



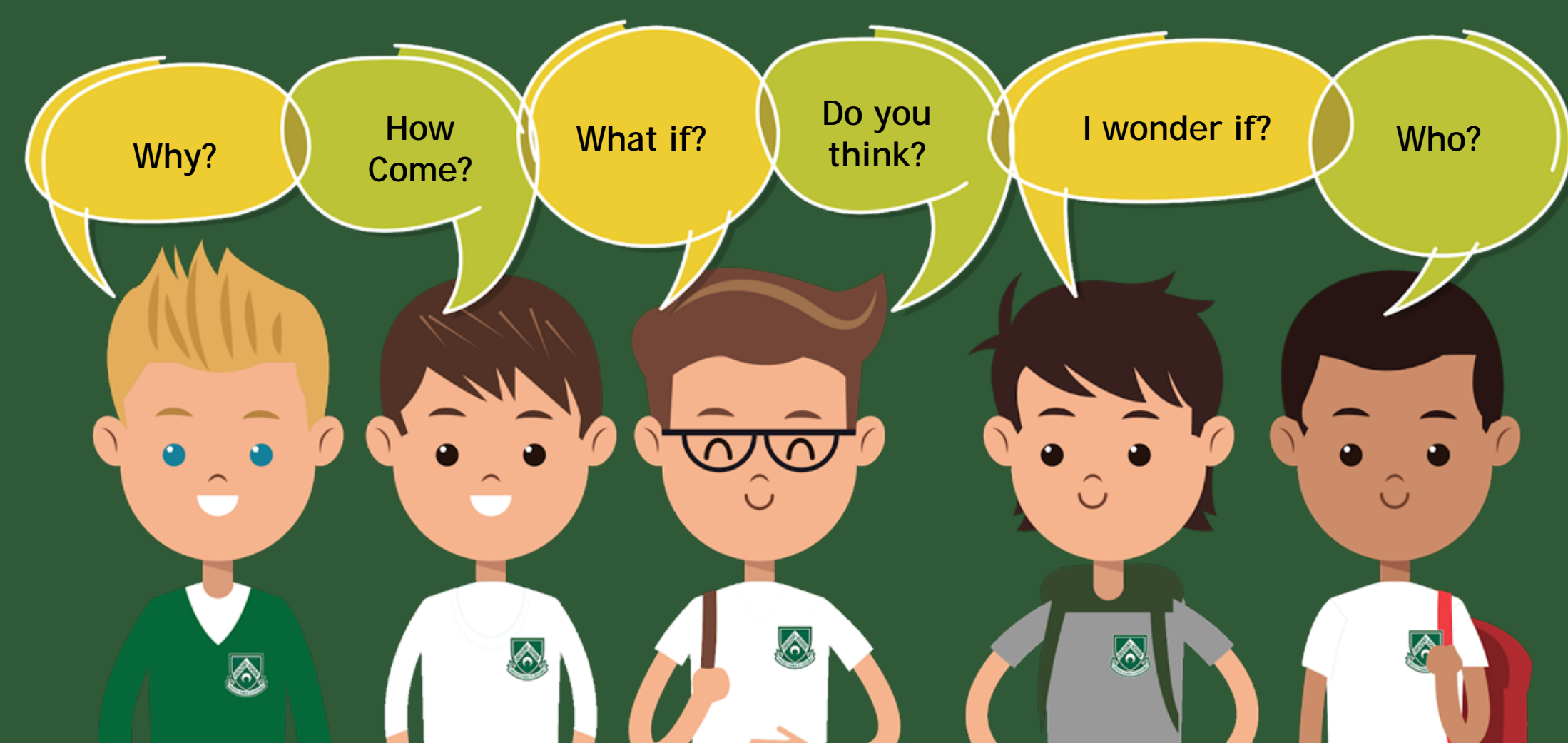
Key and Essential Questions: Fostering Empathy Through Multiple Perspectives

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Further Information

This poster and further information is available at
www.theibsc.org

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Introduction

The motivation for this project stemmed from an observation that young boys when discussing an issue or arguing a point of view would often only see one side of the issue. I wondered if there was a way that I could teach boys to see a different perspective and feel for a different viewpoint even if they didn't agree with that viewpoint.

Were they able to create questions that went beyond the facts of a text or an article? Could they become more **adaptable** in their thinking?

Research Context and Participants

Crescent School is an independent non-denominational day school from Grades 3 to 12. The school is located in Lawrence Park, a high socioeconomic area of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Twenty Grade 6 boys participated in this action research. These boys were chosen because they were part of my home form and I taught them both Social Studies and Science. I had daily contact with the participants either through class time or through home form time.

How might developing essential questions when exploring multiple perspectives in Social Studies enhance empathy in Grade 6 boys?



Data Collection

Surveys

Likert-style and short answer questions allowed the boys to think about the types of questions they asked and created.

