

Driving Questions

statement" of a project a *driving question*. It captures the heart of the project by providing purpose using clear and compelling language. With so many different flavors of

If a student can ask Google, Cortana, or Siri a question and get the answer, then that question would not be a good driving question. Its answer is readily available. Answering it again as a project won't make a dent in the universe. It would be work that keeps a student busy but has little value in itself (also known as busy work).

Consider where your standards are used in the real world may help you connect them with a problem, dilemma, or question you can use to drive a project.

Types of Questions

There's an art to developing driving questions, because there isn't a specific formula you must follow. Though, you can find some examples and structures to help you out. Below are some types of driving questions. Maybe some of these will be the spark that inspires you write your next driving question.

🔪 **Solve a Problem:** There's a real-world predicament with multiple solutions.

- How can we stop phantom traffic jams?
- How can we beautify the vacant lot across the street for \$200?
- What's the best way to stop the flu at our school?
- Design a better lunch menu for our school.
- Design a safe and sturdy bridge to replace one in our city.

📖 **Educational:** The purpose of the project is to teach others.

- How can we teach second graders about helpful insects.
- Create a campaign to teach senior citizens how to use an iPad.
- What do the students at our school need to know about being respectful?

🗣️ **Convince Others:** Students persuade a specified audience to do something or change their opinions.

- Create a public service announcement (PSA) that persuades teens to drink more water.
- Drive yourself to define a question and then **Prove It** to your classmates.
- Convince grocery shoppers to return their shopping carts.
- How can we convince our principal that we should have a party in December?

🌐 **Broad Theme:** The project tackles big ideas.

- What does it mean to read?
- How does conflict lead to change?

- educating others
- solving a problem
- calling people to action
- building something useful
- planning an event
- raising money for a purpose
- recognizing or inspiring others
- designing a better way to do something

- !! The question is appealing to students.
- ☐ The question is concise.
- 🚫 The question has no easy answer.
- 😊 The question taps into students' interests and passions.
- zzz The question does not sound like a test question.
- 💡 The question leads to more questions.
- ☐ There is more than one answer to the question.
- 📍 The topic is personal or local.
- 🏠 Students can relate to the question in their daily lives.
- ☐ Students will have choices for end products.
- 🗣️ There is an authentic audience for the project.
- 👩‍🔬 The question requires serious investigation.
 - Students will learn important skills and content.
- 🌟 The project will somehow make a difference in the world.

- How do writers persuade others?
- How are good and evil depicted in different cultures?

● **Opinion:** Students need to consider all sides of an issue in order to form and justify their opinions.

- Should pets be allowed to attend class?
- Why has a woman never been a U.S. president?
- What makes a good astronaut?

📅 **Divergent:** Students make predictions about alternative timelines and scenarios.

- What if Rosa Parks gave up her seat?
- What if the world ran out of oil tomorrow?
- How might your city change if the climate became an average of 10°F warmer?
- What if the USA switched to the metric system?

🎭 **Scenario-Based:** Students take on a fictional role with a mission to accomplish.

- You're a NASA engineer, and you are in charge of building a moon base. What are the ten most important things to include and why?
- Imagine that you are King George. What would you have done differently to keep American part of England?
- You are the CEO of a company that is designing a new social media app. Present a business plan to your investors that explains how your company will make money.
- You've been hired to revamp your local shopping mall. Come up with a plan to increase business.
- How would you spend \$1,000,000 to help your community?

🔗 **Scaffolded Around Framing Words:** BIE has a tool to help you develop driving questions called a [Tubric](#). It provides possible framing words, actions, audience, and purpose. If you'd rather not take the time to construct a tube, you could use Rhoni McFarlane's [Developing Inquiry Questions chart](#), Amy Mayer's [Scaffold for Writing a Driving Question](#), or TeachThought's [PBL Cheat Sheet](#).

- How can I create a campaign to reduce bullying in my school? (from [Rhoni McFarlane](#))
- How can we find a solution to reduce the litter in our school permanently? (also from [Rhoni McFarlane](#))
- How can we as first graders create geocaching sites to promote physical fitness in our neighborhood? (from [Washington Discovery Academy](#))

Outcomes

Since you've probably attached a few learning standards to the project, you'll want to make sure that those are addressed. Learning goals don't have to be part of your driving question. In fact, mentioning them in your driving question will complicate it. Instead, the place to communicate learning outcomes is in your assessment instrument. Whether you use a checklist, rating scale, or rubric, you'll want to create it alongside your driving question. The criteria you put in your assessment will guide students toward the content and skills you want them to learn. You might even want to get their input before you finalize the project's assessment.



Branching Questions

A good driving question will lead to more questions. Students will generate these sub questions and their answers are important for the project. These sub questions branch off of the driving questions and each other. They are specific and can guide student research.