hadn't really answered that question yet for me. Um, but I was like, I feel like this is the direction I needed to go. So I was like, yes, definitely. |
| Speaker 3: | Um, that's great. Um, so tell me a little bit about Woodford County high school. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:07:00]  [00:07:30] | Sure. Um, Woodford County high school is, um, you know, very similar to a lot of schools, um, that I've, I've been in before, but I feel a really deep connection to the school. Not because I just teach here, but because I think there is something special about our school. Um, and I think a lot of it, um, you know, it's a, it's a very small school, um, compared to some of the bigger schools around us. Uh, but at the same time we, we teach everybody, um, we teach, uh, the struggling learners we teach, um, uh, students who, uh, could do school on their own quite frankly. Um, and we kind of embrace, you know, everything that comes with both ends of that. And so I've enjoyed the during, during my time of teaching, I've gotten to teach some of the smartest individuals I've ever met and I've gotten to teach, uh, students that could barely read. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:08:00]  [00:08:30] | Um, and I like that we're all in the same building. I like that. Um, our mission as a social studies department here is really to, um, you know, to teach every single person where they're at. Uh, the school itself is kind of in an older building. And I, I kinda like that. I feel like it feels very old school. Um, I was fortunate enough to come into a department of very well qualified, very well experienced teachers. And it gave me, I think the space to kind of figure out who I was, I wasn't immediately come in or I wasn't immediately met with this is what you're teaching. Um, it was very much like, what do you want to add to what we're doing? Um, I don't know if all, a lot of teachers get that. And so, um, I think it really helped me discover my own voice as a teacher. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:09:00] | It let me experiment, let me evolve. Um, and I think for the most part, I can't say that about the entire school, but I think our department has always been committed to bringing in teachers and allowing them to, uh, mature on their own path, um, with a lot of guidance. And so I think some of our best teachers that we have, have been allowed to try things and fail, to figure things out on their own. And I think our school as a whole is very conducive to that. Um, and so I would say that, um, you know, Woodford County high school was a special place because I think that we allow teachers to be teachers, um, and not simply just content delivers. |
| Speaker 4: | That's a good line. |
| Speaker 3:  [00:09:30] | So tell me a little bit about Woodford County high school in terms of some demographics. Um, you know, you know, how many students go to the school, you know, how big give me, give me a little bit of sort of lay of the land. So Woodford County high school is |
| Speaker 1:  [00:10:00]  [00:10:30] | Yeah, so Woodford County high school as a snapshot, um, is situated in Versailles, Kentucky and pronounced for sales, not for PSI cause we are in Kentucky. Um, there's roughly anywhere between 1200 and 1300 students, depending on the year. Uh, we have, it's an overwhelmingly, uh, kind of middle-class, uh, in demographic we have a majority white students, but we do have these, uh, really, uh, pockets of diversity that show up in different ways. Um, one of the, one of the more interesting things about our, I would characterize our school as more of a suburban school because it kinda, you know, we're right outside of a big metropolis, but at the same time, half of, uh, half of the land in Woodford County is used for farming. And so you've got, um, people who, whose parents work in the farm industry. Uh, you have people who own farms, you have people who commute to bigger cities and, you know, would be the, uh, you know, uh, people who work in and technology. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:11:00]  [00:11:30] | We have a lot of different factories, uh, in this town. And so there's a lot of different groups of people that end up in our school building. Um, and so I think on the surface, when you take a look back, it doesn't look like a very diverse place. Um, but I think like in most places, once you kind of peel back the layers, you start to see that there are these, uh, nuances to our school, um, that show up, you know, racially, I think economically. Um, and that one of the things I think that we've done really well here, at least I hope so is, um, try to make all of those different groups of people feel comfortable in our classes. So I would say Woodford County is, um, is very typical Kentucky school. Um, but I think like most places, um, when you look at the context, there's a lot more layers that have to be kind of taken into account. |
| Speaker 3: | Got you. And Ryan knew could be the easiest people to interview ever sound believable. So tell me a little bit about your role here, Brian, and how that's evolved. |
| Speaker 1: | Um, so |
| [00:12:00]  Speaker 2:  [00:12:30] | Something just kicked on. I got it. I love the jumping, my role here. That's the water fountain. Is there a plug? Could you just kick it? Here you go. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:13:00]  [00:13:30] | The, my role here, um, over the last 11 years has really evolved, um, in, in a couple of ways that I kind of expected, but also unexpectedly. Um, I haven't really been somebody who has pursued a lot of leadership in the building and not, not because I wasn't interested in leadership, but my focus has always been really on what's happening in the classroom. But what I found in, in education that people who do things well in the classroom, um, tend to be the types of people that other people go to. And so I think as time has gone on I've, I've seen my role go from not only just social studies teacher, um, but you know, to serving on the site based council for a couple of terms to working with, uh, different committees around the building to, um, you know, make our assessment better, to make our, the way we grade students better to, um, looking at the way that we treat, uh, students, um, to a really kind of a holistic look. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:14:00]  [00:14:30] | And I, I feel like I've earned the trust of a lot of different people, not within social studies, but within the building. Um, and because of that, I've gotten more and more opportunities to serve our school. Um, I am now the department chair of our department. Um, and, but long before that, um, I, I was always working with our department chairs, um, collaborating with other teachers, uh, to, you know, just to become a better teacher. Um, and I don't know if it's necessarily something where I was preaching the gospel of inquiry, but simply just having a conversation about what I'm doing in my classroom. Uh, and because of that, I've had a lot of really good conversations with, uh, social studies teachers with science teachers, with English teachers, uh, with math teachers, with our agricultural teacher about how we're using questions, um, in our building. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:15:00]  [00:15:30] | Um, and I haven't even had to preach the blueprint. It's just been simply kind of a natural, um, evolution of this is what I'm seeing in my classroom. What would it be if you ask questions in this way? I had a really good conversation at the end of this past year with our art teacher who had talked a lot about compelling questions with, um, she's super creative, uh, her final or one of her assessments was actually a series of, um, compelling [inaudible] types of questions about, uh, the art that they had just finished the project. And her assessment was about really like digging deeper into what was going on in the minds of the students while they were completing this artwork. And so I would say that my role in this school has kind of evolved both formally and informally. And because of that, I think I've gotten to have a lot more impact on, uh, instruction in our building than by simply being the person that says, let's do this, let's do this, let's do this. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:16:00]  [00:16:30] | Um, I think a lot of times people become better teachers, not because somebody told them to become a better teacher, but you show them to become a better teacher. And so I see my role as somebody who's a facilitator, but also somebody who just, I really like what I do. Um, and so I want to tell other people, um, this is really cool. Uh, this inquiry stuff is really cool. Um, what would it be like to do it in your class? Um, and one of the neat things about that is that I've gotten to see other teachers, um, take this idea of inquiry and do it in a little bit different way, um, than I, than I had even thought. And so, because of that, I think, um, because they've been allowed to make inquiry their own, um, it makes it less that, you know, Ryan Lewis department chair is saying, we should do inquiry. It's more like I saw this in my classroom. So I'm going to keep this compelling question bit, or I'm going to keep this source thing. Um, and so it kinda just grows from there to be quite honest. |
| Speaker 3:  [00:17:00] | Yeah. I need you to do something, um, before we move on to the defining inquiry and talking about it, but I need you to, just as a soundbite, tell the story of becoming a teacher, you know, in, in like two minutes. So something like, you know, I became a teacher about 12 years ago. Um, I've been at Woodford County high school for all of that time, and I've now become the department chair of the social studies department, something, something soundbite in case we cut all the shit you just said. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:17:30] | Okay. Um, so I became, uh, I've been, uh, back up for a second. Um, so I've been a teacher for County high school for the last 11, almost 12 years. Um, I became a teacher, um, right before that time. I've spent all that time here. Um, and I've kind of grown here and become the department chair, um, and I've loved every minute of it. |
