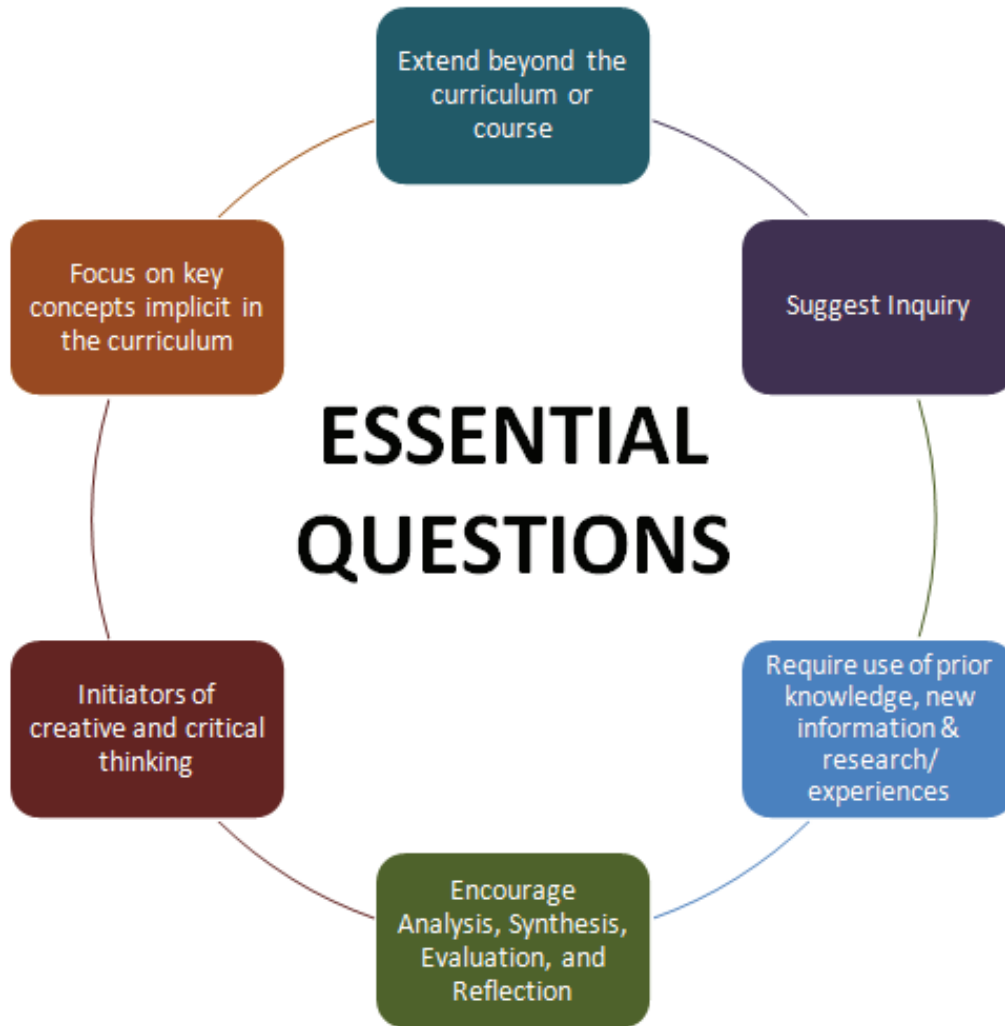


Essential Questions Series



Essential questions can not be answered with a “yes” or “no.”

Essential questions typically lead to more questions.

Essential questions require the use of multiple sources to understand a complex issue.

Essential questions often require an opinion and evidence to support your position.

Essential questions are the engines of inquiry that propel students through the learning experience. Essential questions prompt exploration and open discovery. All content should contribute toward or inform learners as to the evolving complexity of potential responses to these questions. Grant Wiggins characterizes them as “well, essential: important, vital, at the heart of the matter — the essence of the issue.”

A question is essential when it:

Causes genuine INQUIRY into the big ideas and core content.

ARGUABLE: provokes deep thought, lively discussion, sustained inquiry, and new understanding as well as more questions

Requires students to CONSIDER alternatives, WEIGH evidence, SUPPORT their ideas, and JUSTIFY their answers.

Stimulates vital, ongoing rethinking of big ideas and assumptions.

Sparks meaningful CONNECTIONS with prior learning and personal experiences.

As a big idea will unpack into multiple essential questions (usually), so an essential question will itself unpack into multiple smaller questions. The smaller questions are not unimportant, but it is crucial to understand how the smaller questions relate to the Big Idea. For instance:

Essential question: What traits and characteristics are collectively used to determine a classification?

Non-essential question: How many legs does a spider have?

It may well be the case that non-essential questions can be used to bring about understanding of the essential questions, but they are not the essential thing. Consider another pair:

Essential questions: How do history and context determine the definition of “art?”

Non-essential question: Is Duchamp's “Fountain” art or not?



Wiggins and McTighe

<https://iteachu.uaf.edu/essential-questions/>

Sample Essential Questions

What is happiness?

How do our senses effect our experiences?

Am I my physical body or a spiritual being?

Am I my conscious mind or unconscious mind?

How does society define me?

How does my financial situation define me?

How do you identify who you are?

How does your environment affect/effect your experiences?

How do I fit into or affect my environment?

How do memories effect the present?

Is history accurate?

How do I know if I am wrong if I am not open to a new perspective?

Should wealth inequality be allowed in today's society?

How can we know what really happened in the past?

When and why should we estimate?

What is the relationship between fiction and truth?

How are structure and function related in living things?

Sample Essential Questions

Is aging a disease?

Why and how do scientific theories change?

How can we best measure what we cannot directly see?

To what extent do artists have a responsibility to their audiences?

Do audiences have any responsibility to artists?

How much cultural understanding is required to become competent in using a language?

How does social media affect our lives?

Are video games harmful?

Big Social Issues can be turned into Essential Questions

Black Lives Matter

Global Warming

Capitalism

Racism, Sexism, Ageism, etc. (Discrimination)

Homelessness

Covid / Public health

Protest Art

Activist Art

Other

Explore materials and process