Written Reflections and Exit Tickets

The boys were given opportunities to reflect on their findings and discuss differing points of view. Prompts allowed students to think about how they got to their point of view.

Interviews

Students were asked questions in a controlled environment to reflect on their participation and were asked to describe their thoughts on the process.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the qualitative data, including field notes, handouts and my own observations, looking for different types of questions, different points of view and recurring themes. Emphasis was given to ensure that the boys' voices were front and centre. The data were then categorized into major findings which were used to inform the results of the project

Conclusion

As the boys became more and more comfortable creating key and essential questions, they were willing to embrace different points of view and be more **adaptable** in their thinking.

- The empathic and thoughtful responses demonstrated with their discussions and written responses convinced me of the **power of the structured approach** where students were asked to identify and differentiate between **key and essential questions**.
- The boys' ability to **formulate questions** enabled them to delve deeper into the article.
- Their comprehension heightened every time they read a new article and *with added* opportunities to discuss and **debate** their thoughts and findings, the boys demonstrated increasing ability to empathize with differing viewpoints and became far more **adaptable** in their thinking.
- Some students began applying their questioning techniques to many other subjects which got them to see **multiple perspectives**.

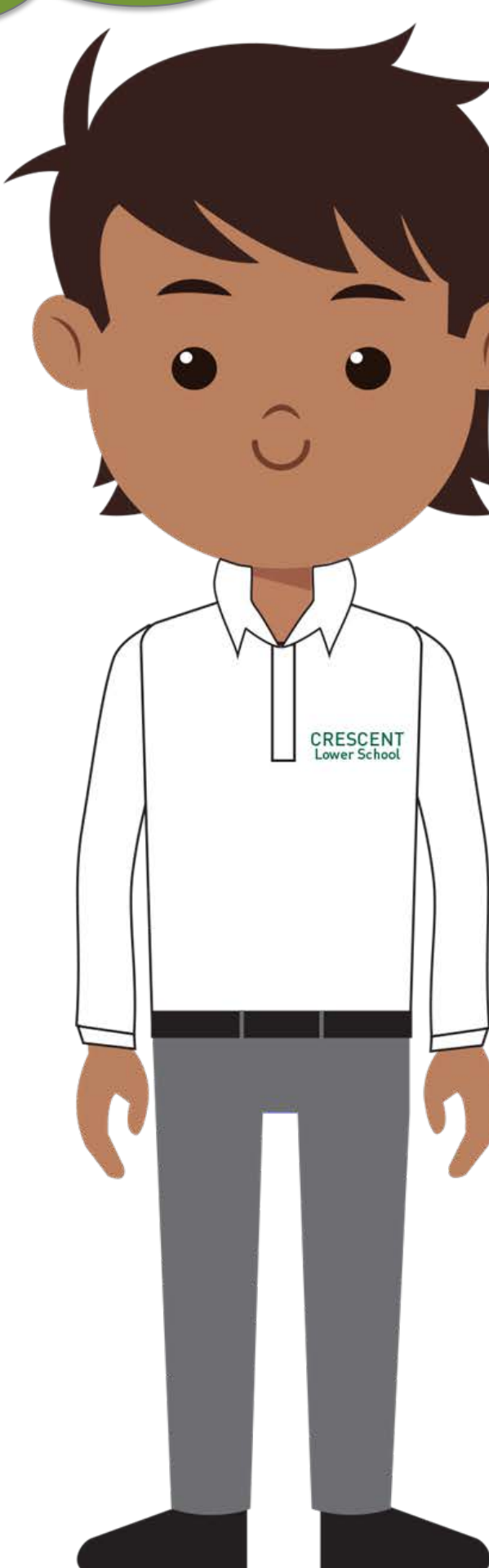
Key Findings and Discussions

An essential question makes you more empathetic because you look at the perspectives of both sides of the argument and feel for those who need it.

"Essential questions make you argue and you can have many different opinions."

"If you look for the questions, not the answers, then you build deeper understanding about the article by looking for different vantage points."

"Key Questions tells us a straight forwards answer and can be easily found. They give us general information of the topic."



Read Article

Identify Key and Essential Questions

Formulate Answers

Share Answers in Groups

Listen and discuss opinions from Peers

Debate an Essential Question

The Research Action

- My action was to formalize and differentiate the way questions were taught.
- The boys went through a process where they had to **identify** types of questions and discuss their answers.
- In small groups and whole class discussions, the boys **debated** the different viewpoints that were brought forward from their essential questions.
- The boys wrote their observations and thoughts after each article.



Key Readings

- Denning, S. (2011, September 11). *Learning To Ask The Right Question*. Forbes.com Retrieved from: forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/09/11/learning-to-ask-the-right-question-2/#20cf2061167a
- McTighe & Wiggins. (2005). *Understanding by Design*. 2nd Edition. Alexandria: ASCD
- Ryan, James E. (2017). *Wait, What? And Life's Other Essential Questions*. New York: Harper One



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