| Speaker 5: | Okay, great. |
| Speaker 3: | Um, so tell me about, tell |
| Speaker 2: | Me about the first time you heard the word inquiry and how did that impact you? What's your sort of first experiences with the word inquiry? |
| [00:18:00]  Speaker 1:  [00:18:30] | So the first time I heard the word inquiry, I believe I was at a professional development with Kathy Swan. I'm from the university of Kentucky. And I don't even know if I remember the word inquiry as much as the word or the term compelling question. Um, and it was almost at that moment, um, that, that all of the things that I had been kind of struggling with to put a, like, just to put my finger on, kind of just came to a head, um, and I immediately saw the value of a compelling question as something that could frame instruction, um, and it could help students' learning. I didn't really understand at the moment what it would look like in the classroom, but I knew there was something about using questions as a more precise way of teaching, um, and also a more precise way for students to focus and, and hang their knowledge on something other than simply just content. |
| [00:19:00]  Speaker 1:  [00:19:30] | Um, and so I would guess probably, uh, if my memory serves that, um, I've eventually connected all of that back to inquiry and to IDM, um, and all of the different things that go with that, including, you know, you know, how, how the supporting questions are supposed to work, how the sources are supposed to work, how argument is supposed to work. But I would say all of that was probably secondary to me hearing the, just the term compelling question. Um, and that really just for me, kind of just changed the way I was thinking about my teaching, um, at the, at that moment. Um, I don't, and I don't think it's almost like I've kind of crossed the Rubicon. You can't really look at it anyway, different differently. |
| Speaker 3:  [00:20:00] | Yeah. We got the wearable con quote too, like the diffuser, Oh, you were so smart to get the Rubicon. You're gonna have to do it again. A friend of mine would use that term yesterday. So I was like, Ooh, that's a good one. You've used, you used it in your last interview. Kathy's mentioned it like the Rubicon |
| Speaker 2: | Talk about one of the little guys to do inquiry every day. Oh yeah. If you want to be involved in the PPM, |
| Speaker 1: | Could I say cross the river sticks into Haiti's |
| Speaker 2: | What about it that might throw it in a slightly negative way. Yeah. |
| [00:20:30]  Speaker 1: | Where would you, where would you like me to, |
| Speaker 3: | So you were |
| Speaker 2: | Talking about, um, sort |
| Speaker 3:  [00:21:00] | Of the first time you heard about inquiry, right? So you were talking about compelling questions and how that was such a defining moment and that once you got to that point, there was just no going back. So, |
| Speaker 1:  [00:21:30]  [00:22:00] | Um, so I, I would say that, uh, me thinking about inquiry hearing inquiry for the first time was really kind of secondary to me hearing just that term compelling question. Um, and it was, it was almost like since that moment, even though I didn't really understand what it would look like in my classroom, I didn't really know how it would fit into my curriculum. I knew there was something there. Um, and so from that moment on, I kinda sorta just kinda crossed the Rubicon of like, I really can't go back. I can't unthink, um, how to teach without using compelling questions. Um, it's not to say that immediately. I was like, Oh, this is, this is perfect. Everything's going to go this way. But I knew that there was something there. Um, and I knew that it was worth spending time on. Um, and so from that kind of moment on, I just kind of went down this own, this separate path of what is it that I'm really teaching my students. And, uh, what is the, what is the vehicle that I'm going to use, um, to kind of just push my teaching even further. |
| Speaker 3: | That's good. So with that, what sort of early experiences did you have with inquiry? What was the first time you can get specific the first time you taught with inquiry? |
| Speaker 1:  [00:22:30]  [00:23:00] | So I did, I kind of dabbled in questioning for awhile. Um, and I had been, I remember going to the professional development session and hearing compelling question before that time, I had been just kind of messing with questioning a little bit more, more from the side of student questioning, how do I get more student questions into the classroom? Um, and I had done a lot of things where I had tried to help students create questions in order to drive instruction. And I was really kind of frustrated with it. Uh, I remember immediately coming back from that PD session and thinking, okay, well, let's start using the term compelling question. Let's just start using that. Um, I didn't really do anything with IDM at that, at that point, but I simply just brought in the idea of a compelling question to my students. I knew what that was, and I knew what a supporting question was. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:23:30]  [00:24:00] | And so I said, uh, I think I did some experiment. I remember doing like my us history class. We were right in the middle of reconstruction and we pulled up one of those like really terrific Thomas Nast political cartoons. And I said, we're going to come up with a compelling question, um, to help us understand this cartoon a little bit better. Um, and it was a lot easier said than done, but at the end of the day, I think the students at the very least, I don't know what they got out of it necessarily, but they released say there's something that Thomas Nast here trying to say about race in America. Um, and they were able to at least come up with questions that pointed to that particular perspective. I got enough out of those conversations to think, I think this is worth it. And so I believe the next year I started trying to do implement my first kind of IDM. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:24:30]  [00:25:00] | I'm a very cautious teacher. I don't like to, I like to push my students a lot, but I am very, um, cautious about how I'm going to be structuring my teaching. I usually have to be able to see the very, very end before I can even start to think about what is this going to look like? So the next year I tried, um, uh, an IDM around the constitution. Um, and for a long time, I thought it was going very poorly. Um, it took about seven days, eight days to complete when I had blocked out maybe three. Um, and it was really difficult for the students. Um, and I was teaching, uh, you know, an advanced class. They didn't quite see a lot of the, the bigger picture. Um, they, uh, they were a little confused along the way. Um, and so at that moment, several times during that particular moment, I was like, I don't know what, what this is going to be like. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:25:30] | Um, but I said, you know what? I tried, it we'd have to, we have to ride the whole thing out. And so we did the entire thing and they ended up writing an essay about, um, the, the extent to which they believe the constitution was adjust, uh, formed adjust government. Um, and their essays were fantastic. Um, they, they blew me away and it wasn't really because, um, the, the kids, I taught them how to write and all of a sudden they knew how to write. It was like they, because there was this question hanging out in front of them. They had a very, very clear picture of what it was that they were writing to. Um, and because the, because they had done all these tasks, they had, they had, they were able to go back and say, this, this is what I know. This is what I know. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:26:00]  [00:26:30] | This is what I know. They didn't have to front load their argument and then go, you know, backload all of this information. They already had it. Um, and so I, at that moment, I read those essays. I said, okay, there's something about this process that is important. And so, even though I would say that my, I would say my first couple of experiences with inquiry were really inconclusive. Um, but there was enough that came out of the initial conversations with students and what they were producing that made me think that I think there's something here. Um, I don't think that year I did another IDM. Um, but instead I think I went and I started like kind of plugging in elements of it and the next and the kind of the third year. Um, I started kind of wholesale structuring my instruction around these key four to five inquiries. Um, until eventually it kind of blew up to where I'm structuring a lot of what my stuff is around, uh, this inquiry thing. |
| Speaker 3: | So tell me when you, if you were trying to explain to a colleague at IBM, how would you, how do you define the inquiry design model and how do you describe it? |
| [00:27:00]  Speaker 1:  [00:27:30] | So when I'm trying to talk to other teachers about the inquiry design model IDM, um, I usually talk about it as a way of thinking about inquiry based learning. Um, and I think, I think one of the phrases I've, I've heard you say several times is we didn't invent fire. Right. But I think what, what you've, what the IDM does is it shows people how to make fire, like, um, and the reason why I like it, I mean, when I first saw the blueprint, I was like, this just makes all of the, like the scatterbrain stuff that I usually have going on. Just feel so calm because I've got a question, I've got a series of scaffolds I've got, I know clearly where I'm going. And I remember showing it to a student for the first time. And they were like, I like this. And I asked them, I said, why do you like this? |
