Guiding Inquiry-based Research

Subject Areas: English/Language Arts, Social Studies and Science

Grade Level: 6 – 12 (ages 11-18)

Time: At least two 45-minute class periods; time outside of class as necessary

Lesson Objective:
Students will identify a specific and viable focus for research and generate a working thesis statement for a research paper.

Common Core State Standards¹:
Reading Standards for Grades 6-12 in English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
   Standard 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
Writing Standards for Grades 6-12 in English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
   Standard 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
   Standard 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
   Standard 8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

Overview:
Narrowing a research topic down to a specific, easily researched question can be challenging for students. Use the Inquiry-based Paper template (Webspiration Classroom™ Starter> Starter Docs> Thinking and Planning> Inquiry-based Paper) as a tool to help make this process easier for your students. The template guides students to write supporting questions, conduct preliminary research and combine the most significant findings into a working thesis statement.
Preparation:
• This lesson requires Internet access and the Webspiration Classroom software application published by Inspiration® Software, Inc. It can be accessed by visiting <http://www.webspirationclassroom.com>.

Lesson:
1. Explain that Webspiration™ offers many tools and templates to help with the research process. Open the Inquiry-based Paper template (Webspiration Classroom Starter>Examples>Thinking & Planning>Inquiry-based Paper) and explain the areas of the template to the students. Explain that students will be using the template to narrow the focus of broad questions down to specific, researchable topics. Students will be conducting preliminary research, developing a working thesis statement and then moving on to writing a research paper using the Research Paper template.

2. Open the Inquiry-based Paper Example (Webspiration Classroom Starter>Examples>English Language Arts>Inquiry-based Paper Example) so that students have an idea of a finished diagram.

3. Point out to students how the one initial question branches off into sub-questions and supporting questions and eventually becomes a working thesis statement. Emphasize that as students conduct their preliminary research, they should record any relevant websites to return to for closer reading. They can add URLs (Internet addresses) to the diagram using the Hyperlink tool.
4. Once students understand how to use the template, they can begin entering their questions, developing sub-questions and conducting research. As they work, students can obtain feedback on their diagram from the teacher and their peers using the collaboration tools. Documents can be shared with others using the **Collaborate Tab**. The **Comment Tab** can be used to comment on the document, or the **Chat Tab** can be used, if it is turned on at your school, to discuss ideas in real time.

5. Students can transfer their working thesis statement and relevant research findings to the **Research Paper** template where they can continue the process of researching, organizing and writing a research paper.

**Adaptations / Extensions:**
- This lesson can be used in any content area that requires students to generate research topics.
- Students can work in groups to explore a common general question. Each member of the group can research a different sub-question. Then they can each write a research paper presenting all of the group’s findings.