CHAPTER 4

Critical Inquiry

Supporting Children's Investigations

Learning is experiencing the world (Dewey, 1938). Children put forth hypotheses and test them. For example, as kindergarteners go from the classroom to the playground after a rainy morning, they may find mud puddles. They may wonder: What if I jump in the mud puddle? Will my shoes get wet? Will my socks get wet? Will my feet get wet? Why? Then, they may jump right in to find out–to test their hypothesis. After jumping in and realizing that the socks did or did not get wet and that their feet did or did not get wet, they hurry to tell their friends and their teacher(s) about their findings. They disseminate their findings after testing their hypothesis.

Young children inquire much of the time–they act in ways that test space, time and material boundaries, which also test the consistency of behaviors of their teachers and their parents. Inquiry is a way of being for young children. As some adults say, "pushing the limits" or "testing the limits" are ways of life for many children. So–why not bring this way of life to the forefront of the teaching and learning that takes place in early childhood classrooms?

Yet, adults have traditionally viewed inquiry as more formal research–the scientific method and procedures, involving stating a hypothesis along with data collection and analysis (Jennings & Mills, 2009). Here, from a critical multicultural perspective and in the early childhood classroom, inquiry involves teachers and students who engage in "grand conversations" (Wells, 1995) and in both "wondering" and "information-seeking" forms of dialogue (Lindfors, 1999). This concept is further explained below.

WHY CRITICAL INQUIRY AS A STRATEGY FOR TEACHING MULTICULTURALLY?

Inquiry does not have a formula. It cannot. It emerges out of the questions and interests of students who are members of a classroom community of learners. And since each community is different, each inquiry journey will

be unique. From a critical perspective, inquiry is multicultural because it transforms the curriculum in ways that address both personal and culturally relevant teaching as well as rigorous educational opportunities. It departs from the notion of curriculum as static and separate from the lives of young children. Young children's questions are at the core of an inquiry-based curriculum.

From the students' interests, inquiry expands and grows to address and approach a variety of content areas. Inquiry brings together content areas in interdisciplinary and authentic ways through students' questions and interests. It brings together a variety of backgrounds and resources–some of which are typically included in the traditional classroom, and others that are not. Inquiry is a space where the personal and academic converge and craft an interdisciplinary and culturally relevant curriculum (Cowhey, 2006; Mills & Donnelly, 2001; Mills, O'Keefe, & Whitin, 1996).

Inquiry is multicultural because is uses multiple perspectives and knowledge while engaging learners in a knowledge-construction process. From an inquiry perspective, learners collectively uncover the social and cultural influences of knowledge and its creation. As learners ask questions, they consider the multiple ways to pursue answers, thus considering many perspectives that are socially and culturally located (Banks, 2007). Inquiry has the potential to foster the development of positive attitudes and actions toward diverse groups. Finally, inquiry can come to life as equity pedagogy, which encompasses culturally relevant practices, thus restructuring the classroom environment.

WAYS TO ENGAGE IN CRITICAL INQUIRY

Critical inquiries are interdisciplinary learning opportunities regarding issues that are critical for the children who are part of a classroom learning community. They differ from themes and units as the teacher listens to the children and seizes opportunities for pursuing questions. In critical inquiry, questions matter. An important part of inquiry in the early childhood classroom is dialogue (Freire, 1970; Lindfors, 1999; Wells, 1999)–consideration of a variety of perspectives and learning from and with others. It is respecting and revering differences as providing additional and valuable insights. Teachers and learners co-construct knowledge as they talk, learn, and delve deeper into their inquiry.

An important part of inquiry is the sense of historicity of the learning journey, awareness of decisions made and of resources employed. When she was a junior kindergarten teacher in Canada, Vivian Vasquez (2004) used audit trails to chronologically document the inquiry journeys of the

three- to five-year-old children she taught, making a visual display–an audit trail–of their learning journey. This aided the community of learners to sustain a topic of inquiry over a long period of time. Together, Vasquez and the young children who made up her classroom community engaged in inquiry about beluga whales, reading from a variety of sources and inquiring into fiction and non-fiction accounts. They also inquired into McDonalds happy meals–why they were made and marketed, and how they targeted children when not even their happy meal toys came in child-safe bags. (For more about these inquiries, see Vasquez, 2004.)

