

Rationale

A CLOSER LOOK AT BIG IDEAS
AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

DECLARATIVE
STATEMENTS
THAT DESCRIBE
CONCEPTS THAT
TRANSCEND
GRADE LEVELS



BIG IDEAS

Effective readers use appropriate strategies to construct meaning

Artists use tools and resources as well as their own experiences and skills to create art

Patterns exhibit relationships that can be extended, described, and generalized.

BIG IDEAS

Matter can be understood in terms of the types of atoms present and the interactions both between and within atoms.

Governments and their citizens distribute resources, trade goods, and services to balance freedom and liberty.

- Provides a **focusing** conceptual '**lens**' for any study
- Provides **breadth** of meaning by connecting and organizing many facts, skills, and experiences, serving as the **linchpin** of understanding
- Points to ideas at the **heart** of **expert** understanding of the subject
- Requires 'uncoverage' because its meaning or value is rarely **obvious** to the learner, is **counterintuitive** or prone to **misunderstanding**
- Has a great **transfer** value, applying to many other inquiries and issues over **time**

(Wiggins, 2005)

By Definition...

Concept

Ongoing Debate or Point of View

Recurring Question

Paradox

Theory



Theme

Understanding or Principle

Underlying Assumption

(Wiggins, 2005)

In Description...

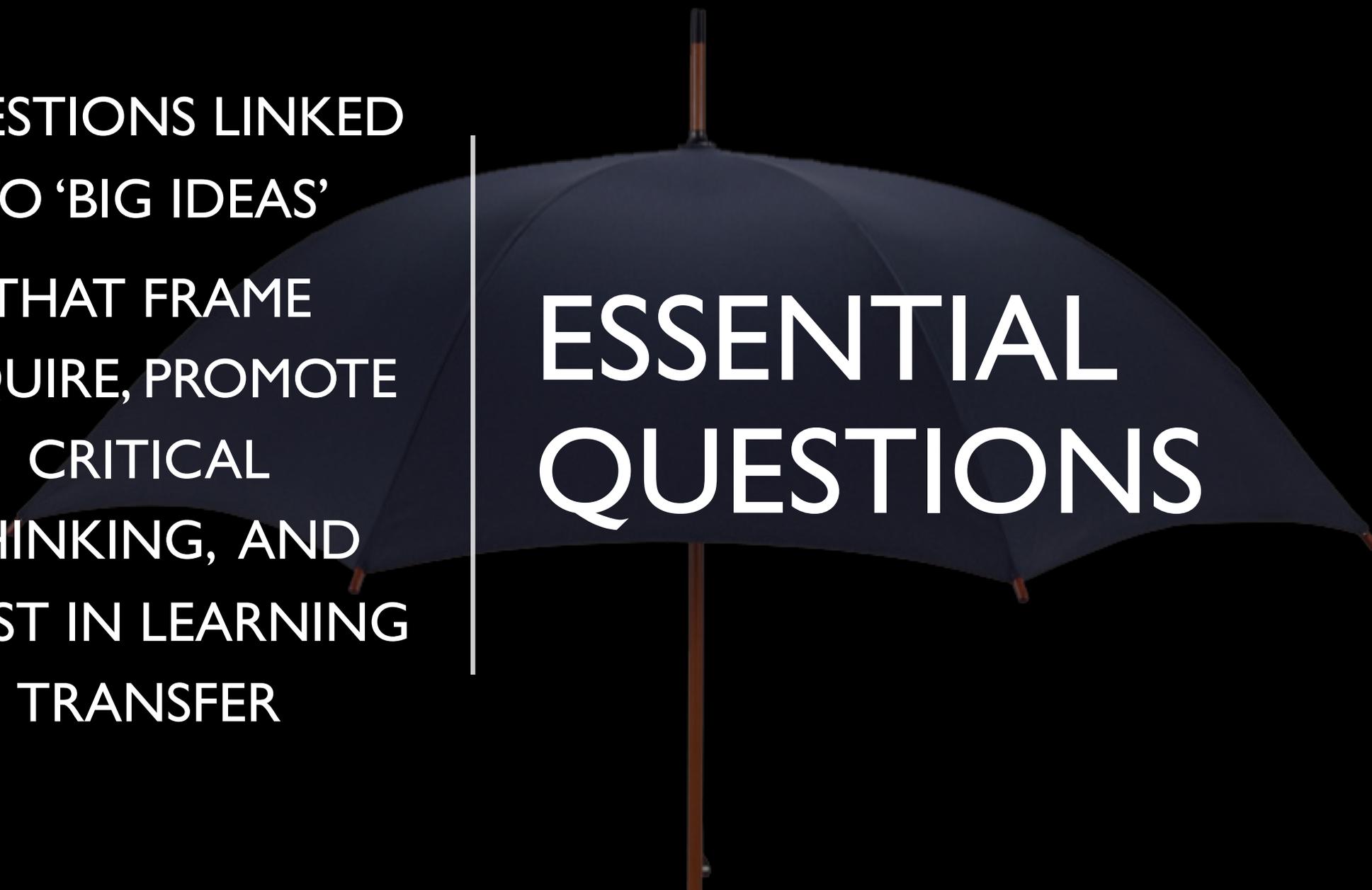
- Look carefully at state **standards** for **stated** big ideas
- Circle the key recurring **nouns** in standards documents to highlight big ideas and the recurring **verbs** to identify core tasks
- Refer to existing lists of **transferable** concepts
- Ask **questions** about a topic or content standard
- Generate big ideas as an outgrowth of related and suggestive **pairs**



