TASK 1.5 Writing a Driving Question

An effective Driving Question meets the following criteria:

1. Engaging for Students

- It interests students of the project's intended age, demographic background, community, etc.

- Students can understand the Question

- It does not sound like it came from a teacher or textbook

- It actively guides students through the project; it is not just a theme for the unit

- When applicable, it uses the words "I," "we," or "us" — not "you" or "students"

- It provokes students to ask further questions, beginning the inquiry process

- It might have a local context and/or a charge to take action, making it even more engaging — focusing on community issues and needs, or topics relevant to students' lives

2. Open-Ended

- It has several possible "right answers"

- The answer will be unique; it is not "Google-able" by students

- The answer is complex and leads to an in-depth inquiry

- It may be a "yes" or "no" question, but if so, the answer must require a detailed explanation or justification

3. Aligned with Learning Goals

- Students will need to learn important content and skills in order to create project products that answer the DQ

- It is not too big, requiring more knowledge than can be learned in a reasonable amount of time

- It does not necessarily state the learning goals explicitly — they can be specified later, when telling students more details about the project and the products to be created

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Different Types of Driving Questions

A Philosophical or Debatable Issue, or an Intriguing Topic

- Who is a hero?
- When is war justified?
- What is a healthy community?
- Is our water safe to drink?
- How did the human species evolve?
- Why don't I fall off my skateboard?
- Why did European explorers of the New World risk their lives?
- Does Kashmir rightfully belong to Pakistan or India?
- Can DNA evidence be trusted in criminal trials?
- Should a park, an apartment building, or something else occupy the empty land in our community?

Specifying a Product, Task, or Problem to be Solved

- How can we create a picture book about the life cycle of animals in Oldham County?
- How can we create a web page for other kids that recommends some good books to read?
- How can we invent a new type of artificial log for a fireplace that burns with colorful flames but is environmentally friendly?
- How can we write a historically accurate story about a person who lived in our community long ago?
- How can we develop a business plan that will attract investors?
- How can we invent a new toy that is safe, not too expensive, and fun for four year olds?
- How can we design a theatre of a given size so it holds the maximum number of seats?

Adding a Real-World Role for Students

- How can we, as tour guides, plan a tour to show visitors what to see and do in our city?
- How can we, as structural engineers, design and test bridge models for a walkway over the river?
- How can we, as financial planners, advise a client about the best ways to invest and save money?
- How can we, as English town elders, decide who will board the ship to the New World and what they should take, so they can be successful colonists?
- How can we, as agricultural research scientists, design an experiment to show the Vice President of Marketing which company's bean seeds grow the fastest?
- How can we, as highway engineers, make a presentation to our boss about where to build a new highway in our region so that it does not harm animal habitats?