Seeking to honor the history and the context of the inquiries that went on in her classroom, Mary Cowhey (the teacher featured in Chapter 3) created newsletters that not only documented the inquiry undertaken by the children in the classroom, but also reached a wider audience. These student-authored newsletters involved families in learnings by telling stories of inquiries in-progress taking place in her first and second grade classrooms and served to expand their inquiry. The six- to eight-year-old children in Ms. Cowhey's classroom also wrote about their inquiry for a local education publication.

GETTING STARTED

To get started, a teacher must listen to the children and place the children's interests and questions at the center of the curriculum–not being oppressed or bullied by standards or guides. This does not mean that standards will go unmet–it means that they will be addressed in a context that is authentic and interesting to the classroom community. In listening to children and the questions they have, teachers can seize important moments and topics, bringing together children's interests and academic demands in seamless and meaningful ways.

It may be fruitful not to deflect questions or interjections that may initially seem to be disruptive, but to explore those topics and questions that draw energy and interest from the group. As a topic is determined and starts being pursued, it is important to document its history in the context of the classroom–the history of the community's journey with that topic. There are many ways of documenting this journey such as audit trails (Vasquez, 2004), book writing, and newsletters. Such documentation also serves to plan for an integrated curriculum, offering the teacher and students opportunities to return to a previously explored aspect of the topic of inquiry. It is important to know that when getting started, it is hard to know how long the inquiry will last–so any topic may become an extended topic of inquiry. In Mary Cowhey's forthcoming narrative, second grade students

moved from exclaiming in the middle of a read aloud that the teddy bears were naked to exploring how clothing is made and where children's clothing came from. So to start, just listen, jump in and document your journey, knowing that you won't have all the answers or resources–and that this is the way inquiry begins.

CONSIDERING OBSTACLES, EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

Inquiry takes time–it is not a tool, but a strategy that shapes a classroom's teaching and learning (Mills, O'Keefe, & Jennings, 2004). As such, it respects the individuality and diversities of learning experiences, backgrounds, and abilities in a classroom–it does not impose time constraints or one-size-fits-all standardized ways of teaching. It honors the breathtaking diversities of schoolchildren (Genishi & Dyson, 2009). From a critical perspective, the possibilities afforded by inquiry include expanding the teaching and learning that goes on in your classroom in significant and meaningful ways.

From a critical perspective, inquiry is not simply following the scientific method, not simply testing hypotheses. It is more about understanding the world in which we live. It is about inviting students to engage in research to answer a question that truly matters to them. In other words, for teachers, inquiry is about creating the space for children to see themselves as capable and worthy human beings, inviting them to be researchers and to systematically learn from a variety of sources representing multiple perspectives and points of view. It is about going beyond what is to be taught, thinking of standards as the floor rather than as the ceiling. And while a variety of tools (such as interviews and multicultural books) can be part of inquiry, inquiry cannot be a tool that is part of another approach to teaching. Inquiry is a strategy, an approach to teaching.

Through inquiry, teachers use children's interests to craft an interdisciplinary curriculum that is at once critical, multicultural, and rigorous (addressing standards and curricular goals). This is an opportunity but can also be a challenge since it requires that the teacher know the standards and curriculum for his or her grade level (and beyond) very well. So, the work of the teacher in regard to standards is to look at what is happening and identify which standards are being addressed within the authentic learning that is going on. In doing so, the teacher can extend and expand learning opportunities to address even more standards. Nevertheless, addressing the standards does not mean standardizing teaching and learning.

One way to bring inquiry to life in an early childhood classroom is to listen more and talk less. Too much teacher talk is an obstacle to learning

through inquiry. The teacher must identify and use students' energy and excitement for learning about their topic of interest as he or she engages them in a learning journey that can encompass multiple areas of the curriculum. For example, social studies (economics, geography, history), mathematics, language arts, and science are applied when inquiring how cloth is made. This is all done while placing issues of equity front and center. So, the children's interests and questions became a locomotive to which other areas of the curriculum can be connected in a meaningful and exciting way. It takes time, but it is worth the effort.

