



## OPTIONAL HANDOUT

### THE INQUIRY CYCLE

The cycle of inquiry (or scientific method) is a thinking tool—not a specific activity. This tool helps us go through the process of questioning, exploring, predicting, discussing, and observing something of interest. Rather than focusing on learning scientific facts, when we take the time to observe things in our environment we become curious and begin to ask questions. Curiosity and asking questions (inquiry) is what helps children learn about the world around them. Inquiry builds critical thinking skills and supports problem solving across the domains of learning and development, which is key to children’s school readiness and independent learning throughout life.

This cycle doesn’t always move in one direction. Sometimes, you will move back and forth through the steps because your child might notice something new or realize he has a new question after exploring more. As your child explores your home and community, practice asking questions to help your child learn more about the world around you. Use the questions in the green bubbles to get started.

- Encourage your children to ask questions in their tribal languages whenever possible. Provide visual aids that your child can use to communicate their thinking.
- Adjust your questions to match your child’s current level of receptive and expressive language and English.
- Allow your child to communicate in the language in which they feel most comfortable to support curiosity and questioning. Encourage your child to speak in his or her tribal language.
- Children develop their comprehension and communication skills as they make predictions, plan explorations, describe findings, document observations, and explain their reasoning (“Why did it happen?”). They also learn how to engage in small group conversations.

