MODULE 6 · LESSON PLANNER

Purposeful Provocations
Lesson Planner

Designing a provocation to kick off a unit of inquiry. A practical, teacher-facing planner: a step-by-step guide to thinking about and preparing a provocation, followed by three ready-to-use lessons across Early Years, Middle Primary and Upper Primary.

AGE RANGE	FORMAT	FOCUS
Early Years to Upper Primary	Design guide + 3 lessons	Provocations that begin inquiry

HOW TO USE THIS PLANNER

Begin with the design guide to prepare one provocation. Then choose the lesson that matches your phase. Each lesson sets up a provocation that children walk into, wonder about, and investigate, so the unit of inquiry begins with the children's own questions rather than the teacher's instructions.

THE KEY MESSAGE

A purposeful provocation does not tell children what to think. It invites them to begin thinking, and it is most powerful when connected to the learning, responsive to the children, and open enough to allow many pathways of thinking.

> *"Curiosity is the kindling that fuels the fire of lifelong learning."*
>
> — Module 6: Purposeful Provocations

A PROVOCATION INVITES CHILDREN TO

- Wonder
- Question
- Investigate
- Connect
- Represent
- Test ideas
- Build theories
- Share thinking
- Construct meaning

SECTION 1 · DESIGN GUIDE

Thinking about and preparing a provocation

A step-by-step way to plan a provocation that kicks off a unit of inquiry

1. **Start with the learning.** Choose the concept, central idea, inquiry or learning intention the provocation will connect to, before choosing any materials.
2. **Decide the thinking.** Decide what thinking you want to invite: wondering, questioning, investigating, connecting, representing or theory-building.
3. **Design the encounter.** Choose an object, image, story, material, problem or contradiction that demands interpretation, something intriguing and a little unfamiliar.
4. **Set it up with care.** Present it calmly and intentionally, without over-styling. Position it where children will meet it as they arrive, so it changes the atmosphere of the room.
5. **Offer one strong question.** Add a single framed question rather than instructions, so children enter through wonder, not direction.
6. **Step back and observe.** Watch what children notice, touch, test and say. Resist rushing towards the answer; the teacher's role is to listen for theories.
7. **Document the thinking.** Capture questions, theories, drawings and conversations in the children's own words, unaltered. This becomes evidence, and often the next provocation.
8. **Ask: open or closed?** Reflect on whether the provocation opened thinking or led every child to one expected outcome.
9. **Adapt and extend.** Follow the children's inquiry. Add, remove or reshape the provocation in response to their questions.

OPEN QUESTIONS TO OFFER

- What do you notice?
- What do you wonder?
- What could this become, or have been?
- What happens if...?
- What problem could we solve?

TEACHER REFLECTION

- What did the children notice and wonder?
- What did they do with the provocation?
- What questions emerged?
- What will I offer next?

PREPARE TO CAPTURE THINKING

Before every lesson, have clipboards and pencils ready with the "My observations and thoughts" (I see, I think, I wonder) worksheet, so children and teachers can document thinking as the inquiry begins.



SECTION 2 · LESSON 1 · EARLY YEARS

What Lies Beneath the Sand?

A fossil dig in the sandbox, to begin an inquiry into the past and living things long ago

LEARNING INTENTION

Children wonder about and investigate objects buried in the sand, asking questions and building theories about what they are, where they came from and how long they have been there.

THE PROVOCATION SET-UP

In the sandbox in the corner of the classroom, bury a collection of replica fossils, bones, shells, ammonites, "dinosaur" teeth and footprints pressed into the sand. String a simple grid across the tray to make a dig site. Lay soft brushes, small trowels, magnifying glasses, a clipboard and picture cards beside it. Set it up calmly before the children arrive. Place one small framed question nearby, "What could be hiding under the sand?", and give no instructions. Let the children discover it.

CENTRAL IDEA

The clues we discover can help us wonder about and understand the past.

KEY CONCEPTS

Form, causation and change. Related concepts: fossils, the past, evidence and discovery.