Aside from time and space, the biggest obstacle to reimagining the demands associated with the standardization of education is the courage to admit that you don't know it all–and that you will be learning from and with your students. It is the act of embracing a humble stance that blurs the roles of teacher and learner. In doing so, you help students understand that the books present in your classroom portray incomplete accounts and that there are human resources beyond the classroom walls that can further the learning journey of that specific community. In doing so, you will help your students see that their learning community goes beyond the classroom walls. In considering and addressing this obstacle, remember that you don't have to have perfect answers and things to say all the time–even if (after the fact) you think of what you should or could have said. Welcome the opportunity to learn with the children in your classroom and make room for other voices, perspectives and points of view to be considered.

ENACTING CRITICAL INQUIRY IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING

What does an early childhood classroom look like when a teacher uses critical inquiry to support children's investigations and teach multiculturally? There is no formula for the perfect classroom inquiry since the topics of study, the group of children and families, as well as the resources available will be particular to specific times and spaces. Thus while there are many ways to bring critical inquiry to life in early childhood classrooms, here I invite you to listen closely to Mary Cowhey (whom you met in Chapter 3) and learn how critical inquiry came to life in her second grade.

The Teacher

As no one tool or strategy works for everyone, some teachers choose to use a variety of tools and strategies for teaching equitably. Mary Cowhey is one of those teachers. Her mission as a teacher is to teach children within the context of their community. She sees communities, families, students,

and teachers learning together, thus forging possibilities for positive change. She emphasizes that we all bring biases to what we do–whether or not we admit it–and her bias is to look closely at the experience of low income students, being very critical of school as an institution.

Mary points out the biases that are part of America's schooling institutions–a system that discriminates against low-income people, single parents, English language learners, and many others. She believes that even though she works in a wonderful school with excellent leadership, she must be vigilant and aware of that because schools as institutions are structured to privilege White middle class, educated, English speaking, professional families. She constantly tries to look at school through the eyes of her students who are struggling the most, who are the most marginalized. In doing so, she considers how she can contribute to making schools more empowering rather than disempowering. In the next two sections, Mary writes in her own voice about using critical inquiry in her second grade classroom.

The Classroom

How we can make the experience of education transformative? That is, not something students have to endure, survive, put up with, or slog through–but something that they can really embrace, that they feel they could use, that could transform their lives, that could be their ticket to what they want. School needs to be a nurturing place, where they can figure out what they want. Initiating and pursuing inquiry projects centered on student-generated questions can be an important part of figuring out what they want to learn and do in their lives.

One year we distributed teddy bears in my second grade classroom to support children's emotional health (see *Bears, Bears Everywhere* by Lesley Koplow, 2008). One day after recess, as my students settled onto the rug with their teddy bears for our read aloud, one child gasped, "My teddy bear is naked!" The panic spread like wildfire as all the students realized their teddy bears were naked. My students had completely lost interest in the book I wanted to read aloud. I sighed, said the teddy bears looked fine to me, but asked if they wanted to do something about this situation. They said that in first grade they had made clothes for their bears.

Not being a craft-inclined teacher, I asked *how* they made clothes for their bears. They said that Evan's dad came in with a sewing machine to help them sew the clothes. After much talk, they decided to make vests for their new bears, and invited Evan's dad, Peter, to come in with his sewing machine. I figured this would be a good way to counter gender stereotypes. I remembered from a home visit that another student's mother was a quilter. I asked for her help. She made a simple vest pattern for us and donated

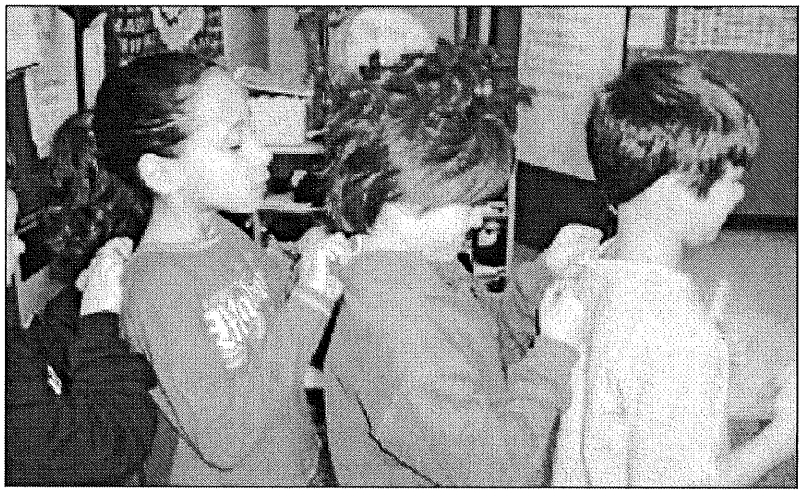
a bag of ribbons. I dug out a box of felt rectangles and a coffee can of buttons we use when learning about attributes in math. Evan's dad came with his sewing machine. Each child traced the pattern on a piece of felt, learned to sew a vest with ribbon trim and a button, and selected a ribbon for the bear's necktie.