| Speaker 1:  [00:28:00]  [00:28:30] | And I said, well, I just, I see, I see everything that I need to do. Like, and I like that. And I think from a teaching perspective, that made me feel really good. I, so when I, when I talked to colleagues about it, I simply say, this is a way of mapping out exactly how I'm going to tackle this question. Um, because otherwise, and I would say here's the flip side of the coin. Um, while I'm in love with compelling questions, I have sometimes floated compelling questions and immediately what happens, which is good, but is probably, uh, maybe premature, uh, for a lot of students is they immediately want to go to their position. Um, and I'm a very firm believer that we, uh, you've got to really build from the ground up. You've got to, um, you've got to really walk through evidence in order to make your claims, to make your, um, um, to test your assumptions in order to build your argument. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:29:00]  [00:29:30] | And I think the IDM model allows people to do that, even when they don't realize that they're doing that, that by going through the tasks and sources along the way, answering these kind of seemingly small supporting questions, a lot of students think they're just checking the boxes, but what they're really doing is building a, uh, a context for how to answer this bigger question that they just did not have before. Um, and so when I talk about the IDM model, I usually tell other teachers who are maybe overwhelmed by it. Um, I say, this is not prescriptive. This doesn't tell me how I'm going to walk through the documents with, with my students. It doesn't mean that I don't teach at all. It doesn't mean that, um, that I can't, uh, switch out sources or change them or excerpt them, or, um, you know, you basically use my expertise as a teacher to know my students and to change things that I need to change. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:30:00]  [00:30:30] | Like all of this is very flexible. Um, and so from that perspective, what it is simply telling you is these are my, this is my end point, and these are my checkpoints. Um, and so I I've usually had a lot of, um, the conversations that I've had that were student or teachers are really struggling with this model, uh, that usually diffuses that. And they immediately say, Oh, well, this is how I teach my kids to read. We'll do that, do that, and then answer the supporting question. And then we have no problem. Right. And, uh, most of them are like, yeah, I can do that. Um, so I think it's usually a matter of just saying number one, I think asking how do you feel when you look at this? And then the second thing is helping them kind of to debunk those fears a little bit as they walk through this process, |
| Speaker 3:  [00:31:00] | How do you, um, how do you feel that was great. Um, it's going to go on that advertisement for IBM, um, that we're going to splice out of here. Um, uh, ha I think one of the things that I was trying to get summer to talk about yesterday and my tagline, a new, um, talk about can't remember all of last week, but just, how did your role change as a teacher when you start teaching with inquiry? What, what are sort of the major shifts that you've seen, you know, in terms of your role? |
| Speaker 1:  [00:31:30]  [00:32:00] | So my role as a teacher, um, has changed, I would say, um, not dramatically by any means, but it has definitely evolved how I teach. Um, what I would say is this, and I'll kind of preface. That is what I've noticed with, um, the use of compelling questions and using IDM in my classroom is it is absolutely incumbent on the student to answer that question for themselves. What it forces students to do is to have to make an argument. Now that doesn't seem wild when we say that, but in the moment of teaching, uh, many of our students have been accustomed to being able to find an answer, um, rather than simply create one. Um, and so because of that, the process of getting students to that moment where they're making their argument, um, is really critical. That's my favorite part of the entire thing, but it's really critical. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:32:30]  [00:33:00] | Um, they need enough support, um, in order for them to even put the pieces together. But what I've noticed, it's almost like it's almost like holding an egg, and then if you, if you grip it too tightly, it's, it's gonna break. Um, if you, if you, if you truncate everything too much for the student, what you get on the other end is, is simply just not as a robust answer. Um, and it kind of kills the process. Um, so because of that, because I have to be both the support, but also have to like, you know, kick the kid out in the pasture a little bit to kind of figure things out on their own. Um, my role as, as, as a teacher has truly changed to a facilitator, um, and also somebody who is, is really committed to building context for students. One of the biggest mistakes as teachers we make is I think this question is really important, but it may not actually be important to the students yet. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:33:30]  [00:34:00] | Um, even if it's like this beautiful question that like, you know, everybody w wow. I mean, yeah. I mean, I show it to other teachers. Oh, that's a great question. Um, some of my students may not even know what the, what those things mean. So my role now has become also, I've got to build context and I'll have to build, I have to create supports. Um, and so, you know, you know, I hear a lot of teachers say, well, what do I do as a teacher when I'm teaching IDM? Do I just give them the documents? No, don't just give them the documents and walk away, um, because you will get nothing. Um, there is, there is, um, I guess I would say it this way. I think that the teacher then becomes really, um, a partner in their learning rather than simply just the one who's dictating their learning. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:34:30] | Um, and that's really what I've enjoyed the most about it is it relieves a little bit of the pressure on me to be able to deliver every single piece of information to them, but it's also amped up my, um, uh, I guess the pressure on me as somebody who is, uh, who was having to teach these skills along the way. I can't expect a student to be able to create an argument without me understanding how those pieces work. And so I can help them every single step of the way. So it's just simply shifted my expertise from one area to another place. And to be quite honest, I prefer this place, um, than simply somebody who's just the deliver of content. Um, if anything, it's because they've got this question staring in front of them, and I said, well, we have to answer this question, guys. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:35:00]  [00:35:30] | We can't just be like, wow, this is a nice question. Let's just move on. We have to engage this question. Um, and it's allowed me to simplify my teaching down to some, a smaller arsenal of things that I, that I need to be good at rather than simply, uh, I don't know, somebody once said, uh, to put on a laser show, right. Um, I don't need to put on a laser show, but we're simply just working through a, um, a problem together and the feedback and the connections I've made with students, um, has been, uh, just so rewarding because of the process. So |
| Speaker 3:  [00:36:00]  [00:36:30] | When you to, I want you to talk a little bit about, um, so one of the things I hear hear from teachers novices in inquiry is when they're explaining sort of, I think one of the things that happens immediately is that you have to give up a little control as a teacher, but that doesn't mean to you a really good point that you're not doing anything or that you're just letting students go. I sort of cringe when I hear well, you've just let students go. And I'm like, then you're not doing it. Right. You know? So I think one of the things that's really hard is the, is the skill work that's involved in building up students' capacity. I mean, you've taught me a lot about this. So building up students' capacity to do that, what seems like a really simple thing answer the question is actually quite challenging. So maybe you could talk a little bit about, you know, the ways in which you have to build up that, that capacity to read evidence in order to develop a claim in order to understand what is a claim. So maybe get, maybe talk a little bit about that. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:37:00]  [00:37:30] | So I can talk about that in kind of two, two different ways. I think from a teacher's standpoint, um, I remember going to a, a meeting with some middle school teachers once, uh, along with some high school and were doing some vertical alignment stuff. And we at, at that time, this was several years ago, uh, pre inquiry, pre IDM, but we were talking about how do we increase the skill level of our students from six all the way through 12? And the department chair at the middle school said something really, really good, uh, that stuck with me. And he said, uh, he said two things. He said, well, number one, we're going to have to step outside of the textbook. Um, and we're going to have as teachers we're going to have to start reading, um, and bringing in stuff from all, all sources for this to work. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:38:00] | Uh, and the second of all, we're going to have to be able to do these things we're going to ask our students to do. Um, and so I would say that there is a learning curve to teaching through inquiry based learning that the teacher is going to have to at some point get over. Um, and I don't, I don't say this as a scary thing. I just simply say like with any new method, there is going to have to be a paradigm shift, a mind shift, a skill shift, whatever it is. Um, and that, and in order to whether they're veteran teachers starting with inquiry or novice teachers starting with inquiry, I think the challenge might be the same if I don't, at least for me, if I don't understand how I would approach this particular question and build my capacity for understanding how this works, there is no way that I'm going to be able to show students how to do this. |
