



INQUIRY WORKSHOP 2 · RECORDED 15 AUGUST 2026

Capturing Students' Thinking

The six roles you play in one inquiry lesson — and the single template that runs all six.

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Why this exists

A finished piece of work no longer proves that any thinking happened.

The essay arrives clean. The design brief is complete. The lab write-up looks right. None of it tells you where the student got stuck, what they tried, or whether the idea started in their own head. The answer is not detection software. It is capturing the **messy middle** while it is still happening — inside the lesson, while you can still do something about it.

On 15 August 2026, Ioana Badicioiu and Brian Jackson spent 45 minutes on exactly this problem. Their instrument is one you almost certainly already own: a Cornell Notes template. Most classrooms point it at the student, as a tidy way to take notes. This session points it at the teacher, as a diagnostic.

This companion holds the six roles they walked through, in the order a lesson runs, and — the part worth keeping — what you read back out of the template in each one.

The template is not the point. What you can see because of it is.

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The six roles, in the order the lesson runs

One lesson. Six roles. The same sheet of paper.

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|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. The Provocateur | → the hook | → who got interested |
| 2. The Designer | → the constraints | → transformed, or transcribed |
| 3. The Curator | → the sources | → did they use what you vetted |
| 4. The Coach | → the dip | → lost, or thinking |
| 5. The Facilitator | → the silence | → a question is safer than an answer |
| 6. The Assessor | → the summary | → a checkpoint, not a grade |

Brian's framing: you are already doing all six. Naming them is what makes them intentional. Ioana added the other half of that — being able to name your method means you are aware of it, and struggling to name what you do is an invitation to ask why you do it that way.

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The six roles in detail

1. The Provocateur — capturing the initial wonder

What the role is. You open with something that makes the room stop. A surprising phenomenon, a debatable question, an image that misbehaves. The job is two things at once: spark the curiosity, and see who catches it.

What it does to the template. The first line of the Cues column belongs to the student's own *"I wonder..."*. They write it before any teaching happens. It is theirs, in their words, on the page.

From the session. Brian described a physics teacher who walks in without a word and drops two identical soda cans into a tank of water. One sinks. One floats. Phones go down. The *"how?"* comes from the students, not from her. Brian's own provocation for the Monday after the workshop: *"How is innovation different from design?"*

Three moves:

- Open with the phenomenon, not the learning objective.
- Require every student to write one *"I wonder..."* question in the Cues column before you say anything else.
- Read faces, posture and comments while they write. How hooked they are at minute three tracks with how the learning goes.

What you read back out. Not *"was the class engaged"* — you can guess that. You get **which** students were hooked, and on what: a named starting point for every person in the room, in writing, in the first few minutes.

2. The Designer — setting the process constraints

What the role is. Before students touch the material, you decide how they will have to process it. This is the single move that stops the template becoming organised copying.

What it does to the template. You pre-populate the Cues column with disciplinary prompts — the questions your subject asks, not generic study questions. The three from the session:

- *How does George Orwell use personification to enhance the story?*
- *Why did Apple use aircraft-grade aluminium for its laptop body instead of plastic?*
- *How does the poetry of WWI help me understand the historical context of the war?*

Not one of them can be answered by moving a sentence across the page. Each one demands real transformation.

From the session. For MYP teachers, Brian noted, this is where your factual, conceptual and debatable questions live. A prompt can be a whole question or a stem the student finishes. Over a unit, hand more of the column back to them — including the side-question they want to chase.

He also pointed out that Walter Pauk built this layout in the 1950s on instinct: keeping cues, notes and summary apart makes a student retrieve rather than reread. And the sheet should match the grain of your discipline. Arts teachers he knows run it as a mood board.

Three moves:

- Write the Cues prompts *after* deciding where the lesson has to land. Plan backwards from the big idea.
- Make every prompt demand a transformation: *why, how, compared to what*.
- Reshape the sheet to fit your subject: a mood board, a data column, a score, a storyboard.

What you read back out. Whether the Notes column holds transformed information or transcribed information. Ioana's name for the whole design job is *engineering the thinking*: "the foundation of inquiry is the architecture of thought."

3. The Curator — tracking engagement with vetted sources

What the role is. You choose what the students meet. Curated content is anything you prepared: a poem, a listening task, a graph, a business case study, a product on the desk, one artist's body of work.

What it does to the template. The Notes column becomes your evidence that they went where you sent them. Specific detail is the tell: a vetted source leaves fingerprints a generic search does not.