LINES OF INQUIRY

- What the objects we uncover are, and what they are like.
- How the objects came to be buried, and how long ago.
- The stories and questions our discoveries spark about living things long ago.

SECTION 2 · LESSON 1 · EARLY YEARS

The fossil dig, step by step

From the first glimpse of the dig site to reburying the finds for the next explorers

1. **Reveal.** Set up before arrival and let the children find the dig site as they come in. Gather nearby and simply look.
2. **Invitation.** "What do you notice? What could be hiding here?" Invite children to observe before they touch.
3. **Exploration.** Children brush, dig and uncover finds, then sort, group and compare them.
4. **Teacher role.** Observe closely and listen for theories. Introduce a book or picture to extend the children's thinking.
5. **Documentation.** Photograph the dig and scribe the children's exact words and theories, unaltered.
6. **Reflection.** Children share what they discovered using words, drawings, gestures or home language.
7. **Care.** Return the tools and gently rebury the finds for the next explorers, guided by a "Return me to my spot" photograph.

MATERIALS

Sandbox or tray; string for a dig grid; replica fossils, bones, shells, ammonites and teeth; soft brushes; small trowels; magnifying glasses; clipboards and pencils with the "My observations and thoughts" worksheet, ready to capture student thinking; picture cards and a reference book; a framed question card; a "Return me to my spot" photograph.

TEACHER PROMPTS

What do you think this is? How might it have got here? How old could it be? What does it make you wonder? Can you tell the story of your find?

OBSERVE FOR

Curiosity and questioning; theory-building; sensory and fine-motor exploration; vocabulary and storytelling; collaboration; and care for shared materials.

SECTION 3 · LESSON 2 · MIDDLE PRIMARY

Two Plants, One Story

An intertwined vine, to begin an inquiry into living things, growth and change

LEARNING INTENTION

Students investigate why two plants grew so differently, documenting the growth and changes of living things and building theories about what living things need to survive.

THE PROVOCATION SET-UP

Display a large vine as a striking centrepiece: a healthy, thriving bean stalk intertwined with a granadilla (passionfruit) plant that appears to have died, brown, wilted and brittle. Place magnifying glasses, clipboards, a measuring tape, observation sheets, sticky notes, a camera or tablet and a few plant reference books alongside it. Set one framed question beside the vine, "Both plants grew here together. Why did only one survive?", and offer no further instruction.

CENTRAL IDEA

Living things grow, change and survive in response to the conditions around them.

KEY CONCEPTS

Causation, change and responsibility. Related concepts: growth, needs, life cycle, survival and conditions.

LINES OF INQUIRY

- What living things need in order to grow and survive.
- The conditions and causes that help one living thing thrive while another dies.
- How we observe, measure and document change in living things over time.

SECTION 3 · LESSON 2 · MIDDLE PRIMARY

Investigating the two plants

From first wondering to revising theories as the new plants grow over the unit

1. **Notice.** Students meet the intertwined vine on arrival. "What do you notice? What do you wonder?" Gather their first observations.
2. **Investigate.** Examine both plants closely. Compare the living and the dead: stems, leaves, roots, moisture and light. Measure and sketch.
3. **Theorise.** Students record predictions and theories about why one thrived and one died, water, light, roots, disease or competition.
4. **Document growth and change.** Plant new seeds or cuttings and begin an ongoing record, photographing and measuring across the unit to track change over time.
5. **Student voice.** Students write or record their theory: "I think the granadilla died because..."; "The evidence is..."; "We could test this by..."
6. **Reflect.** Return to the vine over the unit, revising theories as the new plants grow and the evidence builds.

MATERIALS

A large intertwined vine, a healthy bean stalk and a dead granadilla plant; magnifying glasses; measuring tape and rulers; clipboards and pencils with the "My observations and thoughts" worksheet, ready to capture student thinking; sticky notes; seeds, cuttings and pots for ongoing growth; a camera or tablet; plant reference books; a framed question card.

TEACHER PROMPTS

What evidence supports your theory? What would you need to test it? What do living things need to survive? What changed, and what stayed the same? How could we find out?