| [00:38:30]  Speaker 1:  [00:39:00] | And what I learned early on when I couldn't do those things, I found that I was spoon-feeding students. Um, uh, very, I guess, kind of like prescriptive, like, well, just say this right, or just do this. Um, cause you know, this, this is at least a valid answer you could, and then, then find that, you know, I felt like I was doing things backwards and at some moment I just, I kind of stopped to myself and I said, this is not really, this is not how I write. This is not how the best writers I know, uh, write this stuff. Um, they spend time with this evidence and they work through it that way. So my conversation in my mind was had to shift a little bit to what am I, what are, what are the ways that I'm going to show students to proceed through evidence, to proceed, proceed through conflicting information in order to kind of emerge out of that. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:39:30]  [00:40:00] | And so I, I kind of came up with several different methods. Um, but one of them, I, you know, and I've talked to you all about this a lot was like, there's got to be some emphasis on this business of claim making. And so for me, it boiled down to if a student can make a valid claim, they can do any of these other things. So it was like, it took me almost like three years to figure out what is it, what's the, like the linchpin of this whole thing. And so what I, what I worked on it was, um, so, so it became, so how do I get students to make a claim? Right? And so we worked, uh, I worked through series of scaffolds and structures and tried things that were successful and threw things out that were not. And, uh, for me, it was very much like if I can get my students to make a claim, they can then use that claim to craft an argument. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:40:30] | Um, and so it was all hands on deck. And so, you know, claim making has been part of the, has become the part of the culture of my classrooms. Um, I teach AP level, I teach electives, I've taught, um, you know, struggling readers and the common denominator in all of those was can I get them to make a claim? Um, some may be more sophisticated than others, but if they can do that, then they have the capacity to answer this question. Um, and that's worked for me. I know other individuals, uh, other teachers who, for them that wasn't the ground zero for them. It was the question itself, the compelling question. And so I, I, you know, I asked there was a younger teacher in our department. I said, so I know you're doing an inquiry. You're trying this out. Um, she was teaching an elective, so she was really getting to experiment with them. |
| [00:41:00]  Speaker 1:  [00:41:30] | And I said, so how are you walking through this? And every single day, she was like, well, I start my class out every single day with us talking about that compelling question, even though we're not at the end of the inquiry yet. And so we, you know, my, my bell ringer or my starter or whatever it is that starts our conversation for the day centers around that question. Um, and so we continually go back to it based on what we know, and that carries that for her was the, um, whatever you want to call it. The, the thread that ran through the entire inquiry with which, for me was really eyeopening. Um, whereas I had been focusing on claims. I thought maybe, well, let's, let's put this in front of them a little bit more. And it really, it really changed how I was doing in Korea at that time. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:42:00]  [00:42:30] | So to kind of circle back, I think what it is is teachers are going to have to, um, at some point decide, uh, what it is for them. That is the most important thing that students are doing in this inquiry process. If they can build the students' capacity to do that one thing, I think that's the, the skill that helps all the other things kind of translate. I don't think it has to be the same thing for every teacher. I do think, and this is just me. I do think if students could do claims they can do anything. But, um, so if teachers ask me, I say, we'll start with claims, but I've seen that other teachers have found ways of making it work for them. Um, and they've been brilliant at it. So |
| Speaker 3: | Well, to your point though, the claim, now that we've talked about this, but the claim involves the question and it also involves the source, but it's the outcome and the task that actually sort of drives ultimately the instruction. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:43:00]  [00:43:30] | Right. Um, and so if, so I've talked about, uh, Clint, I, you know, I talk about claims so much that it's almost a joke in my class. Um, we end, um, we usually like, it'd be like, all right, guys, we have, we need to, you know, students or wherever we're packing and getting, getting ready to leave. I was like, okay, we're going to, we're going to end class today. And the kids will finish my sense. We know we're writing a claim. Right. Um, and, and S and so I would say that those that has become part of my instruction, um, and how to write a claim, how to speak in claim, language, how to use evidence has become part of my instruction. I have presented that to other teachers before, and they will look at it. Some of them are like, Oh, that I love that I'm going to just take all that and use it on my own. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:44:00]  [00:44:30] | Other people are very much like, well, I'm not sure I like this word claim. I like the word position. I like the word argument. And to me, to them, I'm like, okay, that's fine. I would say they're almost interchangeable, but for them, they, they, they have gravitated more to, um, different things about the inquiry process that are part and parcel of the instruction. And so I think to me, when I, you know, if I'm, if I'm promoting IDM, I'm not necessarily saying there is one size fits all. I know what works for me, but if, if you would rather call this something else and still get kids to the, uh, compelling question, finish line, do it, even if you're wrong, even if claims are actually the most important thing you should be doing in your yes. |
| Speaker 3:  [00:45:00] | So now we're going to take break. Um, why, how is inquiry, um, why, why is inquiry so good for social studies? Like, what's the, you know, why are they the, you know, chocolate and the peanut butter? Why does, why does inquiry, how does inquiry help support the teaching and the meaning and the purpose of social studies? |
| Speaker 1:  [00:45:30] | So can I ask a side question before I answer? Um, is it okay if I say things that I know I've said already? Okay. Okay. So the reason why I think that inquiry is so good for social studies is, um, I don't know. I think there's something that we've, this is kind of a lost art in education. I think that we learn through questions. Um, I think that humans are naturally inquisitive people. Um, and that, to, to remove the question from the learning process is to actually in many cases, just absolutely, uh, water down, what you're doing. Um, there are several years ago, like right around the time I was starting to kind of wrap my head around the inquiry process. I was listening to a science educator, um, on some being interviewed. Um, and she had changed her focus from research to public education and science education. |
| [00:46:00]  Speaker 1:  [00:46:30] | Um, and she said something that was really profound to me. She said science became boring. When we started giving the answers to students and stopped giving them the questions. And she said, the thing that made me a scientist wasn't that I knew all this information about the world and then decided I'm going to become a biologist. They were the questions that I had about the world around me, which made me want to be a biologist. And she said that we've done that in most of our S and most of our schools that we've, we've taken all the answers that we've already figured out and said, all right, students, this is, this is what you need to know, rather than saying, these are the questions that we started out with before we knew this information. Now let's, let's, I'm going to present to you the same questions. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:47:00]  [00:47:30]  [00:48:00] | And I, and so when it comes to social studies, I don't think that's any different, but I would say at a higher level, because we are social creatures students that are always going to be asking social questions, um, even when they don't realize it, the decisions they make every day, what I think inquiry does is take the questions that we know in our expertise as teachers are important. And we present it to students in a way that forces them to have to wrestle with those questions, too. I think compelling questions are good questions when they're authentic questions, when they're questions that a historian or a government official, or a political scientist or sociologists would ask. And I think what it does is when we take those same questions and we make them accessible to students, um, then what it does is it is, it does what that one educator was saying. We are actually presenting the question that even the most inquisitive are asking, and we're asking you to do the same thing. Um, and it was just a game changer, um, to how I was teaching. And so I think it goes beyond just the classroom. I think it is, it is tapping into just the way that we naturally kind of approach social life. So why wouldn't, why wouldn't I ask these questions? Why wouldn't I do inquiry with social studies? Um, because I feel like it's just a natural, uh, step natural progression in how we learn. |
| Speaker 3: | That's great. So to that end, how does inquiry make better citizens? |
