

Drafting Essential Questions



Reading and Literature

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>What makes a great book or story great?</p> <p>What is the relationship between popularity and greatness in literature?</p> <p>Is a “good read” always a great book?</p>	
<p>Why read fiction?</p> <p>Can a fictional story be “true”?</p> <p>What is the relationship between “fiction” and “truth”? Is historical fiction a contradiction?</p>	
<p>What is a story? How are stories from other places and times about me? Must a story have a moral?</p> <p>Must a story have heroes and villains?</p> <p>Should a story or fairy tale teach you something?</p>	
<p>Why read? What can we learn from print?</p> <p>Can all of our experiences be put into words?</p> <p>Does literature primarily reflect culture or shape it?</p> <p>To what extent is written text conservative and to what extent dangerous?</p>	
<p>What do good readers do?</p> <p>What do they do when they don't understand?</p> <p>How do texts differ? How should I read different types of texts?</p>	
<p>What is the author saying? How do I know?</p> <p>What is the gist? What is the main idea?</p> <p>How do I read between the lines?</p> <p>How do I know I am getting the point and not merely imposing my views and experience?</p>	
<p>From whose viewpoint are we reading?</p> <p>What is the author's angle or perspective?</p> <p>What should we do when texts or authors disagree?</p>	
<p>What's new and what's old here?</p> <p>Have we run across this idea before?</p> <p>So what? Why does it matter?</p>	

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Writing, Listening, and Speaking

	Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
Writing	<p>Why write? What if writing didn't exist?</p> <p>Why share personal experiences in writing?</p> <p>To what extent is the pen mightier than the sword?</p> <p>How is written language different from spoken language?</p> <p>What makes writing worth reading?</p>	
	<p>How do writers express their thoughts and feelings?</p> <p>Where do ideas for writing come from?</p> <p>What makes writing flow?</p>	
	<p>How do effective writers hook and hold their readers? What makes writing easy to follow?</p> <p>What is the best beginning? ending?</p> <p>What is the best order (sequence)?</p> <p>What is a complete thought?</p>	
	<p>Why am I writing? For whom?</p> <p>What am I trying to achieve through my writing?</p> <p>Who will read my writing?</p> <p>What will work best for my audience?</p>	
Speaking and Listening	<p>Why speak? What do good speakers sound like?</p> <p>How do good speakers express their thoughts and feelings? What makes a speaker easy to follow?</p> <p>How is spoken language different from written language?</p> <p>What is body language? Why use it?</p>	
	<p>Why am I speaking? What am I trying to say?</p> <p>To whom am I speaking? Who will listen?</p> <p>How can I help them understand me?</p>	
	<p>What does a good listener listen for?</p> <p>Can one hear but not listen?</p>	

Drafting Essential Questions



History and Geography

	Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
Historical Analysis and Interpretation	<p>Why study history?</p> <p>What can we learn from the past?</p> <p>How am I connected to people in the past?</p> <p>To what extent is history different from the past?</p>	
	<p>How do we know what happened in the past?</p> <p>What can we legitimately infer from artifacts?</p> <p>What should we do when primary sources disagree?</p> <p>Who do we believe and why?</p> <p>Whose “story” is it?</p> <p>Is history inevitably biased?</p> <p>Is history the story told by the “winners”?</p> <p>Who were the “winners” and who were the “losers” in any historical event?</p>	
	<p>What causes change? What remains the same?</p> <p>How do patterns of cause and effect manifest themselves in the chronology of history?</p> <p>How has the world changed, and how might it change in the future?</p> <p>Is it always true that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it?</p>	
Geography	<p>Why is “where” important?</p> <p>Why is/was _____ located there?</p> <p>What makes places unique and different?</p> <p>What defines a region?</p> <p>How do a region’s geography, climate, and natural resources affect the way people live and work?</p> <p>How does where I live influence how I live?</p> <p>Why do people move?</p>	
	<p>What story do maps and globes tell?</p> <p>How and why do maps and globes change?</p> <p>How do maps and globes reflect history?</p>	

