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The 15 April deadline

for cim project proposals for the 2015 – 2016 school year is fast approaching.

If you have a burning question that you believe is linked to the ACS core purpose – ‘through learning inspire all to make a difference’ – and relevant to other education professionals in ACS International Schools, use the Project Proposal Form as a first step to begin its exploration with cim staff members. The proposal is initially drafted by you, but once shared cim staff members will guide you to ensure the proposal is completed to a standard that the four-campus Head of School Committee can evaluate.

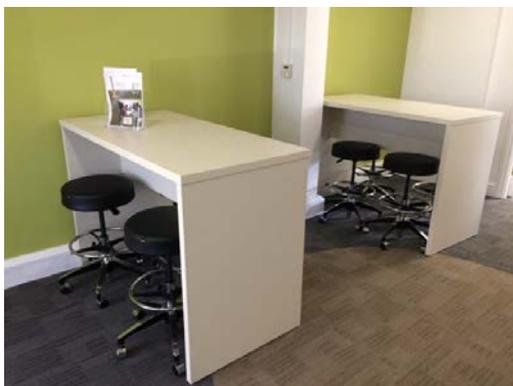
cim’s collaborative action research model favours an inter-school project team of two or more people from at least two different ACS International Schools campuses, typically employed in roles that are relevant to the research project. The project team must be identified at the project proposal stage, and cim staff members are available to help identify and recruit potential team members from other campuses.

The completed proposals and the scoring rubric are sent to each Head of School and are reviewed prior to the HOS meeting that most closely follows the 15 April proposal deadline. CIM staff members prepare a summary of the scored rubrics and present this at the meeting. The Heads of School will select the projects that will go forward, using the averaged rubric scores to prioritize the proposals, and based on CIM staff members capacity to support projects in the coming year.

You will find copies of the Project Proposal Form and Scoring Rubric, as well as the Teaching and Learning Focus Areas for 2015 – 2016 at <https://cim.acs-schools.com/index.php/project-management/326>

Please contact cim staff members if you have any questions regarding the project proposal process. The deadline for project proposals for the 2015/2016 school year is 15 April 2015.

Ben and Latifa



We've moved

into our new home at West Lodge at the far end of the Cobham campus grounds. The building has been completely refurbished and features contemporary training and collaboration spaces. We look forward to seeing you here!

The goal of action research

is a positive change in everyday practice in one's own classroom, school or institution. Action research is also about incorporating reflection into the daily teaching routine – the willingness to critically examine one's teaching in order to improve or enhance it so that teachers become empowered to make [evidence] informed decisions about what to change and what not to change. (Nugent, Malik & Hollingsworth, 2012)

Every teacher to some degree has probably displayed characteristics of a researcher. When you were experimenting with a new instructional strategy to help a struggling student, you were doing informal research. When you spent time reflecting on student outcomes and how you might approach the topic differently next time, you were thinking like a researcher. Action research is just a more formalized, systematic approach to reflective practice.

Action research is a cyclical process – reflect, act, evaluate. It begins with teacher reflection. As teachers *reflect*, they consider their current instructional challenges and the needs of their students, and define the problem they will focus on. In the *act* stage, teachers learn about relevant strategies from reading research and from collaboration with colleagues. Teachers develop a plan for the implementing the teaching strategy they will study in their classrooms. Then, in the *evaluation* stage, the teacher is collecting data to get feedback on the strategy. This could be in the form of observations, questionnaires, test scores, etc. The teachers once again reflect as they analyze and interpret data, and use that information to plan the next set of actions.

Action research is different from traditional education research. In traditional education research, the researcher is an outside observer. In action research, the researcher is both practitioner and participant. Traditional education research is often conducted with a large random sample of students. In action research, the population that is studied is typically a small sample of convenience - the students in the researcher's classroom.

Finally, the goal of traditional forms of education research is to draw conclusions that are generalizable to a larger group. Practitioners engaging in action research are researching for the purpose of creating usable knowledge that guides them in changing and improving their practice.

Read more about action research in *A Practical guide to Action Research for Literacy Educators* by Nugent, Malik & Hollingsworth. Available online at <http://www.reading.org/Libraries/international/a-practical-guide-to-action-research-for-literacy-educators.pdf>

Watch *Action research in Special Education*, an informative video about action research. Available online at <http://youtu.be/0gUrPmGWbYE>

This article was written by Jacquinette Brown for our online Action Research Course, which is currently being piloted with 12 ACS staff members. Jacquinette is a PhD candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Research Schools International school advisor.



A good question

is at the heart of both effective reflective practice and formal action research.

To develop a good research question, you have to be clear about the problem you are attempting to address. Therefore, it helps to begin with a process of reflection. When reflecting for the purpose of identifying a research focus, you are not merely sitting and thinking about what happened in the classroom. You must use a critical lens when reflecting. This means looking at multiple sources of student data and other relevant information to make sure you are defining your problem correctly. It means considering your own experience, skills, beliefs and values, and questioning how these all may or may not influence the classroom challenge.