OBSERVE FOR

Close observation; cause-and-effect reasoning; theory-building and revision; measurement and recording over time; use of evidence; collaboration and student voice.

SECTION 4 · LESSON 3 · UPPER PRIMARY

Do Not Enter

A sealed classroom, to begin an inquiry into decomposition and how mould forms

LEARNING INTENTION

Students investigate how mould forms, designing their own questions and a safe, fair-test investigation to explain the growth they discover.

THE PROVOCATION SET-UP

Seal the classroom door with "Do Not Enter" caution tape and warning signs, such as "Caution: unidentified growth" and "Quarantine zone". Inside, the sink and the fruit bowl where the class stored their fruit appear overtaken by mould. Prepare this safely in advance using clear, sealed containers of mouldy fruit and bread, arranged as if discovered that morning. Students gather at the doorway and observe through the door or window before anyone enters. A single framed question is visible from outside: "Something has grown here overnight. How?" Offer no explanation; let the sealed-off room do the inviting.

SAFETY NOTE

Mould can trigger allergies and asthma. Keep all mould inside clear, sealed containers, never let students handle open mould, ventilate the room, check for allergies and sensitivities in advance, and dispose of samples safely. Students investigate sealed samples only.

CENTRAL IDEA

Matter changes and breaks down through natural processes that depend on particular conditions.

KEY CONCEPTS

Causation, change and responsibility. Related concepts: decomposition, microorganisms, conditions and systems.

LINES OF INQUIRY

- The conditions that cause mould and decay.
- How decomposers recycle matter in the natural world.
- Our responsibility for food, waste and hygiene.

SECTION 4 · LESSON 3 · UPPER PRIMARY

Investigating how mould forms

The lesson flow, from the sealed doorway to sharing findings

1. **Arrive and wonder.** Students meet the taped-off door and warning signs. Observe before entering: What do you notice? What do you wonder? What might have happened here overnight?
2. **Enter and examine safely.** With the room ventilated, study the sealed samples with magnifiers. Sketch, compare and describe what they see on the fruit, bread and sink.
3. **Hypothesise.** What conditions might mould need? Students propose and record ideas: moisture, warmth, time, a food source and spores in the air.
4. **Design a fair test.** Students plan a safe investigation in sealed bags, changing one condition at a time while keeping the others the same, to see what grows mould fastest.
5. **Investigate over time.** Set the sealed tests aside and observe daily, photographing and measuring the change across the week.
6. **Research and connect.** Explore how mould and other decomposers recycle matter, and the ethics of food waste, storage and hygiene.
7. **Document.** Record hypotheses, variables, predictions and findings in the students' own words, and photograph each stage.
8. **Share.** Present findings to a small group, giving feedback with: I notice...; I wonder...; What if...?

MATERIALS

Caution tape and printed warning signs; clear, sealed containers of pre-grown mouldy fruit and bread; the classroom fruit bowl and sink as the "scene"; magnifying glasses; gloves; sealable bags for fair tests; clipboards and pencils with the "My observations and thoughts" worksheet, ready to capture student thinking; a camera or tablet; reference material on decomposers.

TEACHER PROMPTS

What evidence supports your idea? What are you changing, and what are you keeping the same? What might happen if...? What would you need to learn next? How could we reduce food waste at school?

OBSERVE FOR

Questioning and hypothesising; fair-test and systems thinking; use of evidence over time; scientific and ethical reasoning; collaboration; and the ability to explain choices and next steps.

IN CLOSING

The provocation is only the beginning

A provocation does not deliver the answer; it opens the question

REMEMBER

A purposeful provocation does not tell children what to think. It invites them to begin thinking. When children walk into a dig site, an intertwined vine or a sealed classroom, the unit of inquiry begins with their own wondering, and our task is to notice it, honour it, and help their thinking travel further than we expected.

> *"Children can and will exceed our expectations."*
>
> — Module 6: Purposeful Provocations

FINAL TEACHER REFLECTION

- What did the children notice and wonder?
- What theories did they begin to build?
- What will you offer next to extend the inquiry?
- What questions did the provocation open?
- What surprised you?