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Government and Politics

Government and Politics

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>Who should govern or rule? Should the majority always rule? Why do we have rules and laws? Who should make the rules and laws? Is it ever OK to break the law? To what extent should society control individuals? How do governments balance the rights of individuals with the common good? What are "inalienable rights"? Should _____ be restricted or regulated? (e.g., immigration, alcohol/drugs, media) When? Who decides?</p>	
<p>How do the structures and functions of government interrelate? How do different political systems vary in their toleration and encouragement of change? How do politics and economics interrelate?</p>	
<p>How do personal responsibilities and civic responsibilities differ? Can an individual really make a difference? What are the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy? What is a good citizen? How do citizens (both individually and collectively) influence government policy?</p>	
<p>What is power? What forms does it take? How is power gained, used, and justified? How can abuse of power be avoided? Is a two-party system best?</p>	
<p>What constitutes a great leader? Are great leaders made or born (nature or nurture)?</p>	

Drafting Essential Questions



Economics and Culture

	Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
Economics	<p>Why do we have money?</p> <p>What is the difference between needs and wants?</p> <p>How does something acquire value?</p> <p>How much should things cost? Who decides?</p> <p>Who should produce goods and services?</p> <p>How does the free market system affect my life? our community? our society? the world?</p> <p>Should government regulate business and economy?</p> <p>What goods and services should government provide?</p> <p>Who should pay? Who should benefit?</p> <p>Should everyone be expected to work?</p> <p>What does it mean to "make a living"?</p>	
	<p>How does technological change influence people's lives? society?</p> <p>What social, political, and economic opportunities and problems arise from changes in technology?</p>	
Culture	<p>What does it mean to be "civilized"?</p> <p>Are modern civilizations more civilized than ancient ones?</p> <p>Why should we study other cultures?</p> <p>Who are the "heroes" in a culture and what do they reveal about the culture?</p> <p>How and why do we celebrate holidays?</p> <p>What are the significant symbols and icons of civilizations and cultures?</p> <p>Who and what do we memorialize?</p>	
	<p>What happens when cultures collide?</p> <p>How are all religions the same?</p> <p>How and why do beliefs change?</p> <p>Why do people fight? Is conflict inevitable?</p> <p>What is worth fighting for?</p> <p>Is there a "just" war?</p> <p>What is revolution? Are revolutions inevitable?</p>	

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Mathematics



Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>What kind of problem is it? What do the best problem solvers do? What should we do when we're stuck? What does it mean to reason mathematically? When is the "correct" mathematical answer not the best solution?</p>	
<p>What is a number? Can everything be quantified? What couldn't we do if we didn't have or couldn't use numbers? Why do we have negative numbers? irrational numbers? imaginary numbers?</p>	
<p>What is a pattern? How do we find patterns? What can patterns reveal?</p>	
<p>How might we show _____? In what other ways (how else)? How do we best represent the part and whole relationship? the pattern? the sequence?</p>	
<p>What are the limits of mathematical modeling? In what ways does a model illuminate and in what ways does it distort? How can numbers (data) lie or mislead?</p>	
<p>How does what we measure influence how we measure? How does how we measure influence what we conclude?</p>	
<p>When is estimation better than counting and when not? When is simplification helpful? harmful? When should we sample? When shouldn't we? How much or many (of a sample) is enough?</p>	
<p>How sure are you? What's the likely margin of error? How accurate (precise) is it? How accurate (precise) does this need to be? What is proof? Do I have one?</p>	

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Science and Chemistry

	Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
Nature of Science	<p>What is science? How does it differ from other disciplines?</p> <p>How is scientific knowledge generated and validated?</p> <p>How are scientific questions answered?</p> <p>How do we decide which scientific claims to believe? What's the evidence?</p> <p>How are science and common sense related? How does opinion affect inquiry?</p> <p>What is the role of serendipity in scientific advances?</p> <p>How do you study the unobservable?</p> <p>How do you measure the unquantifiable?</p> <p>What drives scientific and technological advancement?</p> <p>In what ways do technological advances influence scientific inquiry?</p> <p>How might advances in science and technology affect society?</p>	
Chemistry	<p>How is the periodic table organized?</p> <p>How can materials with the same chemical composition be so different (e.g., graphite, diamonds)?</p> <p>How is energy conserved?</p> <p>How is matter conserved?</p> <p>How are materials recycled or disposed of?</p> <p>How do the unique chemical and physical properties of water make life on earth possible?</p> <p>What is the role of carbon in the molecular diversity of life?</p> <p>How do structures of biologically important molecules (e.g., carbohydrates, lipids, proteins, nucleic acids) account for their functions?</p> <p>How do enzymes regulate the rate of chemical reactions?</p> <p>Why do you gasp for breath during exercise?</p> <p>Why and how does the ozone hole form?</p> <p>What happens to acid rain?</p>	