My students were very excited about their dressed teddy bears, so I decided to channel that enthusiasm into a writing activity. They each drew a detailed portrait of their previously identical teddy bears. Then, they wrote a detailed description of their teddy bear, detailing the attributes of its necktie and vest with the button and ribbon trim. We hung up all the teddy portraits in the hallway, like a little rogue's gallery. Then we mixed up the written descriptions and hung them underneath. My students (and most of the other first and second graders in the school) read the descriptions and carefully figured out which teddy bear portrait matched. Since we were studying attributes in math, we decided to use the dressed teddy bears to play our "Guess My Rule" attribute game. Right about then I was starting to feel pretty done with the teddy bears and their vests.

But no, it was not to be. One of my students, Thomas, brought in an old book from the 1960s called *How We Get Our Clothing* (McCall, 1961). He had gone home very excited about making the vests, told his family about it and had been busy sewing at home. His mother found this old book for him. The book was full of stereotypes, referring to the workers as workmen, even though many were female seamstresses. I set the book aside, thinking that I would read it myself at lunchtime and then use it for a critical reading activity in the afternoon. James, however, was very interested in the book and brought it when we went to the library. He begged me to read it right then. Someone once told me that a teacher should never read aloud a book to the class that she hasn't read herself beforehand. Cornered by Thomas, I broke that rule. I pointed out the copyright date, 1961. The children were fascinated by the black and white photos, the details of clothing manufacturing. On page 13, I showed them a photo of White women with beehive hairdos and cat eye glasses working at sewing machines and dutifully read the caption, which said, "much of our clothing is made in factories like this one," I looked at the children and said, "Actually, that's a lie," They gasped. I went on, "Well, it used to be true, when this book was written. This is where my clothing was made when I was your age. Lots of adults in my neighborhood in Brooklyn worked in clothing factories, and they were all members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which meant a better life for them and their kids. In the 1970s there was a TV commercial for the ILGWU with a song that began: 'Look for the union label /When you are buying a coat, dress or blouse.'"

To my amazement, I remembered the whole song, and when I finished singing, Thomas asked, "Where should we look for it?" "Look for what?" I responded. "The union label, you said we should look for it." I chuckled, "Oh, they meant the label in the back of your shirt, but you won't find...." The children weren't listening to me. Quick as a wink, they were slipping their arms out of their sleeves and turning their shirts backwards to look at their labels, or pushing away their friends' ponytails and tugging at their shirt tags, trying to pronounce Malaysia and Lesotho. They wanted to know why their labels didn't say "Made in the USA" as in the end of the song. I explained that nowadays, most of our clothes are made outside the United States. Lots of questions bubbled up, "Why don't they make clothes in the United States anymore? Who makes our clothes now? Does it matter where clothes are made?" The children kept looking at tags. My students began to make connections between where their clothes were made and the countries their classmates were from. "Gonzalo, my t-shirt was made in Mexico, where you're from!" or "Vien, my sneakers are made in Vietnam. That's your country!"

Figure 4.1. Reading Shirt Labels



Source: Cowhey, 2009, p. 15

We lined up to head back to class for snack, stopping at the bathroom to wash up. Usually I have to hassle the students to all get in there and wash their hands, but on this particular day, they all went in without a sin-

gle reminder. I stood alone in the hallway, thinking that I hadn't planned on them freaking out about naked teddy bears or teaching them how to sew tiny vests. I was able to harness that enthusiasm and use it to meet objectives in English language arts and in our mathematical study of attributes. Now I hadn't planned on this sudden obsession with where our shirts were made, and I tried to think of a way we could use it.

