



Lesson Essential Questions, Distilled*

*Distilled (di-stild') adj. 4. Separated or extracted essence

What a Lesson Essential Question is...	What it is NOT ...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An objective for a lesson in the form of a question 2. A guide for students' inquiry and learning 3. An organizational tool to focus the lesson 4. A way to gather evidence of learning 5. Always accessible to students (in student-friendly language) 6. Based on the grade-level expectations for meeting a specific standard 7. A guide for planning of informal assessments and learning experiences 8. A way to organize a chunk of the learning in a unit 9. Part of a broader plan for answering an overarching essential question in a unit 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A "Big picture" or broad question, i.e., a unit question 2. A factual question or yes/no question 3. Focused on a specific activity 4. Only for the teacher or supervisor 5. Created in isolation from other lessons in a unit
	Assessment Prompts ...
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. APs are the building blocks, the pieces or chunks of learning, which students need to "get" in order to answer the EQ. 2. APs are used for formative assessment—they let the teacher know immediately if students need more help. 3. APs are the parts of the equation that equal the EQ response: AP+AP+AP=EQ response.
Why we need them ...	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To answer the "Why do we need to know/do this?" questions students always ask 2. To organize and focus teaching and learning 3. To align instruction and assessment with standards 4. To help gather evidence of learning—<i>Assessments Prompts</i> 5. To separate essential understandings, knowledge, and skills from less important ones 	

How to use a Lesson Essential Question
Introducing it at the beginning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an activating strategy based on the lesson essential question which captivates students' interests, builds on their prior knowledge, and starts them "uncovering" the learning target of the lesson. 2. Post or display each lesson's essential question in the room for students to see. 3. Verbalize the lesson's essential question in some way at the beginning of each lesson (and at the beginning of each subsequent day of the lesson).
Weaving it throughout the lesson
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consistently bring students back to the essential question as they add to their understanding, knowledge, and skills throughout the lesson. 2. Deconstruct the lesson essential question into the smaller pieces or chunks of learning that will be required in order for students to be able to answer the essential question. <i>These are smaller chunks that can be assessed through Assessments Prompts.</i> 3. Use the lesson essential question and its smaller pieces to inform your design of learning experiences within the lesson and bring about the targeted learning. 4. Use these smaller parts to guide the informal assessment prompts that students will answer throughout the lesson. 5. Use the lesson essential question and its smaller pieces to design the homework assignments, which should reinforce and provide practice of students' learning.
Using it at the end
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring students back to the lesson essential question at the close of the lesson to consider what knowledge, skills, and understandings they have gained which will enable them to answer the lesson essential question. 2. Create an engaging and targeted summarizing strategy—based on the lesson essential question—which requires students to demonstrate their learning.