

iExplore Academy

Trailblazer PLUS

Congratulations! Welcome to the iExplore Academy!! You have taken the first step to transforming your classroom and embracing discovery-based learning, and I'm thrilled you have allowed me to be a part of your journey. Your time and energy is so valuable, and it is truly my honor to save you a whole lot of both by guiding you through this often confusing transition to the NGSS. I promise you, you are in great hands!

This document walks you through what you can expect from this program. We will review what you can expect from me, what I can expect from you, and how we will communicate throughout this course.

What You Can Expect From Me

Making the leap to embracing discovery in your classroom and implementing the NGSS as they were intended can be scary but also so exciting. First, I just want to reiterate that I am so excited to take this journey with you. I truly believe every student deserves the opportunity to learn as they do best -- through exploration and meaning-making -- and I believe every teacher deserves (and needs) support throughout the process of implementing these approaches. By and large, we weren't taught this way, so embracing this change and really putting it into practice can be a challenge. But that's why I'm here! I am with you to clarify what discovery-based instruction for the NGSS looks like, to simplify your implementation of it by providing you a step-by-step process, and to address confusions and troubleshoot with you as you experience the challenges and pushback that always accompanies change.

So specifically, what can you expect from me?

Workshops That Simply Make Sense

One of my talents as a teacher is breaking down complex concepts and communicating them in a simple, understandable fashion. This is what our workshops do. They take all of the babble you have been hearing about the NGSS and discovery-based instruction, and they put it into terms you can easily understand and relate to. Plus, I'm an examples-person, so you'll find a lot of those embedded in our workshops, as well!

A Path To Implementation

Beyond teaching you what the NGSS and discovery-based instruction is all about, I'm going to guide you through implementing it in your own classroom. When you follow our step-by-step process to create cohesive units, you can be confident the lessons you are engaging your students in represent the best. That doesn't mean every lesson will be perfect, or you won't find room for improvement later, but it does mean you will be well on your way to embodying the greatest role of any educator -- that of a facilitator of discovery.

Support When You Need It

It is always my goal to respond to your communications within 24 business hours. Sometimes I have a quick answer, while other times I may need to do some digging to fully address your needs. Either way, you can expect to hear something from me within 24 business hours.

My Best

I hold myself to high expectations, and I want the service I provide to you to always represent my best. Sometimes a request for help or service requires additional time to provide you a quality response, and in those cases, I will let you know when you can expect an answer - and I will ALWAYS do my best to meet those deadlines!

Along those lines, though, I want to acknowledge - as far as I know, I'm not superhuman. On occasion, things come up - people get sick, daycare falls through, emergencies happen. If any of these things prevent me from showing up for you, you can be sure I will do my best to communicate that in a timely manner and reschedule for a time that works best for all of us.

I believe I can safely say - teaching is our career, our passion, maybe even our mission in life -- but it is not EVERYTHING we are. We are people with families, with friends, with interests and other responsibilities, and that is OK.

I commit to always giving you my best, but I also want to recognize we all need a little extra grace sometimes.

What I Expect From You

While I am wholeheartedly thrilled to be your guide in this journey to discovery-based learning and the NGSS, this is YOUR journey. This transformation is for YOU and YOUR students. I'm sure I'm speaking to the choir here, but just in case - YOU will need to take ownership of your own learning. (How many times have you said that about your students!?) The investment you make is going to determine the results you get.

So what do I expect from YOU?

Do The Work

First and foremost, just DO THE WORK. Complete the lessons. Carry out the tasks. Engage with the community. Prepare for our meetings. Put what you learn into practice. Simply do your best.

I love love love helping you. I love digging up resources, mapping out storylines, brainstorming phenomena. BUT I can't create your units for you. I can't write your lessons. I don't know your objectives. So when you ask for help, make sure you've done all you can first.

When you want to ask for a resource, be sure you are sharing your objectives. I can't know what you want to teach unless YOU know first.

When you are struggling to find a phenomenon, be sure you share what questions you want it to generate. Again, I can't know what you want to teach unless YOU know first. (And if you don't

know what you want to teach, give me whatever information you CAN nail down! Do what you can, always.)

Do the work, try your best, and then when you are truly stuck, turn to us!

Speak Up

When you're struggling, when you are feeling frustrated, when you need *something*, SPEAK UP. We can't help you if you don't advocate for yourself. I want to meet your needs, but I need to know what those are! Communicate where you are and what you're experiencing, so we can help you find a solution. This can be a challenging journey, and I promise, you won't find any judgment here when you stumble.

Engage

Truly, join our community. Share your struggles and your triumphs. Give and take advice and encouragement. Share your work, and let us be your sounding board. We can accomplish more together than we can on our own, and when we work together, we won't need to reinvent the wheel (again and again).

Professionalism

I wholeheartedly believe this goes without saying, but I also believe clear communication of expectations is important in any relationship, so I'm going to say it anyway. I expect us both to behave as professionals -- honoring the knowledge and wisdom we both bring to the table and the time and energy we invest in our work.

If for some reason you cannot attend a scheduled session, please communicate that with me via text or email at least two hours before our scheduled meeting. I have set aside this time specifically for you, sometimes making special arrangements for childcare or reservations in my office space.

That said, I do understand emergencies happen -- we get sick, our kids get sick, sitters fall through, the power goes out -- I get it. Things happen. I have no problem making allowances for those unforeseen events. We are all human! However, a pattern of short-notice cancellations may result in forfeiture of cancelled sessions.

Please arrive promptly for your scheduled call. I have blocked this time specifically for you, and I am not always able to extend our scheduled time. Let's maximize the time we DO have by arriving promptly. If for some reason you ever have issues accessing our calls, please contact me immediately via text (814-873-3721).

Patience

This is a process. It's truly a transformation. It doesn't happen overnight, and we all bloom on our own schedule. Trust that every aha! gets you one step closer, and each element you implement is improving your students' learning. Nothing is wasted - no time, no energy - if you are learning from it. Keep that in mind if a lesson flops, or if you spend hours on a task only to go another route. It happens. It gets easier.

How We Will Communicate

Communication is SO important to me. I want to know what you're thinking, feeling, struggling with, celebrating. I want to know what is confusing, where you need help, and what I can do for you. So please, don't ever hesitate to communicate.

That said, HOW will we communicate?

Preferred Methods

When a question arises from the course content, post your question right on the appropriate lesson or module page! Others may share that same question and may benefit from the answer.

When you have a question about implementing the work in your own classroom -- when you are struggling to understand a standard, want feedback on a storyline, or are looking for lesson resources -- post your question in the Beyond The Aha! community. Again, your question may benefit others. Alternatively, others may have just what you are looking for. Posts inside the Beyond The Aha! community are always a top priority to me, so you can be sure that I will address your question. But I also want to see that benefit others, so that is always where I will share my response.

If you have something you would like to ask but are uncomfortable doing so publicly, feel free to direct message me on Facebook or Instagram. You may also email me at nvantassel@iexplorescience.com. Depending on the nature of the question, I will either share a response (leaving your identity anonymous) in the community or correspond with you directly.

If you have technical issues with the site or your account, please contact support@iexplorescience.com.

Hours Of Communication

In our ever-connected world, it can be truly difficult to disconnect. However, I do believe it is vital we do this in order to protect the relationships most dear to us (and it's not bad for our own mental health, either!). For that reason, you may not hear back from me immediately, especially when your contact comes during off-business hours. (That said, while disconnecting is the goal, I can't say I'm never on Facebook while we're watching Netflix at night!) Also, please keep in mind that we represent a cross-country community. We are all in different time zones! For that reason, my business hours may not completely align with yours. Please know that I will respond as soon as I am able - I won't leave you hanging!

Our Meetings

You will be sent my calendar to schedule our meetings, and you will receive a meeting link at least one day before our scheduled time via email. Please keep that email so you can access our call at the scheduled time. If for some reason you have any issues accessing our virtual meeting room, please contact me immediately via text (814-873-3721).

All of our meetings will be recorded, and you will receive an email with the recording within 48 hours of the call.