(Wiggins, 2005)

For Design...

QUESTIONS LINKED
TO 'BIG IDEAS'
THAT FRAME
INQUIRE, PROMOTE
CRITICAL
THINKING, AND
ASSIST IN LEARNING
TRANSFER



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Cause genuine and relevant **inquiry** into the big ideas and core concepts
- Provoke deep **thought**, lively **discussion**, sustained **inquiry**, and new understanding as well as more **questions**
- Require students **consider** alternatives, **weigh** evidence, **support** their ideas, and **justify** their answers
- Stimulate vital, ongoing **rethinking** of big ideas, assumptions, and prior lessons
- Spark meaningful **connections** with prior learning and personal experiences
- Naturally recur, creating opportunities for **transfer**

(Wiggins, 2005)

By Definition...

Scope

The next two slides have examples of the four 'quadrants'.

Overarching

Topical

Open

To challenge students to think more deeply and creatively without an expected answer

These are broad and deep questions that remain open and alive in the discipline—perhaps forever. They cut across unit, course and (sometimes) subject boundaries.

These questions stimulate inquiry and deepen understanding of important ideas within the unit. It is not expected that they will be answered by unit's end.

???

Guiding

To direct student inquiry to a deeper, desired understanding

These are general questions that cut across unit, course and subject boundaries but that yield one or more desired understandings.

These are unit-specific questions that converge toward one or a few settled understandings of important ideas.

Intent

Scope

Overarching

To what extent is DNA destiny?

To what extent is U.S. History a history of progress?

Who is a true friend?

Topical

Should we require DNA samples from every convicted criminal?

How might Congress have better protected minority rights in the 1950s and 1960s?

Should Frog have lied to Toad?

Intent

Open

How do recent developments in genetics affect the nature/nurture argument?

How is reliability ensured in DNA testing?

Guiding

How much progress in civil rights has the United States made since the founding of the country?

What were the defining moments of the Civil Rights Movement?

What are the signs of a 'fair weather' friend?

In what ways was Frog acting like a friend to Toad?

- **Brainstorm** a list of questions to anchor the unit around the content (think “Jeopardy”)
- Consider **broad** questions that extend **beyond** the specific content
- Derive essential questions from national or state content **standards**



(Wiggins, 2005)

For Design...

Pennsylvania Department of Education. "Standards aligned system." Accessed via the world wide web October 29, 2019.

Wiggins, Grant and McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Images:

Umbrella

<https://imgbin.com/png/FFy7FY0B/umbrella-mockup-png>

Caveman

<https://imgbin.com/download-png/NwJme8tT>

Brainstorm

<https://imgbin.com/download-png/j65m8HK9>