My approach is to listen to and watch children, to be ready to catch these eruptions of curiosity. I also need to know my standards and curriculum frameworks well enough so that I can think creatively about how to connect that curiosity with a learning objective. When kids come up with an authentic question that they're ready to pursue with passion and energy, I can use that question and driving curiosity like a locomotive to power their learning. I can start by hooking one curricular objective to it. If that locomotive's energy keeps building, I can hook on more objectives, like more freight cars. The way I can "fit it" into my schedule is by thoroughly integrating it into our day, across our morning meeting, math, social studies, reading and writing, and read aloud.

We were still in our data unit in math, having finished up with attributes; we were moving on to gathering and representing data. Instead of gathering data about how many teeth students in other classes and grades had lost, as we usually do in our math curriculum, I thought we could use shirt label data instead. I also considered how our second grade standards include a unit on maps and globes, with children beginning to learn the continents and some countries on each continent. I was planning to do that later in the year, but I could move it up. Then I noticed I was still alone in the hallway and hustled the kids out of the bathroom. As they lined up in the hallway, I noticed they were whispering to each other. I moved closer to listen and heard a child whisper, "My pants were made in Egypt."

Back in the classroom, as the children took out their snacks, I put globes or world maps on each table and pulled down the world map in the front of the classroom. I started by asking them to find the continents on the map, which I listed on the easel. Then I asked them to work in their groups to find the country where their shirt was made and figure out what continent it was on. They got busy, scouring their maps and globes, often going over to classmates for help, "You're from Cambodia, right? Can you show me where Cambodia is?" Then we went around the room, with each child saying where his or her shirt was from and (with the help of the table group) which continent it was on, as I put a tally mark next to that continent. I asked them what they noticed from our graph and what they wondered. Again, lots more questions came up, like why there were so many marks for Asia, why most of the marks for North America were for coun-

tries in Central America and the Caribbean, and were there really factories in Africa?

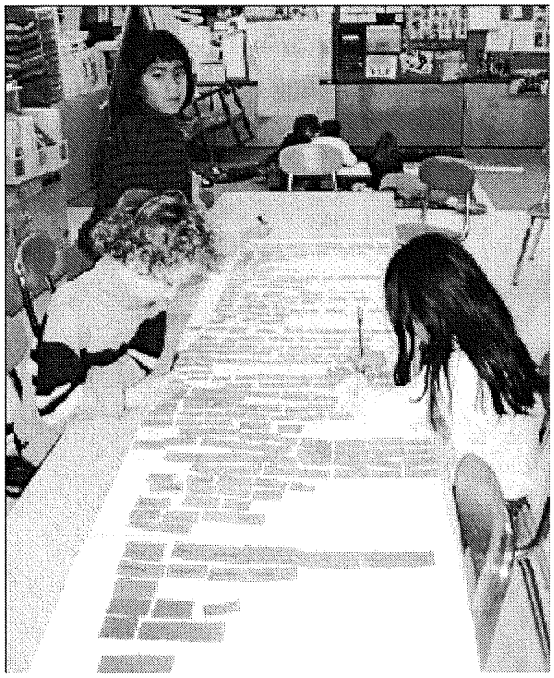
That night I looked up the union song on You Tube and learned that there had been a whole series of union commercials, which are still studied in business schools today as a brilliant (though sadly unsuccessful) piece of commercial marketing. The commercials were unique in those days in that they used real union members, not professional singers or actresses. I remembered that the workers were of all races, short and tall, fat and thin, wearing glasses and regular street clothes. I wrote down the lyrics to show my students at morning meeting.

The next day, when I told my students what I'd learned, they wanted to learn to sing the union song themselves in spite of some difficult vocabulary for English Language Learners, like "blouse" and "wages." When I showed them a video of the original ILGWU commercial, they wanted to know when they could make a commercial like that.

Challenged by technology, I sought help from a former student who was then in high school, and his favorite classes were video production and Latin. He was happy to help my students videotape a commercial and borrowed the necessary equipment from his video teacher. The children staged their commercial to look like the original, with one child singing at first, and more and more children joining with each line, carrying props to illustrate the lyrics. The high school student did a very professional job editing the video and earned extra credit in his video class.