| Speaker 1:  [00:48:30]  [00:49:00] | So I think that inquiry makes better citizens because I think it forces well, I'll say it this way. Um, I think it, it, it forces individuals to acknowledge competing views. I think the beauty of a compelling question is that there are multiple ways of, of boom screen. I heard that too. I can start that over again. Okay. I think that, um, inquiry makes better citizens because I think in essence, um, inquiry forces, the acknowledgement of competing views. I think when students have to grapple with, um, competing views that are valid, that are backed up by evidence. It's not just someone else's opinion, it's simply, well, I don't know what to do with this information. How do I take what I think and account for what this other thing is saying? Um, I think it, it makes students more aware that there are multiple ways of seeing something, um, and then, then re situates them as well. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:49:30]  [00:50:00]  [00:50:30] | If there are multiple ways of saying this, there must be multiple people who have these points of view. And so I think part of what makes us a really good a citizen, nevermind a good citizen, um, is that we are, whether we like it or not, we are, we live in a community with people when we are a part of a school culture, a city culture, a national culture, whatever you want to call it, um, where we have competing views. And in order for, um, in order for citizenship to actually work, people have to feel like they belong somewhere. Um, and I don't even think it's like a, you know, everybody, it's not a kumbaya moment. It's just simply an acknowledgement of, there are reasons why people hold the views that they hold inquiry brings that out. And rather than just simply saying, well, there's competing opinions. It actually shows the reasoning behind why those opinions exist. And, um, I think that's what really, um, makes inquiry good for producing, uh, citizens who at least can acknowledge, I understand this about the world, but that is not simply just the only way of looking at it. And so that's why I think, I think inquiry just naturally brings that out of the learning process. |
| Speaker 2: | Yeah. Okay. Why don't we take break that was sent on that day and take it a 15 minute break. |
| [00:51:00]  Speaker 1: | The stool was creaking just a little bit. I moved it. |
| [00:51:30]  Speaker 2: | Sound speed. I also want to have you talk a little bit about teach too. |
| Speaker 3: | Um, I don't know if we'll use it, but |
| Speaker 2: | Oh, okay. |
| Speaker 3:  [00:52:00] | But that's fine. It might be kind of cool to have a little bit, then what we're going to do is shift gears and talk about, um, here and growing out from you into, you've done a little bit of that already, so I'm happy to do that more explicitly. Okay. So, um, tell me about, um, sort of how important is it to have collaborators in this work, particularly in your early experiences with inquiry? |
| [00:52:30]  Speaker 1:  [00:53:00] | I think it's really important to have, um, collaborators in this work with inquiry, because I think like anything else, um, especially in teaching, uh, I think the best teachers are the teachers that understand their weaknesses as well as their strengths. Um, and for example, um, I started working with, um, Ryan new from a different district and he is a very, you know, where I'm a very cautious teacher. I would say that he's probably not a very cautious teacher. He's, he's the type of person that will just throw anything to his, into his classroom, um, and just see what kind of happens. And I'd always, I'd always kind of freaks me out a little bit. And so there were, you know, when I, I started doing a couple of things with inquiry on my own, and I just kept hitting a couple of these walls about like, I just, I just couldn't visualize how it was gonna work on a day to day basis. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:53:30]  [00:54:00] | And so I simply just said, you know, I know you've been doing this in your classroom. What does this look like? I wasn't even like, how do you get students to write or whatever I just said, what does it look like in your classroom? Um, and so he, you know, he would explain like, this is, this is what I do. This is what my students do for homework. This is my expectation for class. Um, you know, basically then the, the things that you would normally talk about with other teachers we were doing, we were just talking about how we were doing inquiry. And so I began to talk to him about getting a picture of, okay, well, that's interesting that works for him. What elements would work well in my classroom? What elements are things that I may have to push down the road or we're not even used. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:54:30]  [00:55:00] | Um, and, and so the reason why I thought that that relationship was really important for me, it really taught me this idea that, uh, first of all, just like teaching. And I say that a lot for teachers who think that inquiry is, is something totally different from teaching, just like teaching. Um, you are going to have to own it yourself in your own classroom, but at the same time, you are going to have to find, um, other individuals who can see your blind spots and can maybe just open your eyes to something different. Um, every time I have talked to somebody else about inquiry, um, I have come away with a different perspective on what it could look like in a classroom. Um, for example, a really close teacher, friend of mine. Um, she, uh, had looked at C3 stuff on her own, you know, several years ago really liked it because of her, her schedule and the classes she was teaching. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:55:30]  [00:56:00] | She really didn't have an Avenue to, to put it in there. And then I, I started talking to her about how I use compelling questions and IDM in my AP classes. And she's she thought, okay, well, where can I, where can I put that in? She started by using a, an inquiry that I had come up with a couple of years ago about, you know, why does, why did the South secede? So she started using that in her AP class. Um, and then eventually, uh, evolved in her creating an entire simulation around a question that dealt with the gilded age. She, she put the compelling question at the center of it. Um, and rather than simply just marching through the blueprint while it was there as a structure, she had woven in the simulation that went along with it and had just totally taken something that I, you know, I didn't see and make it fit to what she needed curricularly, um, or, you know, content-related, uh, and so because of that, I, I think that talking about inquiry with other teachers is both a, I need help with this. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:56:30] | Um, how do you do this? I'm struggling with, you know, whatever it is, pick up whatever. Um, but it's also really important for you to kind of broaden your horizons to see what's possible with it. Um, the blueprint is a blueprint. That's, that's what it is, it's, it is not the thing that is going to make it come alive in your classroom. It is simply a structure for you to rely on while you are making your students part of this process with you. Um, and so I would say that importance, you know, I looked at a lot of what, you know, my friend Ryan did in his classroom, and I said, there's, I can't do that. He was teaching seniors. I was teaching sophomores. Uh, my students were just not mature enough to do some of the more difficult tasks that they were doing, but we were still doing the same questions. |
| [00:57:00]  Speaker 1:  [00:57:30] | We were still doing the same tasks. We were still doing it. You know, my students were struggling with class this discussion while his work selling at it. Um, and so we were in different places. And so, but we, we were still pursuing the same questions and goals. Um, and I think that by having that discussion by having that comradery, uh, and it was an informal one, we were teaching at different schools. We weren't in the same PLC. Um, it helped us to get a clearer picture of what it was we were doing. Um, and so because of that, I don't, I just don't think you can do inquiry by yourself. I think if you, if you do that, it's going to be frustrating. Um, cause I've been there. Um, and it's ultimately going to, um, it's ultimately going to feel like just kind of the same old thing. Um, and so other, you got to have at least one other person that you're talking to about this. |
| Speaker 3:  [00:58:00]  [00:58:30]  [00:59:00] | That's good. I always, um, it's interesting cause I've always thought even back 20 years ago when I was a teacher in a school, a K-12 in high school, I remember there was this feeling like I had to be that there was this one style that works. And I remember developing the phrase, my style makes your style possible. And that sort of stuck with me because I think for instance, in the mic now, Ryan, Allie has a different style than I do, but I'm really thankful that my students have him and me not like you did all me all the time. I think our students benefit from having different styles in the classroom. And so much of what you said, it's really that the blueprint is just sort of an agreed, agreed that agreement, that social studies is about questions, tasks, and sources, the instructional style or craft piece is up to sort of the teacher to sort of add, you know, add their sort of flavor or their style or their craft online to sort of this agreed upon Mmm. Purpose and function of social studies. Yeah. Yeah. |
| Speaker 1:  [00:59:30]  [01:00:00] | I would agree, you know, it's um, it's interesting. I like, I liked the idea that, that the IDM is, is, is simply kind of an agreed on structure, a purpose, uh, whatever you want to call it goal. Um, even if you've got, even if you boiled it down to like, this was our assessment, um, I, I think, I think a lot of teachers look at the blueprint and think this teaches it for me. Some teachers are like, Oh, okay, great. I don't have to do anything. Other teachers are like, well, there's so many things that I love about this content and unit that I don't see in the blueprint. I would say to both of those styles of teachers, first of all, you have to do something, um, or it will not be fun. The second to the second teacher that sees the blueprint as this, maybe this monolith or whatever. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:00:30]  [01:01:00] | Um, I would just say that that is not really what makes inquiry work. I would say that you have to have somebody who, uh, thinks that question is important and is willing to, um, put it in the language of their, of their students. Now, this is, I, I, with that said, I will say, if your students are not answering the compelling question, you're not doing it right. Like it's, it's like, um, it's like, if you're shopping for a car or something like that, and you go to the, the, the parking lot and you're like, well, I'm going to buy a car and then you don't actually ever buy a car. You test drive everything, and then you walk away. Um, like you, you have to get in the vehicle. Like you have to get into the compelling question vehicle. You, you have to agree that these steps are really, really important, but how you get your students to those steps, I think is, um, is really important. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:01:30]  [01:02:00] | And I think it brings out the expertise of the teacher. I think so many, that's what I was trying to say earlier. Um, I think so many people look at the blueprint as a monolith and think where is, whereas where's the teacher in this? And I would say actually the expertise of the teacher is actually amplified because we are going to have to not only create the context, deliver content, but we're also going to have to show them how people think through this and what better way to do that than to have, uh, you know, have it in a safe environment, in a classroom where students get to practice and learn and fail at this process of thinking. Um, and I think we've, um, you know, I think it was telling you earlier, many of our students say to me, Mr. Lewis, this is one of the first times that people have actually asked us what we think. Um, and for some students that's very freeing. I think it's very scary for others. I think it's also very freeing for some teachers and it's also very scary for some teachers. Um, so I think it, that collaboration piece with other teachers really, I think, brings to the forefront, what it is that teachers can do. Um, and I think it, ultimately, I think it honors their expertise. |
