



# INQUIRY FIELD GUIDE

*20+ PRACTICAL STRATEGIES AND  
PROTOCOLS TO PROMPT QUESTIONS  
AND FACILITATE INVESTIGATIONS*

# Idea Clustering

## The What

Idea Clustering allows students to see the connections their ideas have with others' ideas, supporting the development of collaborative projects or topics of investigation. Use this process to help establish interest groups for collaborative work, or to synthesize many diverse ideas into a more concise list of options.

## The How

1. Prompt students with a compelling, open-ended question or visualization in an effort to trigger multiple solutions or ideas in response to your inquiry topic.
  - Students respond by jotting their ideas as quickly as possible on a series of sticky notes, writing 1 idea per note, and filling as many notes as possible.
  - Set a timer to help keep students focused on the task. (4 minutes suggested)
2. Invite a student to share a single sticky note idea aloud, and invite others to share aloud any notes they have that relate to that idea in some way.
  - Collect the related sticky notes as they are read aloud and post them on the board or chart paper, sticking them together in clusters.
3. Continue inviting new students to share different ideas, collecting the related notes from other students, one by one, until all sticky notes have been read aloud and clustered by topic.
4. Invite the class to help title the clusters by reading aloud some of the notes in each cluster.