One homework assignment during this inquiry was for the children to learn how their family sorted the laundry. While every family has laundry (a commonality), each family has a particular way of sorting laundry (a potential difference). The first part of the assignment was to learn the family's criteria for sorting laundry. Then they were to sort the laundry for their family, take one basket of laundry they had sorted, and look at all the labels to learn where the clothing was made. They brought that data to class. Together, the children had a ton of data–data that they could relate to, not some numbers in a book as part of a worksheet. There was a lot of discussion about how they would represent the data. They settled on a color scheme for continents and cut small label-sized rectangles of different colors. If they had a shirt made in Mexico, they wrote "Mexico" on a red rectangle and pasted it beside North America on their graph. They made 6-foot long graphs representing the data they'd collected (see Figure 4.2). As they organized countries within continents, they kept referring back to their maps and globes and learned a lot of geography.

Figure 4.2. Graphing Labels



Source: Cowhey, 2009, p. 16

The graphs and the visual representation of data generated many questions. I wanted my students to do more than just gather and represent data. I wanted them to analyze it. I invited the children to think about "What do you notice when you look at these graphs? What do you wonder?" They noted that there were very few labels from Australia and none from Antarctica, which led to an interesting discussion of the presence of international science stations there but the absence of people native to Antarctica. But mostly they noted that their clothing largely came from Asia, Africa, and Central America. The children asked questions such as: "How come there are so few labels from North America?" and "Why do most of the labels from North America really come from Central America or the Caribbean, not USA?" Most of the "made in the USA" labels were from older clothing–some of Ms. Cowhey's own clothing purchased at thrift stores in town. They also realized that "made in the USA" labels were much easier to find

at thrift stores than at Walmart, Old Navy, or Target. The children deliberately looked for "made in the USA" labels in those stores and couldn't find any. The children came to the conclusion (and action) that as shoppers they have the right to ask to see the manager of the store where they shop and to say: "I am a Walmart shopper. I would like to buy clothes that say 'made in the USA.' I would like to see more clothes with a 'made in the USA' label here at Walmart." And while they recognized that this action may not immediately change Walmart and its purchasing practices, they also came to the conclusion that there was no reason not to exert that pressure on Walmart, to exert power as a consumer. The children realized that they could push back and think critically–not only in my classroom, but also beyond the walls of the classroom and the school. They realized that they can (and should) think and look before they buy.

During our inquiry the children had a lot of questions about unions, what they were, why people made them, and if we couldn't find any ILGWU labels, then where did the union go? This was a perfect fit for our economics objectives: learning about goods and services, consumers and producers. To introduce students to ideas of collective action, organizing, solidarity, striking and negotiating, I read aloud picture books like *Swimmy* (Lioni, 1963), *Farmer Duck* (Waddell & Oxenbury, 1991), and *Click! Clack! Moo!: Cows That Type* (Cronin, 2000). I also read books like *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* (Krull, 2003), about Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, and *¡Sí, se puede! / Yes, we can!: Janitor strike in L.A.* (Cohn, 2002) about Service Employees International Union and their Justice for Janitors Campaign. We learned about the sanitation workers strike that brought Martin Luther King to Memphis, where he was assassinated.

At the same time we were engaged in this inquiry, we learned that workers at the local *Stop and Shop* (a unionized grocery store in town) were threatening to strike. When students went grocery shopping with their parents, they read the workers' buttons and asked them questions. Nearly daily, children asked questions or shared updates about the supermarket workers, their demands of health benefits for part-time workers, and brought in news articles about the local negotiations and labor news in other places. The children learned more new vocabulary, like health benefits, contracts. My students kept vocabulary notebooks, where they collected new words they wanted to learn. One of the students noticed he had a lot of new words related to our inquiry. He proposed we make "Protesters' Dictionary."

For the Protesters' Dictionary, the children made their own definitions of these words–e.g., strike, boycott, union, organize, solidarity. They decided what was going to be included and why. The words came from our inquiry and from books we'd read. Other words came from newspaper arti-

cles and family conversations. Words from these various sources became the basis for the dictionary–bringing together community words, adult words (from newspaper stories), along with words from children's picture books. They co-constructed a powerful representation of a complex concept and captured the collective power of a union–that workers gain power by being part of a union.

In their "Protesters' Dictionary," under "negotiate," they had drawn a person with a talking bubble that said "We want money for helf. we need it." The children had a depth of understanding of the issues, but at the same time, they were seven and eight year olds who did not yet spell conventionally–yet this did not hinder their understanding of these important civic issues.