From the session. Brian has asked "*where did you get that?*" too many times and heard WikiHow or Quora — places, as he tells his students, where nobody is checking the answers. So he says out loud why he picked one source over another, and students start making that judgement themselves. Ioana pushed a step earlier: how do you curate? She likes a second thing beside the main text — a work of art, a piece of non-fiction — so students meet the concept in more than one form. And "*go research this*" is not an instruction for students still learning to research. Most take the first link the engine offers.

Three moves:

- Hand out a list of sources, not a verb. Especially in the early research-skills years.
- Say out loud why this source and not that one. Model the judgement in front of them.
- Scan the Notes column for the detail that only your material contains.

What you read back out. Whether the evidence came from your curation or from the top of a results page. A note can be perfectly true and still tell you they never opened what you chose.

4. The Coach — telling lost from thinking

What the role is. The students are working. You are floating — between the desks, or through the shared documents. Brian calls it painting in the dark: you cannot see inside their heads, and the lesson is happening now.

The distinction that matters. Lost and thinking look identical from two metres away. The difference is almost always a **bottleneck skill** — one missing move that blocks everything downstream. Brian set this next to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development: too hard and they give up, too easy and nothing is learned, and the learning sits in the band between. He has re-coined the word *struggle* in his classroom. Struggle is not failure. Struggle is difficult but not impossible, and that is where the learning happens.

Why they will not tell you. Saying "*I don't know what to do*" has a social cost — what friends will think, and what the teacher will think of their competence. In Brian's own classrooms it is usually only around five, at best ten percent of a room who will say it out loud. He was not that student either. He hung back, waited for somebody else, and lost a lot of time.

What a bottleneck skill looks like. In design, Brian found his in analysis. Students write long, elaborate, genuinely careful *description* and believe it is analysis. They never answer why the designer made that choice, or how it makes you read the product as high quality. Those decisions are all deliberate, and naming the missing skill is what changed the work. Ioana sees the same shape in Language and Literature: annotations that are underlining with no thinking attached, or a stylistic device named — metaphor, imagery — with nothing said about what it does in relation to the question. That is how she knows, from the Notes column alone, whether the thinking happened.

The 90-second intervention. Not rescue. Not walking past.

- Ask quietly, one to one: "*Are you thinking, or lost?*" Never in front of the group.
- Put a red, a yellow and a green object on each table. Green: working. Red: completely lost. Yellow: I have a question I have been afraid to ask. Holding up an object costs less than raising a hand, and students use it when they will not speak.
- Brian's rule of thumb: when he comes across more than two students struggling with *knowing what to do* rather than with doing the work, he stops and delivers a mini lesson on the spot on the thing that is missing from their skill set.

Ninety seconds. Five minutes at the outside. The only question you have to answer: what steps get this student to the missing skill?

What you read back out. A Cues column that is still blank in the middle of a task is a signal, not laziness. So is a Notes column full of correct-looking sentences with no question anywhere near them.

5. The Facilitator — lowering the social cost of speaking

What the role is. You asked the question. The room went quiet. Brian's line for that moment: the answer is not on my forehead. Or the other version, where every pair of eyes finds the desk — if I do not look at the teacher, the teacher cannot see me.

What it does to the template. The Cues column becomes a safety net. You stop asking students to invent an answer under pressure, and start asking them to read out something they already wrote.

The script, in three steps:

1. *"Everyone, look at your Cues column. Find the question you wrote down when you first looked at the poem / chart / design. Who has one they're willing to share?"*
2. *"What question did you write down?"*
3. *"What makes you say that?"*

Why it works. A question has no wrong answer, so offering one carries almost no risk. And when answers do come, give nothing away — not even a flicker that there was a right one you were fishing for. *"What makes you say that?"* is borrowed from Socratic seminar and Theory of Knowledge, and Brian uses it even when the answer is plainly wrong. A student once insisted his aquaponics tray would drain with the water going in lower than it came out. Instead of *"you're wrong"*, Brian asked what made him say that. If a student can tell you that, the thinking is real — and you can see where it went astray: a bad source, a copied answer, or an AI reply taken on trust.

Three moves the room offered:

- Reframe the question. Chandra's default, and it matters twice over in language acquisition, where students hold several first and best languages.
- Scaffold back to what they already know, then find the exact point where the jump has to be made. Ioana's move.
- Think-pair-share, or phone a friend. A shared effort costs less than an individual one.

What you read back out. Which questions students were willing to own out loud, and which ones stayed on the page.

6. The Assessor — triangulating the messy middle

What the role is. The lesson ends and you read the Summary — the box most note-taking systems do not have. The student synthesises: what is the big idea, and how has my thinking shifted since the provocation?

What it does to the template. It closes the loop the Provocateur opened. First *"I wonder..."*, last *"here is where I landed"*, and the whole path in between.