| Speaker 1: | I wanna, |
| Speaker 3:  [01:02:30]  [01:03:00] | I wanna spend a little bit of time on that collaboration piece, but before you, I don't want to lose this analogy that you brought up earlier, which is, I think you were saying inquiry is like holding or cradling an egg that if you squeeze too tight, you're going to break the egg. Um, so speaking to that sort of control, but if you hold it too loosely, you didn't finish your thought on that. Um, you were saying something really brilliant, but I kept, I kept thinking that you're right, because if you, if you don't hold it at all, it's going to fall to the ground and collapse. So maybe you can talk a little bit and of talk through that analogy. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:03:30] | So I think, um, doing inquiry a lot is like, it's like, like holding an egg in your hand, um, to the extent that if, if you are, uh, if you, if you try to control the process too much, if you try to, um, try to maybe truncate or to, to limit, what's the options that students have to think freely. If you, if you bring in the boundaries too much of student thinking and not allow them to explore their own and sometimes fail, um, explore their own ways of thinking, uh, you're gonna break the egg, like you're, you're gonna, it's gonna, it's gonna kill the magic of it. Um, at the same time, if you're walking down a hallway, the ag totally, you know, unprotected, um, it's gonna go off the rails, it's gonna break on the ground. And then the kids are sitting there trying to like pick up the pieces of like, what, what are we supposed to know? |
| [01:04:00]  Speaker 1:  [01:04:30] | Like what are we supposed to be able to do? Um, and I think one of the things that inquiry does as a teacher, one of the best ways I think to approach inquiry is, uh, I'm setting the purpose. I'm setting the parameters we're going to, we are going to, you know, the compelling question is going to set our parameters here, but they're soft. You can go anywhere you want inside the parameters. You can do whatever you want. You can think this way, as long as it's, as it's supported by the evidence that we're looking at, as long as it is, uh, as long as you're okay with it, you know, conflicting with your opinions and changing your mind. That's okay. If we feel like we need to extend the borders a little bit more, we can, if we need to bring them in a little bit tighter because we're freaked out. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:05:00]  [01:05:30] | Cause we don't know what we know we can, but there's room to do that. And I think that's about knowing your students, um, more than anything else. There have been several times, especially when I was really new at doing inquiry where I held that. I mean, I held the egg on super tight, cause I didn't know where we were going either. Um, and it just, it just killed the, it just like took all the oxygen out of the room. It was like all of a sudden like students were like, Oh, well we do these things. And then, well, here's my, like, here's my answer. And they were very much, um, it was very dry and they didn't, they didn't challenge each other. They didn't challenge themselves. They learn things. Um, but there was not ownership of it. Um, I would say that the one thing about inquiry that makes it just a little bit different, um, at the very least than traditional instruction is that at the end of the day, when students learn something, they have learned it on their own. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:06:00]  [01:06:30] | Uh, and it's theirs. Um, whereas if I am simply teaching them something, even if I'm doing source work and doing all the cool, you know, history, geography, you know, like history stuff, um, like they're learning cool things, but it's not, it's not theirs. And there's something about the ownership piece. Um, earlier this year I was in my government and, uh, sociology classes, I structured each unit around a compelling question. Um, and it was nice to be able to start the year and saying, by the end of this year, guys, you will have answers to all of these questions. Um, and I think for, I didn't get any like aha moments or like students who were like, wow, but I think as time went on, they eventually saw that they, their knowledge was going to be centered around their ability to answer this question. It wasn't going to be separated from it. Would they pick up pieces on the way? Yes. But, um, were there times that I held the act too tight? Yeah. Uh, were there times that you let it fall? Yeah. But ultimately they were, their knowledge was hinging on their ability to understand and to deal with that question. Um, and because of that, there was some kind of ownership of what they knew. Uh, and for me, that's kind of the magic of, of inquiry. |
| [01:07:00]  Speaker 3:  [01:07:30] | It feels to me that that's what keeps inquiry interesting as a teacher is that you're never quite sure whether you have your you're holding on too tight or non too loose that, that changes from day to day. And, um, sometimes you are, sometimes you aren't, but you're always questioning yourself. Am I, could I be less in this and still produce a good result? |
| Speaker 1:  [01:08:00]  [01:08:30] | Yeah. I, I have, I'll put it this way. Um, the past, probably two years in particular, maybe three, definitely the past two. Um, there have been multiple moments, you know, after I, uh, after I was con I had convinced myself that there was something special about this, that there was something to it. There were several moments where I simply said, what am I doing? Like, um, you know, it would be easier for me, um, to set up shop and to, you know, maybe not like maybe not actually like easier as far as like hours spent, but it would be easier for me to simply do some readings, do some questions, do some discussion and just finish the content, just get through it. Um, and there were multiple times when we just did that. Um, but there was a moment, uh, I was teaching a European history for the first time, about two years ago. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:09:00] | And, uh, first time I had taught the course, most difficult course I've ever taught as far as just wrangling with the content. Um, and I had created an inquiry, um, on absolutism and it was a big one. It was tough. There was a lot of stuff in there had really, really sharp kids, probably the smartest group of kids I've ever taught and which is on the one hand. Good. But also they see everything. Um, and I had, I put the inquiry up in front of them and I, there was a student who had had in another class before and she said, Oh, is this an inquiry? And I said, yes. And she, and she said, she's kind of groaned. And I said, well, what's, what's wrong. And she's like, you know, this is, this is a brilliant student. Um, one of the best I've ever had, she goes, these are so much work. |
| [01:09:30]  Speaker 1:  [01:10:00] | I don't want to do it. And I said, I understand. And that was, it was a, it was a, it was a slog of an inquiry. Um, mostly because I had made it too big. My design was too big, but then at the end of it, um, and because of time constraints, um, I had them write a thesis statement that answered the, you know, basically, um, how basically alluded to the, the effect of absolutism on, on Europe. And, um, it was one of those moments where we were just speeding along. I took up their thesis statements. They actually wrote, uh, an introductory paragraph, including a thesis, rather than doing an outline or something like that because we needed the practice. And it was one of those things I took them up and then we were just onto the next thing, cause we were close to a break and I had set them aside in a little bit of time later, I picked those things up and I was just blown away by how well they were able to tackle this question that I said, yeah, we have to keep doing this. |
| [01:10:30]  Speaker 1:  [01:11:00] | There was no way I would have gotten them to that point. If I simply just, just lectured, just done some simulations or done, done all that. Like the bag of tricks that we normally like roll out when we're trying to make something interesting. Um, it was a slog. They didn't, you know, a lot of my students didn't like it, it was difficult. There was a lot of different strands running through, but the end they had these series of claims that they had developed along the way. And watching them just kind of click together at the end was just abs, I mean, I kept some of them because I was like, these are the best thesis statements I have ever read. And yes, granted, these are great students and they can write anything, but it was the way they were writing. And it was what they were saying. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:11:30] | None of them were the same. And that, that convinced me that there was something about even if it means that some other things fall off the content wagon. Um, I need to keep this going. Um, and so I guess to circle back to what you were saying, like, there are a lot of times when I have questions about what I'm doing with inquiry, um, and that doesn't go away, but I'm convinced that at least this is better than what I was doing and I like it a lot more. So I'm just going to keep doing it. So, and, and I would say that the products that I'm getting from students are just better. They're just better than the stuff that I was doing before. |