Of course, I wondered how much of all this the children grasped. One day a boy arrived late, during morning meeting, when we were discussing the supermarket workers. A student on the rug said, "Hey, Joe, the *Stop and Shop* workers settled!" Joe asked, "So what did they get?" His informant responded: "They got the health benefits for all the workers." "All right!" Joe cheered, pumping his fist in the air. These second graders knew the importance of getting health benefits for all workers–regardless of whether they worked part time or full time. And they knew about the power of collectively protesting, of striking, of demanding better working conditions.

To share our learning, we invited families to the classroom. The children told the story of their inquiry, how they pursued their question. All of our guests checked their shirt labels and entered the data on a new graph, adding their observations and questions to our analysis. They looked at all the graphs the children made and asked them questions. We presented our Protesters' Dictionary and showed our *Look for the Union Label* commercial.

The Teacher's Perspective

This inquiry learning ran for about two months. It started with the exclamation about the naked teddy bears, which I thought I'd settled by following the suggestion that we sew vests for the bears. At first, I'd connected that interest with the attributes work we were doing in the beginning of our data unit in mathematics and used the dressed bears as a subject for nonfiction descriptive writing and reading in language arts. James' obsession with how clothing was made led to his bringing in the old book, which sparked my memory of the *Look for The Union Label* song, which in turn kicked off shirt-label reading. That happened to coincide with our data unit work on gathering, representing, and analyzing data. I was able to move forward with my whole social studies unit about geography and our study of continents and cultures, to integrate that with our data work on the la-

bels. Even as we were finishing the data unit and our huge graphs of label data, interest and energy was still growing, fueled in part by the impending supermarket strike. Again, using children's still growing curiosity as the locomotive that was driving this inquiry, I was able to hook on another standards freight car, our economics objectives, exploring the roles of consumers and producers.

While our second grade social studies unit doesn't include labor history, our language arts curriculum includes biographies of leaders, so we read biographies of labor leaders, like Cesar Chavez and other activists and their relation to labor, like Martin Luther King and the Memphis sanitation workers' strike, and Gandhi, our hero who made his *khadi* himself, from thread he spun and cloth he wove from Indian cotton, rather than wear clothing made in Britain, the colonial ruler of India. Our read alouds throughout this period tied in to our inquiry and built vocabulary, as did our morning meeting discussion of labor-related news articles and current events. Back to English language arts, we built academic vocabulary with our Protesters' Dictionary. We were even able to address standards in media and technology (standards I'm normally not too strong on) through studying the ILGWU commercial campaign and making our own commercial of the song. We never investigated where our shirts were from instead of our second grade curriculum. In fact, we used the inquiry to ignite our second grade curriculum, to teach it all in a deeper and more connected way than I could have without the motivation of the inquiry project. I did not envision this full-blown, complicated, integrated curricular map as I stood alone in the hallway outside the bathroom as my students checked the labels to see where their pants were made. It grew organically, fueled by lively student, family, and community dialogue, spreading like the vigorous roots of raspberry plants, popping up in other curricular areas, bearing fruit all over the place.

If you think that that you couldn't teach this way because you don't have the content knowledge to support children's wide-ranging inquiry, remember that you just have to be ready to learn and to *practice* learning anything from everyone. Don't limit yourself to teaching your students what you already know. Name what you want to learn. Model being a lifelong learner. Enjoy yourself as you learn *with* your students.

REFLECTING ON CRITICAL INQUIRY AS A STRATEGY FOR TEACHING MULTICULTURALLY

In teaching multiculturally, it is essential to start with what matters to children. The question of where clothing was made mattered to the children in

Ms. Cowhey's class. And in pursuing this question, lots of interesting class and socioeconomic status issues came up. Over time, the children realized that the older clothing had a higher percentage of "made in the USA" labels than newer clothing, which is largely made in other countries. As a class, they talked about the meaning of such time and space connections to clothing and workers' rights.

By peeking into Mary Cowhey's classroom, we can see that inquiry is a powerful strategy for teaching multiculturally. Why not give it a try in your own classroom? After all, inquiry is interdisciplinary, relevant, and responsive to children's interests and questions as well as mandated standards. Inquiry can make teaching and learning more meaningful in your classroom.

FURTHER RESOURCES

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If you want to learn more about the wonderful teacher featured in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, please visit Mary Cowhey's website: http://www.mcowhey.com