The rule that makes it work. Do not grade it. Brian was firm: the Summary is a formative checkpoint, not a summative task. The moment students believe the notes are graded they start performing, and performance is the exact thing you were trying to see past.

From the session. Ioana calls the Summary her favourite part of the template, for a reason that turns the lesson inside out: for a teacher engineering the thinking, the Summary is where the *planning* starts. Decide the big idea you want them to reach, then build backwards to the provocation. She reads formative checkpoints as data on her own teaching too — their learning is information about our teaching. Reteach in five minutes, or replan. Brian does the same to the sheet: the questions students wrote tell him how to pre-populate the Cues column better next time.

Three moves:

- Say out loud, before they start, that these notes are not graded.
- Open with a specific Cue question, not with the summary. *"You wrote this question at the start. Where did it take you?"*
- Ask whether the summary is carried by the evidence in the Notes column. If not, that gap is the conversation.

What you read back out. Whether the summary grew out of the middle or arrived from somewhere else.

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The five-second diagnostic read

You walk past a desk mid-task. You get one glance at the Cues column and about five seconds. This is the read.

What you see	What it means	Your move
Cues blank	No entry point yet	90-second intervention
Cues full of hard questions	Productive struggle	Say nothing. Come back
Notes clean, Cues empty	Copying, not transforming	One <i>why</i> , at the desk
A device named, no thinking	The bottleneck is analysis	Name it. Model one
Summary lands, notes thin	The middle is missing	Open with a Cue question

The first two rows are the whole discipline. They look the same from two metres and need opposite responses. A blank column pulls you in. A full one pushes you away — leave them alone. Get those two backwards and you rescue the thinkers into passivity while the stuck student waits.

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The Cornell Notes map

Three zones. Six roles. One sheet.

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CUES & PROMPTS	NOTES & EVIDENCE
Provocateur: hooks	Curator: source tracking
Coach: diagnostics	Designer: process constraints
+-----+-----+	
SUMMARY	
Assessor: the formative checkpoint. Never a grade.	
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- **Cues & Prompts** — wonder gets recorded here, and being stuck becomes visible.
- **Notes & Evidence** — transformation happens here, against the sources you chose.
- **Summary** — the student says what it added up to. You learn what tomorrow needs.

This is also the quiet answer to the blank stare and the copy-paste. AI is very good at finished products. The messy middle is not one. That is not detection, and the session never sold it as one. A lesson that records thinking as it happens stops needing the artefact to prove it.

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After the session — when nobody answers

The recording keeps rolling past the thank-yous. Chandra stayed on and asked the hardest question in the room: you ask, and nobody answers. What then?

Chandra's move: wait, and say that you are waiting. He asks the question, pauses, and tells the class plainly that he is not moving on until he gets some sort of answer. Two minutes, five, ten. Some of them then consciously start making the effort. He was honest that he does not know how effective it is.

Ioana's test for it. If the wait ends in something rather than silence, it worked. She pairs it with an offer: let's break this down together. Or she models the thinking, then stops.

Brian's diagnosis. If he is checking understanding, everybody is in — every group shares. If they genuinely cannot answer, he works out why, quickly. Did they not engage with the reading? Did they not do the work? Did they not understand the question? Then he retools — sometimes by dropping the day's plan and going back to the point where it broke.

The bigger thing he named. Across two decades of teaching and talking with other educators, Brian sees an acceleration of learned helplessness. AI does not ask you questions. It gives you the answer. Passivity has to be unlearned on purpose: a student who is not active is not learning.

And for the ambiguous question. Chandra had dropped a Theory of Knowledge question into a maths lesson and the room froze. Brian's read: maths usually has a correct answer, so there is less uncertainty. A good TOK question is ambiguous, and ambiguity makes students anxious about whether their answer is good enough. His fix is to say so before he asks — *I want to ask you something, and there is no right or wrong answer.* Naming the elephant gets more of them talking. Ioana's addition: the same conceptual question works in any subject. That is concept-driven teaching.

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"If there's nothing in the messy middle that explains the thinking, then where they got that summary from becomes the talking point."

— Brian Jackson, 15 August 2026

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This week's move

One class. One lesson. Not the whole timetable.

- **Use the lesson you already planned.** Do not design something new around the template.
- **Pre-populate the Cues column** with two or three questions only your subject would ask. Leave the top line for their own *"I wonder..."*.
- **Do not grade it.** Say so out loud before they start.

Then do one thing with what comes back: read only the Cues columns and sort them into blank and not-blank. That sort tells you what Monday has to be. The printable scaffold, with pre-populated cues by subject, is in the scaffold pack.

Three places to keep going

edodo.app/workshops/workshop-capturing-student-thinking

edodo.app/download/inquiry-starter-kit

edodo.app/courses

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