| Speaker 3:  [01:12:00]  [01:12:30] | Alright. We just got to go now. Awesome. I'm going to ask you one last question that we're fucking moving on. Okay. Um, um, how do you respond sometimes when I see other people, you know, I, I, you know, me, I'm always looking at other people who were haunting, you know, doing their ticket in a road show on the road or show on the road. And it feels like one of the myths around inquiry is that it's fun. So how, how do you respond to the folks that say, you know, it's usually people who aren't actually doing inquiry or selling you inquiry, who says, Oh, kids are totally gage and it's so much fun to do inquiry. Like inquiry is fun. If you do this, you'll have this totally non Bueller like, you know, classroom. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:13:00]  [01:13:30]  [01:14:00] | Um, I will. So it, I don't know. I guess the question I'm answering is this inquiry fun. So I'm probably the wrong person to ask this question to. Um, mostly because I am just, I'm just not that gimmicky teacher, like I have to try to do gimmicky things, um, because it's just, it's just not part of me. Uh, I would say this, I think that if I think social studies is important, that it's valuable. Um, if I think that there are important questions for us to ask, then I don't think I have to sell the importance of those things. I don't, um, what I think students need and I'm for I'm for having fun. That's one thing I don't think inquiry is inherently fun. What I think inquiry is, is it is rigorous. And I actually think that students are craving rigor. Um, I think that if it, if it's authentic, if it's real, then students are going to gravitate toward it, whether they want to or not. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:14:30] | Um, and I had a really interesting conversation. I had two really struggling learners this year in one of my sociology classes. And we were doing a unit on race, which was a very, it was a contentious one. We were asking the question is race real. Um, I had written a compelling question around that and these two students were very much disengaged. Um, they, they both, they both had some literacy issues. Um, it was not, it was not, I wouldn't call it a fun inquiry at all. We talked about some things that nobody ever wants to talk about. So it wasn't fun. And I had a student teacher and he was doing an activity, uh, involved in that. And so I pulled those two kids out in the hallway and we just sat and we had a conversation about some of the things that we had been talking about and what ended up coming out where some of the best, most honest answers about issues of race in our, in particular, our school building, then I, that I had with some of my other students. |
| [01:15:00]  Speaker 1:  [01:15:30] | And it wasn't because I had made it fun. Like, I don't know how you can say, all right, guys, we're going to make race fun today, but it was rigorous. And it got cut to the heart of what people thought were really important. So I would say, I wouldn't say that inquiry is fun. Um, but does it have, does it have to be fun? Um, you know, I, I think that if we are authentic with students and give them things that are worth taking time on, they will eventually take the time to, um, so I don't think you have to sell inquiry. I just simply think you need to show students how to do it. |
| Speaker 3:  [01:16:00] | That was awesome. It was 20 seconds. There's the whole thing, but the last part was unbelievable. Yeah. I think, um, I think, you know, one of the times I really remember, you know, we've written our first IBM book. We were coming off the assembly line and all of that was just happening so fast that you don't really have a time to ask yourself, does this mean, |
| Speaker 1: | Yeah. |
| Speaker 3:  [01:16:30] | Or is this, I remember though when you and Ryan knew gravitated to it, and I knew, I forget what exact conversation we had, but I consider, you know, you too, I take the Pepsi challenge and any teacher across this country, you know, and I remember you to gravitate into it before anybody else in the class. And knowing that if, if something appealed to both of you intellectually and pedagogically, that we were onto something meaningful. So, um, just remember that was a, it was just a confirming online professional sort of career. So they were in this place right now, or, you know, viewing you about it. But |
| Speaker 1: | It is really weird. I try not to like think too much, like, what are we doing here? Like, you care about my opinion about this. |
| [01:17:00]  Speaker 3: | We couldn't do this interview five years ago or seven years ago. No, |
| Speaker 1:  [01:17:30] | Not at all. Um, in fact I would have probably said, no, if you were like, let's interview, like what it look, I was like, no, because there's a big, like trash sheet behind this door and nobody knows anything. And we're just trying to figure, you know, trying to figure this thing out. So I would have, I would have said no. Um, I'm mostly telling you things that I've already liked just told my wife and she's been like, okay, whatever, like over the years of like, Hey, what about this? What about this? What about this? And, um, uh, or, or other people that I just bounce ideas off of. So this is usually, this is, this is what this is. What's been bouncing around my brain for a while. So |
| Speaker 3:  [01:18:00]  [01:18:30] | Yeah, it hit me last week after interviewing Ryan new and then watching night really interview the both of you, you guys just took off, but I was watching, you're thinking a lot of things, but one of them was, um, wow. Just, um, I don't want to make it, uh, I just was thinking that this conversation was nearest in the making. Yes, I would agree with that. And this project sort of came along and Jeff's the right time, because even a year from now, I don't even know if Ryan is going to have that position or what he's going to be doing or what you're going to be doing, but it just sort of goes like, isn't it sort of a moment. So let's finally shift gears, although I can, I texted SG, he texted a little bit ago and said, how are things going? And I said, well, yesterday we got through it today. |
| Speaker 3:  [01:19:00] | I'm listening to right and low so I can get out all day. Um, cause I learned so much. Um, but let's shift gears to talk about. The first thing I want you to do is tell me about the Kentucky social studies standards. And then you could check your social studies standards as a way of just, you know, I mean, essentially I'm going from, this was something that I was doing because it appealed to me, but now it's sort of policy it's mandate. And so, you know, maybe start with the Kentucky academic standards for social studies, what they're about and what that means for Woodford County. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:19:30]  [01:20:00] | So I think with the new Kentucky social studies standards coming out, being official, um, has done a couple of things for me. And I think our department at Woodford, um, and I would argue also our district as well. Um, first of all, we were very excited to finally have a standards that we F we felt were, um, were good standards, but also very much driven by teachers in how they were, uh, created and implemented it. Wasn't the first time that we tried to adapt to C3. Um, and so we've, this has been a long journey and I think some people because of that are a little bit apprehensive of what these new standards mean. Uh, I think because of that, I would say that we are as a department here and from what other teachers I hear from different districts in schools that I work with. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:20:30] | Um, I think that word is probably appropriate, like apprehensive we're, we're looking at something that I think the standards call for both a, a, a, obviously a shift in content focus, but also it focus in methodology that sometimes standards don't always call for. I think a lot of times the methodology is like, you know, an asterisks at the bottom that says like, you know, students learn best by writing essays or, you know, yada yada yada, or participating in these conversations. But the, the, the part of the standards, you know, those dimensions, especially the questioning one and the communicating, uh, ones really forced us to have to, to not only say, what am I teaching, but, but what am I asking my students to do with what they learn? Um, so I think, you know, we have, we have nine teachers in our department and you could probably line them up on a spectrum of who's most comfortable with them, and who's the least, and I don't think any of them would be offended by that. |
| [01:21:00]  Speaker 1:  [01:21:30] | I think that those are based out of the conversations we've had about where we're going, uh, forward. Uh, I don't think it's a bad thing, but I think it shows us that not, we have to remember that not all teachers are ready to step into the inquiry boat, um, right off, right off the bat. And I think what that allows for some people might be frustrated with that. I think what that actually allows for is for a more, um, detailed conversation about the strengths of inquiry and what are the potential risks and potential, um, you know, areas of, of growth that we can see by trying this on a bigger basis. Uh, one of the, one of the scary things for me is, um, you know, I've been talking about inquiry a lot. Uh, I don't go around trying to sell it to people, but when people ask, what are you doing in your classroom? |
