

# CRAFTING ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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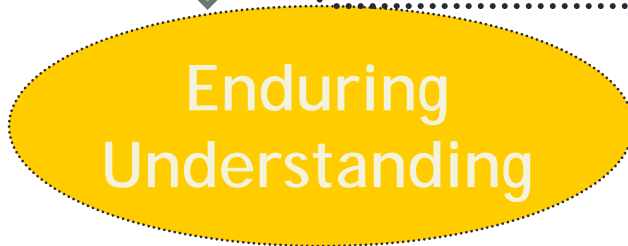
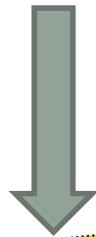


# Goals

- What is an enduring understanding?
- How do I write effective enduring understandings?
- What is an essential question?
- How do I write effective essential questions?

# Making the Connection

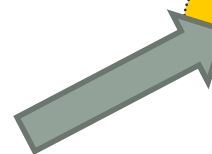
What overarching conceptual understanding do I want students to perceive?



Topic or Content Standard



What is the issue, challenge, investigation, scenario, or problem?



What broad or topical conceptual question do I want students to be able to answer?

# Definitions of Enduring Understandings

Enduring understandings:

- are statements summarizing important ideas and core processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom.
- synthesize what students should understand—not just know or do—as a result of studying a particular content area.
- articulate what students should “revisit” over the course of their lifetimes in relationship to the content area.

# Characteristics of Enduring Understandings

## Enduring Understandings

- frame the big ideas that give meaning and lasting importance to such discrete curriculum elements as facts and skills
- can transfer to other fields as well as adult life
- “unpack” areas of the curriculum where students may struggle to gain understanding or demonstrate misunderstandings and misconceptions

# Characteristics of Enduring Understandings

## Enduring Understandings

- provide a conceptual foundation for studying the content area and
- are deliberately framed as declarative sentences that present major curriculum generalizations and recurrent ideas.

# Examples of Enduring Understandings

- English Language Arts Enduring Understandings
- Conventions of language help readers understand what is being communicated.
- The impact of a text on a reader is influenced by the reader's experience.
- Math Enduring Understandings
- Change is fundamental to understanding functions.
- The probability of an event can be used to predict the probability of future events.

# Enduring Understandings can be focused on:

- Concepts
- Themes
- Issues/Debates
- Problems/Challenges
- Processes
- Theories
- Paradoxes
- Assumptions/Perspectives



# Examples of Enduring Understandings

- Science Enduring Understandings
- The structures of materials determine their properties.
- There are observable, predictable patterns of movement in the Sun, Earth, and Moon system that account for day/night.

# Examples of Enduring Understandings

- Social Studies Enduring Understandings
- Students will understand that the principles and ideals underlying
- American democracy are designed to promote the freedom of the American people.
- Distinctions between a citizen's rights, responsibilities, and privileges help to define the requirements and limits of personal freedom.

# Definition of Essential Question

- One that lies at the heart of a subject or a curriculum and promotes inquiry and uncoverage of a subject.

# Characteristics of Essential Questions

- Have no simple “right” answer
- Provoke & sustain inquiry
- Address conceptual or philosophical foundations
- Raise other important questions
- Naturally & appropriately recur
- Stimulate vital, ongoing rethinking

# Characteristics of Essential Questions

- Recurs throughout all our lives
- Refers to core ideas & inquiries within a discipline
- Helps students effectively inquire and make sense of important but complex ideas, knowledge, know-how
- Engages a specific & diverse set of learners

# Examples of Essential Questions

- What is a true friend?
- To what extent does art reflect culture or shape it?
- Is everything quantifiable?
- To what extent is DNA destiny?
- In what ways is algebra real and in what ways is it unreal?
- To what extent is U.S. history a history of progress?

# Examples of Essential Questions

- Must heroes be flawless?
- Who is entitled to own what?
- Is the subjunctive necessary?
- What makes writing worth reading?
- Does practice makes perfect?
- What is healthy eating? Healthy living?

# Intent, not Language, is the Key

- Why we pose the question
- How students are to tackle it
- What learning activities & assessments we expect



# Types of Essential Questions

- Overarching: Frame courses and programs of study around truly big ideas
- Topical: Are unit specific but still promote inquiry

**GOOD TEACHING USES  
BOTH!**

# Overarching Essential Questions

- More general, broader
- Point beyond specific topics or skills
- Promote transfer of understanding
- This should be the focus of your authentic or problem based lesson.

# Examples of Overarching EQ

- Can a fictional story be “true”?
- How do a region’s geography, climate, and natural resources affect the way people live and work?
- How does technological change influence people’s lives? Society?
- How does *what* we measure influence *how* we measure?

# Examples of Overarching EQ

- How do we classify the things around us?
- Do artists have a responsibility to their audience? To society?
- How does language shape culture?
- Is pain necessary for progress in athletics?

# Topical Essential Questions

- Unit specific - used to guide individual units
- Promote inquiry
- Resist simple answers
- Require explanation & justification
- One could be more than one in a unit.

## Examples of Topical EQ

- How might Congress have better protected minority rights in the 1950s & 1960s?
- Should we require DNA samples from every convicted criminal?
- Are we going into a recession?

# Examples of Topical EQs

- What is the value of place value?
- What is electricity?
- How do we hit with greatest power without losing control?

# Writing EUs and EQs

## Step 1 - Identify desired results

- What curriculum expectations do we need to meet? (TEKS)
- What should they know and be able to do (filter TEKS – Content, Skills, Concepts)?
- What do they need to understand?
  - Big Picture, Big Concepts, What is the “Unit” about?
  - This can come from the standards and your objectives for the unit.



# Filtering the standards

What are the concepts?

Identify the big concepts in the TEKS

Example:

|       |   |
|-------|---|
|       | American Revolution   |
| 8.19  | <b>Citizenship. The student understands the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States. The student is expected to:</b>               |
| 8.19A | Define and give examples of unalienable rights.   |
| 8.20  | <b>Citizenship. The student understands the importance of voluntary individual participation in the democratic process. The student is expected to:</b> |
| 8.20C | Analyze reasons for and the impact of selected examples of civil disobedience in U.S. history such as the Boston Tea Party and                          |

# Filtering the standards – Social Studies

## **What are the major concepts/Big Ideas?**

- Government, Citizenship, Principals, Rights, civil disobedience

## **What is the Enduring Understanding that you want students to come away with?**

- Sometimes the people believe they need to change or overthrow government to protect their rights and liberties.

## **What is the Essential Question that you want students to be able to answer?**

- Overarching: When is it acceptable for the people to overthrow a government?
- Topical: Were the American colonist justified in starting the Revolution?

# Filtering the standards - ELA

## What are the major concepts/Big Ideas?

- “I want students to understand the powerful impact that literature can have on a society.”

## What is the Enduring Understanding that you want students to come away with?

- Art both shapes and reflects the culture in which it is created.

## What is the Essential Question that you want students to be able to answer?

- Overarching:  
Does literature primarily reflect culture or shape it?
- Topical:  
What does *Romeo & Juliet* teach us about Shakespeare’s view of destiny? How does it compare to yours?

# Filtering the standards

Practice – Participants will go to TEKS in their unit and use these to work with developing EUs and EQs.

- **What are the major concepts/Big Ideas?**
- **What is the Enduring Understanding that you want students to come away with?**
- **What is the Essential Question that you want students to be able to answer?**
- Overarching:
- Topical: