

Developing Driving Questions

Driving questions are the “big picture” questions. They are central to the MWEE Essential Element of **Issue Definition**, which aligns with the Environmental Literacy Model’s **Curriculum Anchor** component. Driving questions engage students in meaningful inquiry by focusing on a locally relevant environmental problem, issue, or phenomenon. These questions—often referred to as essential questions, organizing questions, or overarching questions—are important for sparking curiosity and organizing inquiry for the issue investigation. Posed by the teacher to address specific learning standards or leverage existing resources or programming, driving questions provide students with a framework for learning across disciplines.

Supporting questions are generated by the students to help find the missing information needed to answer the driving question. They should uncover the students current knowledge about the issue, create interest, and begin to frame an investigation that addresses the driving question in a local context. Supporting questions provide an opportunity to bring in a variety of subject disciplines, strengthening the life-relevant and authentic contexts for learning.

Criteria for Effective Driving Questions

- » Support learning objectives
- » Are relevant and related to everyday life
- » Are thought-provoking and intellectually engaging
- » Are open-ended (i.e. typically will not have a single, final, and correct answer)
- » Promote further inquiry (i.e. raises additional questions)
- » Encompass both natural and social systems and topics
- » Require students to revisit the problem frequently as knowledge and understanding evolves
- » Call for higher-order thinking, including analysis, inference, prediction, and evaluation
- » Include concepts and practices from multiple disciplines

MWEE Issue	Driving Question	Supporting Question	Standard(s)
		Supporting Question	Standard(s)
		Supporting Question	Standard(s)