| Speaker 1:  [01:22:00]  [01:22:30] | Not just tell them, um, one of the, I was sitting in a district meeting, uh, with some, uh, elementary social studies teachers and social studies teachers from our school in the middle school. Um, and we immediately started talking about something and I, I kind of chimed in by, with something that I just had just come normal. Everybody just like looked at me and I'm like, Oh, okay. So now, now I'm the expert in the room. And at that moment, I realized I need to watch what I say, because over the next couple of hours, because all of a sudden, uh, people are gonna start asking me questions about this. So it made me think, well, great. Now, now people are paying attention to what I'm doing because they, they, they not only just think it's interesting, but they need to know, and you need to know what I'm doing in my classroom. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:23:00] | And so that's really challenged me over the last few months to think about how do I communicate clearly to other teachers who are worried about this? How do we do, how do we implement these standards? Um, and so it's right back to full circle, you know, going through graduate school of like, how do we design our unit lessons? How are unit plans, how do we design, how do we make these, um, you know, objectives? How do we, uh, how do we make space for questioning? Uh, and I would say that, you know, my plan for, for our department, um, is to really start small. Um, I think that less is more, a lot of times I think if, uh, I think if, if teachers simply begin to understand the power of compelling questions, I think a lot of the rest will follow. Um, and so we've talked a lot about what, how are we asking questions in our class already? |
| [01:23:30]  Speaker 1:  [01:24:00] | What could we do with the questions that we have traditionally asked? How can we make them compelling questions? How can we, how can we, um, you know, um, use content in a way that shifts the focus away from just simply, um, learning the material to questioning the material. Um, and so for a couple of, for a couple of reasons, I, you know, I would say apprehensive is just a really good word. It's not a negative word. It's just simply where we're kind of at as a collective there's people who are like, yeah, let's, let's dive in. And there's people who say, well, let's, let's pump the brakes. What is this? And I heard this from one of our teachers, what does this look like for my ESL learners or my ELL learners, or my students who, who struggled to even just keep up in a regular class. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:24:30]  [01:25:00] | Um, and so, um, what I have, what I have tried to do is to number one, say, I don't have all the answers. You're just going to have to figure some of that out on your own, but from my experience, this is what I've seen. And I think teachers respond to that better. Um, when they hear another teacher that they trust to say, well, I can't tell you what to do in your classroom, but I can't tell you what I've done. And these are the pitfalls. Be interesting to see what the pitfalls will be in your classroom. Tell me about it. And I think if you look at the apprehensiveness as an opportunity, rather than simply like, well, not everybody's going to like this, um, then I think it's, it's a little bit easier. And to, even though I think a lot of people look at what I do in the classroom as being, you know, very much inquiry-based, and maybe I know what I'm talking about. I'm not, I'm not the expert necessarily. Uh, I've just done this a few times that I know what to expect. So that's kind of where we're at, um, at the moment in Woodford County. |
| [01:25:30]  Speaker 3:  [01:26:00]  [01:26:30] | Um, so what is just a little bit of, um, so, so as you know, we're sort of doing a little rumble in the jungle here, Ryan Brian, and not necessarily, I mean, just because you two represent very different personalities, but a similar blueprint in terms of what you believe. And what's interesting is you've ended up in these really interesting situations. You know, Ryan's in this big challenging with a top down mandate, trying to mediate that with the new policy of inquiry, you're here at Woodford County in a, in something that I think is temperamentally suited for you, you know, grow inquiry from your own classroom outward, not from some really pristine, not that there is one we're seeing the office in this, in this building where you get to dictate. And so maybe w maybe what would be really helpful is for you to tell us a little bit about, so, so Woodford County gets a mandate new standards. How does that trickle down to the social studies department? And then how is that playing out? Is that sort of thing? |
| Speaker 1:  [01:27:00]  [01:27:30]  [01:28:00] | Yeah, absolutely. So, uh, I have a very specific answer to this, this question. So, um, last year, um, we, we under, we, we knew that standards were coming out and I think a lot of, lot of teachers were, um, including myself, but there were a lot of teachers who voiced concerns to our district and said, we really would like to be ahead of the curve. Um, and we had some meetings, we had maybe three or four meetings periodically, uh, with, with our elementary and middle and high school teachers unpacking these standards. And the folks at the district level rightly understood that these, these standards, weren't just simply another, like here's a list of things for us to teach. They understood that there were these dimensions and that they required a shift in the way we were presenting material. And so, because, because of that, um, at the district level last year, uh, probably last spring, we created a, uh, a white paper, basically a vision for, you know, so two or three page paper that essentially says, when you walk into a social studies classroom in Woodford County, these are the things that you should see. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:28:30] | We had a list of, I was just looking at the other day, a list of six different things that we believe about social studies based on these new standards. And it was a really wonderful process of us taking what we already knew and kind of pairing it with, um, this kind of new way of doing things. So we had this vision, um, however, what was interesting is that because there was no, like top-down of like, this is, this is what, this is what we need to see. There was not a, there was not any prescription. My conversations with a lot of people are like, Oh yeah, I forgot about that thing that we did. Oh, that white paper we did, no, I haven't been using it in my classroom. My PLC, there are other individuals who were like, we have a white paper on this. Uh, what, you know, what is this? And so what I think is, um, what I think is, is going to have to, |
| [01:29:00]  Speaker 3:  [01:29:30] | Uh, the diffuser [inaudible] Maybe a good way to put it to Ryan is to think about, you know, saying, you know, here at Woodford, we have a very centralized structure it's so that I it's, so that we can think about sort of point counterpoint as a way of naming it. Yeah. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:30:00]  [01:30:30] | So here at Woodford, we have a very decentralized structure of PLCs and departments, um, and various levels of schools. Um, and so because of that, even though we, we created a, a central vision, um, I think that honors, that kind of decentral, um, approach to it because we brought a lot of people together to do that. There are still going, there are still going to have to be ways of us figuring out what does this look like in our school building. And so, um, while it does make sense that we would need at least a top down approach from our vision, there is no way, especially at our schools, there is no way that this is going to actually work, unless it comes from the bottom up. Um, and it, it might beat, there might be some tough conversations to say, we need to do this in our, in our classrooms. |
| Speaker 1:  [01:31:00] | But I think in our school system, it's better to hear that from a, from a teacher than somebody from an administrative office. Um, and so because of that, I think that, um, we are, you know, I guess this term works, we're, we're approaching it from a more organic perspective. Um, we're starting with teacher buy in first and then seeing where that takes us, rather than simply saying, we hope that teachers buy into this by the end of the year. And so we're working with some ideas on how to make inquiry possible within classrooms, uh, to the extent that a teacher can buy into it. Um, and I think by starting small, by keeping a vision in front of them, rather than simply just the, to do list, we have a better chance of doing that rather than simply saying, well, um, you know, this is what central office wants us to do. |
| [01:31:30]  Speaker 1:  [01:32:00]  [01:32:30] | The other factor is being in a small district like ours. Um, we tend to think that we're the most important people in the district because we're the only people in the district. And so to convince people in our district to do something to expert teachers, that we have, they, they need to see other teachers doing this first, before they are going to buy in. Otherwise to them, it's just a template and it's just a series of standards that we're checking the box. Um, and so I think because of that, um, we are going to have a very, and I think this is a good thing. Uh, we were going, I should expect to see blueprints question tests and sources, but I, I would like to see inquiry, um, look, look, and feel like the teacher that's teaching it in each of our classrooms. Um, I don't want everybody to teach like Ryan Lewis, um, but I do want them to teach like themselves. Uh, but our vision in our district is to at least understand the buy in that we learn through questions. We understand those questions through tasks. We, um, we are able to do those tasks through evidence, gathering through sources that is kind of the backbone or the spine of what we were doing. Everything else I think can be molded as time goes on. So we're really trying to get teacher buy in at the front end rather than simply just hoping it happens. Um, because I don't think that would work here. |
| [01:33:00]  Speaker 3: | Done. You're done. That was it. Perfect. It was perfect. Absolutely perfect. There's camera's better than working, so good. Yay. All right. Um, I think, let me ask. |