

Sample Essential and Unit Questions from Intel® Teach to the Future Unit Portfolios

Although the following questions are divided into three general grade levels, many of these questions can be used with almost any grade.

Elementary School Curriculum-Framing Questions	
Essential Question	Unit Question
How can I make a difference? What makes a cause worthwhile?	What can our school do to help save an endangered species?
How do we use our five senses? How do animals use their senses?	What is sound and why is it important? Is sound more important to a bat than to me?
How do we collect data to make good predictions?	What can our shadows tell us?
How have species adapted to their environment? Why do some organisms survive and others don't?	What is special about frogs that help them survive? How are frogs different from me?
Why do we need others? What is a community?	Which of our community helpers is the most important? Which community helper would you most like to be?
How does the earth change?	How are mountains made? What type of mountain would make the best building site and why? Could a volcano erupt in my backyard?
What is essential for life? How do things grow?	Am I really growing like a weed? What do plants need to grow? How do plants grow? How would you grow a big, strong beanstalk to reach the giant's house?
How can we all get along?	Why do we need manners?
How can animals and humans live together successfully?	What are the risks facing urban wildlife, and how can they be avoided?
What patterns can be found in the English language?	Why rhyme? Where can rhyme be found?
How is our community alike and different from other communities? How does my environment affect me?	How does weather affect me? Can I go outside and play today? How is weather different in other places?

Middle School Curriculum-Framing Questions	
Essential Question	Unit Question
What does it take to change the world?	What impact did early explorers have on the development of America and their home country? How did early explorers change the world?
What is an ecosystem and why should I care? Why protect the environment? How can we all get along?	Are rainforests worth saving? How do people and animals live in rainforests and how can they best co-exist?
Where does energy come from?	How can we use natural resources to create energy?
Why is water important?	Are the world's ponds healthy? What makes a healthy pond?
Am I healthy?	What can I do to reduce health risks? How do the systems of the body work together to keep me healthy?
Why are people always on the move?	Where's the best place to live? Why do immigrants give up everything to go to a strange country?
What are the building blocks of life? What makes something "alive"?	What is special about a cell? What can cells tell us about the organization of other systems?
How does the past affect the future?	How is Ancient Egypt still with us today?
How does environment affect behavior?	How would you be different if you lived somewhere else?
How can one live beyond one's time?	Which of Leonardo Da Vinci's areas of expertise had the most impact on today? How was Leonardo Da Vinci an inspiration for the future?
How do systems of government affect the individual?	What impact did the Feudal System have on a person's overall quality of life during the Middle Ages? What Feudal character would you have liked to have been during the Middle Ages?
How does conflict produce change?	What were the causes and results of the _____ war? How is our life different today because of this conflict?
Where do stories come from?	How much does Greek and Roman mythology influence literature and our everyday life?
What makes a community?	How does community history affect today's community values?

High School Curriculum-Framing Questions	
Essential Question	Unit Question
What can we learn from music?	What does the music of today tell about us? How does a composer's life influence his/her music? What does the music from the 60's say about its time period and culture?
What does it take to change the world?	How did the policies or actions of Abraham Lincoln affect America in the 1860's? How do the policies and actions of Abraham Lincoln affect your life today?
How can we respond to human suffering in ways that promote dignity?*	Does society have a responsibility to treat diseases? What are our individual roles in their prevention, containment, and treatment?*
How can I use logic to find new properties and relationships?	How can geometry help me understand the world around me?
Am I my brother's keeper?	What can we do to help those in need? Can famine be prevented?
How can I get what I want?	What's the best car? How do loans work?
Can one person make a difference? What makes someone important?	How have individuals impacted history? Who is the greatest American president?
How can we harness the earth's power?	What is electricity? Where else can we get electricity?
Why is the universe the way it is?	What's the physics behind the stars? What can we learn about ourselves by studying the galaxy?
Who decides for us? Do we really have a choice?	What forms public opinion? How can statistics lie?
Where do stories come from?	How much does history influence literature?
How can we predict the future? What can numbers tell us?	Based on current statistics, what will the future be like?
How does art imitate life?	Is a picture worth a thousand words? What stories do photographs tell? Whose story does a photograph tell?
Why do laws change? When should laws change?	Are 200-year old laws still relevant today? What laws, national or local, may be challenged sometime in the future?

How does conflict produce change?	In <i>Lord of the Flies</i> , how do the characters respond to conflict? Why do humans often react to conflict with violence?
How does art reflect or change culture?	How does impressionist art represent life in the late 1800s? How did impressionist art change society in the late 1800s? How does your own art reflect your life?
How can history predict our future?	How do wars start and can they—and should they—be prevented? Who benefits from war?
Does democracy result in effective, representative, and humane governance?*	Should the public vote on complex policy issues? What connections are there between wealth and political power?*
What is the difference between genius and madness?	What makes good music, art, or poetry?
Does personal freedom exist? Does democracy really work?	Does the constitution really protect our rights?
Why are you the way you are?	Environment or DNA, what influences our individuality?
Why have stories always been important throughout history?	Why do we still read Shakespeare? How do Shakespeare's poems and plays impact and accurately reflect modern life? How is Shakespeare's work relevant to my life?
Do politics affect science?	What <i>really</i> is happening to our environment?

How do Content, Unit, and Essential Questions support learning?

Sample objective	Students will be able to identify an ecosystem and explain how the organisms within an ecosystem are connected and interdependent.
Content Questions	How do I collect information and display it in a graph? What urban animals are there and what do they need to survive?
Unit Question	How can urban wildlife and humans live together successfully?
Essential Question	How can we all get along?
Project	Using actual wildlife injury data from a local wildlife rescue center, students learn what animal species have been injured, the causes of injury, and the effects of reduced urban wildlife. Students provide recommendations to reduce human caused injury to wildlife and present a summary of their findings and recommendations to the local Audubon Society, the Humane Society, neighborhood associations, and other interested groups. At the end of each public presentation, students gather public reaction to the data, and publish the findings and ideas in an informational brochure for the public.

*Some questions are from Katherine G. Simon's article, "The Blue Blood is Bad, Right?"