



Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

The 5 Whys for Inquiry

Developed in the field by educators.

Purpose

To help the presenter get at the foundational root of her/his question and to uncover multiple perspectives on the question

Process

1. Presentation (3 minutes)

The presenter describes the context of their inquiry question.

One might include:

- Why you chose this question
- Why it is so important to you
- How it relates to your work back home

2. Clarifying Questions (3 minutes)

The group asks clarifying questions. These are questions which clarify the context of the presenter's remarks. They should be specific questions which can be answered with brief statements. For example, "How long has your school been involved in place based learning?" Or, "How many community members are involved with planning this project?"

3. Decision (3 minutes)

The group discusses the best line of inquiry to get at the heart of the question and decides upon the initial "why question." The presenter is silent.

4. The "Why Questioning" (10 minutes)

The "why question" decided upon is asked and the presenter responds. Another "why question" is asked in response to the presenter's answer. This continues with a maximum of 5 "why questions" being asked.

5. Discussion (5 minutes)

The group then discusses what they have heard the presenter say. Their discussion is not about solving the problem, but is an attempt to help the presenter understand the underlying causes for the issue they described. The presenter is silent.

6. Response (3 minutes)

The presenter responds to what has been said. The group is silent.

7. Debrief (3 minutes)

The group and the presenter debrief the experience.