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Science

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>Life Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we come to know the natural world and our place in it? How do we classify the things around us? What is the basis of life? How can we prove cells make up living things? How are characteristics of living things passed on through generations? How are form and function related in biology? How do the structure and behavior patterns of organisms enable them to survive? How do organisms survive in harsh or changing environments? How do species change through time? How are new populations developed through natural selection? What are the life cycles of living things? How do living things obtain and use energy? How does energy move? Where does it go? What is a system? How do systems interact? How does an ecosystem respond to change? Is this a healthy place? What's the evidence? 	
<p>Physical Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are force and motion connected? How do forces affect the motion of an object? How do we measure matter? How and why does matter change? How is energy conserved? How is matter conserved? How do matter and energy relate? What natural phenomena are generated by heat? How and why do machines make work easier? How are energy transformations applied in today's world? What relationships, if any, exist among different kinds of atoms? How are molecules arranged in different states of matter? 	

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Visual and Performing Arts

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>What is art? Where can we find art? Why and how do people create art? What makes art "great"? How does art communicate?</p>	
<p>How does art reflect as well as shape culture? What can artworks tell us about a society? What can we learn from studying the art of others? How do artists from different eras explore and express similar themes?</p>	
<p>What is the artistic process? What factors influence artistic expression? How and where do artists get their ideas? How do artists express their ideas? What does the design of art say about its creator? How do you know when the creative process is complete?</p>	
<p>How can we "read" and understand a work of art? Who determines the meaning of art? Does art have a message? How would we know? Should art have a message? Is one picture worth 1,000 words?</p>	
<p>How is feeling or mood conveyed musically? visually? through movement? In what ways have technological changes influenced artistic expression? Is the medium the message? Are some media better than others (e.g., for communicating particular ideas or emotions)?</p>	
<p>Do artists have a responsibility to their audiences? to society? Should we ever censor artistic expression? Should aesthetics supersede function? Is art more important than utility? What if we didn't have the arts in our world?</p>	

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World Languages

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>Why learn another language?</p> <p>Why study another culture?</p> <p>How does language shape culture?</p> <p>How does culture shape language?</p> <p>How do native speakers differ from fluent foreigners?</p> <p>Why isn't a dictionary enough?</p> <p>What do I do when my ideas are more complex than my ability to communicate them?</p> <p>How can one express complex ideas using simple terms?</p>	

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Physical Education and Health

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>What is healthful living? What is wellness?</p> <p>Who is a winner?</p> <p>How does physical fitness relate to health?</p> <p>What constitutes a lifelong sport?</p> <p>When is physical activity good and not so good for your body?</p>	
<p>What strategies do the top performers and teams use?</p> <p>Is pain necessary for progress in athletics?</p> <p>How do you achieve greater power without losing control?</p> <p>What type of feedback is best?</p> <p>How can you best use feedback to improve performance?</p>	

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Media and Technology

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>How can technology enhance understanding?</p> <p>In what ways can technology enhance expression and communication? In what ways might technology hinder it?</p> <p>What are the pros and cons of technological progress?</p> <p>Should technology be controlled? by whom?</p> <p>How can we find out things we want to know?</p> <p>What is the best source of information?</p> <p>What do you have to remember vs. what can you just look up?</p> <p>What makes information "true"?</p> <p>Is some information better than other information on the same topic? How do we judge?</p> <p>How do we know what to believe (from what we hear, read, see on the Internet)?</p>	

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Education

Overarching Essential Questions	Adapt these questions or generate new ones
<p>What educational beliefs about teaching and learning do we share?</p> <p>To what extent do our policies, priorities, and actions reflect our educational beliefs?</p> <p>How would people know that we are a standards-based school and district?</p> <p>What content is worth uncovering?</p> <p>How will we know that students really understand the Big Ideas?</p> <p>Are we assessing everything we value? Is anything important falling through the cracks because we are not assessing it?</p> <p>To what extent is instruction engaging and effective?</p> <p>How might we walk the talk and apply standards to our own work?</p> <p>How might we work smarter and more effectively?</p> <p>Would you want your child to attend school?</p>	