

## Learning in Depth

### FAQ

#### **Q. Won't students become bored with the same topic for twelve years?**

A. Boredom is a product of ignorance; generally, the more we know about something, the more interesting it becomes. An underlying principle of the LiD project is that “everything is wonderful, if only we know enough about it.”

#### **Q. The random assignment of topics is absurd. Why not let students choose their topic?**

A. Children's interests at age five tend to change quite often. A particular topic may be stimulated by a recent movie and change in a week; even the dinosaurs so loved by typical five year olds commonly lose their appeal after a few years. There are a number of reasons to hold to the random assignment, though it isn't some dogma for LiD.

#### **Q. Wouldn't this be too complicated to organize?**

A. Certainly it will be a challenge. If we are more committed to an educational system than a schooling system, then we can make it work. It will cost something, of course. Even if each student meets a supervisor for only half an hour per month, that becomes a significant time requirement. But the cost will be tiny compared to educational budgets. Teacher-librarians, parents, and older students studying the same topic in depth can mitigate the costs.

#### **Q. What is the research basis for this project?**

A. Nearly all questions of educational importance are matters of value and meaning, and these are beyond the reach of the dominant forms of research methods we currently have available. What research basis is there for including Social Studies in the curriculum?

#### **Q. Aren't many of these topics developmentally inappropriate for the ages at which they are to begin?**

A. We have always liked, and agreed with, Jerome Bruner's argument that “any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to a child at any stage of development” (1966, p. 33).

**Q. Will the “depth” knowledge transfer to other curriculum areas?**

A. We suspect that it will transfer unstoppably. The kind of expert knowledge and layered understanding, and the skills developed in learning, that will be built up over the years cannot fail to affect how students deal with other subjects and topics in the curriculum. Remember, we have never had anyone—anyone—go through such a program. Our suspicion, and hope, is that it will transform students’ experience of schooling and our sense of what schooling can be.

**Q. This project isn’t going anywhere without teacher buy-in—why do you imagine it will get it?**

A. Administrators commonly respond that they think it would be a great addition to what the schools can offer, but, they say, teachers will never go for it. Teachers commonly respond that it is a great addition to what schools can offer and that they would love to be involved in ungraded exploration of topics with their students on an individual basis, if we can find the time – “This is exactly what I got into teaching for!” one teacher put it recently—but, they commonly conclude, administrators will never go for it. We think both groups will go for it when they understand it.