**What is an Essential Questions**

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| **Essential Questions** | **Not Essential Questions** |
| * • How do the arts shape, as well as reflect, a culture? | * • What common artistic symbols were used by the Incas and the Mayans? |
| * • What do effective problem solvers do when they get stuck? | * • What steps did you follow to get your answer? |
| * • How strong is the scientific evidence? | * • What is a variable in scientific investigations? |
| * • Is there ever a "just" war? | * • What key event sparked World War I? |
| * • How can I sound more like a native speaker? | * • What are common Spanish colloquialisms? |
| * • Who is a true friend? | * • Who is Maggie's best friend in the story? |

**Essential Questions in History and Social Studies**

* • Whose "story" is this?
* • How can we know what *really* happened in the past?
* • How should governments balance the rights of individuals with the common good?
* • Should \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., immigration, media expression) be restricted or regulated? When? Who decides?
* • Why do people move?
* • Why is that there? (geography)
* • What is worth fighting for?

**Essential Questions in Mathematics**

* • When and why should we estimate?
* • Is there a pattern?
* • How does *what* we measure influence *how* we measure? How does *how* we measure influence *what* we measure (or don't measure)?
* • What do good problem solvers do, especially when they get stuck?
* • How accurate (precise) does this solution need to be?
* • What are the limits of this math model and of mathematical modeling in general?

**Essential Questions in Language Arts**

* • What do good readers do, especially when they don't comprehend a text?
* • How does *what* I am reading influence *how* I should read it?
* • Why am I writing? For whom?
* • How do effective writers hook and hold their readers?
* • What is the relationship between fiction and truth?
* • How are stories from other places and times about me?

Thus an essential question is

1. Is *open-ended;* that is, it typically will not have a single, final, and correct answer.
2. Is *thought-provoking* and *intellectually engaging*, often sparking discussion and debate.
3. Calls for *higher-order thinking*, such as analysis, inference, evaluation, prediction. It cannot be effectively answered by recall alone.
4. Points toward *important, transferable ideas* within (and sometimes across) disciplines.
5. Raises *additional questions* and sparks further inquiry.
6. Requires *support* and *justification*, not just an answer.
7. *Recurs* over time; that is, the question can and should be revisited again and again.