Look for patterns in your instruction or in student work that you may not have initially noticed. Try observing an individual student to see if that gives you further insight into your problem. You may want to consider keeping a journal to keep track of your reflections. Journaling cannot only help you clarify the focus of your research, but can be useful throughout the entire action research cycle. All of these reflective activities will help you define and narrow your problem.

Once the problem is clearly identified, you want to turn it into a research question. A research question will frame your classroom inquiry cycle. To turn the problem into a research question, use an "If...then..." approach. The "if" refers to the *independent variable* - the thing you are going to change in your practice. The "then" refers to the *dependent variable* - the outcome you will be measuring. By the end of this session, you still may feel unsure about the "if" portion of your problem statement.

If you are a teacher, it is important to ask yourself the following when forming an action research question:

- What do my students need me to do to improve teaching and learning?
- What would I like to do to improve teaching and learning in my classroom?
- What concerns do parents have about student development or achievement?
- What concerns do my colleagues have about student development or achievement?

To help assess your action research question, ask your self if the question is:

- manageable (it can be accomplished with the available resources – especially time)
- important (it is relevant to your practice and addresses a real problem that is affecting student learning outcomes)
- open-ended (it cannot be answered by 'yes' or 'no'), and
- focused (on a specific teaching strategy and group of students).



Watch *Formulating an Action Research Question* to see a real-life example of the research question setting process.

Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXhOZmFID4c>

Read about becoming a *Reflective Teacher*. Available online at

<http://www.mheducation.co.uk/openup/chapters/9780335222407.pdf>

Ready Steady Charrette

The Centre for Inspiring Minds led a Design Thinking for Educators workshop at ACS Egham International School on Wednesday, 4 March. The session introduced participants to the creative collaboration process developed at the Stanford University Design School. The process is well suited to teacher collaboration to improve student learning outcomes, as well as other school decision-making process. It challenges participants to be responsive to learner needs while thinking creatively to develop effective teaching strategies and problem-solving approaches. If you have a team of teachers who are interested in using this technique, contact the Centre for Inspiring Minds for more information.



Ready Steady Charrette participants 'test' their design solution by sharing it with colleagues, who respond with "I wish," "I like," "I wonder" statements.

Leysin American School

Paul Magnuson, Director of research and Curriculum at the Leysin American School (LAS) in Switzerland is looking for teacher collaborators interested in working with LAS staff members on: greenhouse automation using robotics, project-based learning with an emphasis on making, the internet of things, and using citizen science in the classroom. If you are interested, please contact Latifa Hassanali.

Literature search

ERIC and Google Scholar are two free online databases that offer search services for research literature related to teaching and learning. These databases can help you find out what the literature says about teaching strategies you may be considering. Learn more about their use by watching:

- *How to do a Search in the ERIC Database*. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkUxARnUHn4>
- *Using Google Scholar*. Available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1ZwgDeX2eQ>

Submit a proposal by 15 April 2015

The deadline for cim project proposals for the 2015 – 2016 school year is Wednesday, 15 April, 2015. cim staff members are available to help you develop your proposal. To make an appointment, contact Latifa Hassanali for more information.

The deadline for proposals is 15 April



Inter-school Action Research Proposal Form

ACS CENTRE FOR INSPIRING MINDS

About CIM
Using an evidence-based model for school development, the Centre for Inspiring Minds (cim) supports inter- and intra-school collaboration on educational research and development projects that improve professional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, contribute to campus-level teaching and learning strategies, and advance the ACS International School core purpose.

Please provide the following information. Contact the cim team if you have questions about the proposal process or need help completing this form. Please

Research project information

Project name	
Project leader information	
Name	Start date
Campus	End date (anticipated)
Project team member information (If known, please list the names of potential team members. An inter-campus project must include at least one person from at least one other campus)	
Name	Position
Name	Mobile number
Name	Campus
Name	Campus
Name	Campus

Research project design

Research question
A good research question: focuses on specific explanations and relationships; is manageable and can be completed; is grounded in the group members' teaching practice or experience; provides an opportunity to apply or challenge best practice; and provides a deeper understanding of a topic that is meaningful to the project team.

Purpose
The purpose plausibly and tangibly links your research question to agreed strategic priorities (at the division, campus or whole school level), and ultimately to the ACS International Schools core purpose. It is an explanation of how the research project will contribute to school development and benefit students. There are typically factors other than your project that affect the purpose.

Save the date!

Celebration of Learning

Saturday, 16 May 2015, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., ACS Cobham

This event will feature presentations by the 2014-2015 cim project teams, followed by brunch at noon. The event is open to all members of the ACS International Schools community. To register, contact Latifa Hassanali at lhassanali@acs-schools.com



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ACS International Schools
West Lodge, Portsmouth Road
Cobham, Surrey KT11 1BL, England

<http://cim.acs-schools.com>

On Twitter @acscim