

ISACS 2019 Conference  
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Essential question for this session:  
**Why ask questions?**

**Agenda:**

- I. Why Ask Questions?
- II. Essential Beginnings and Design (Ubd)
- III. James Ryan's 5 Essential Questions in Life Video
- IV. Workshop & Share
- V. Cool Question, Now What?
- VI. Session adjourns



**I. Why Ask Questions?**

How am I called to be an Independent School educator?  
What are the most important concepts that I want students to learn?

**II. Essential Beginnings & Design (UbD, Understanding by Design)**

To what extent is education a design profession?

**III. James Ryan's 5 Essential Questions in Life**

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|--|--|
| Wait, What?<br>I Wonder? - I wonder why? - I wonder if?<br>Couldn't we at least?<br>How can I help?<br>What truly matters [to me]? | Understanding<br>Curiosity<br>Progress<br>Relationships<br>The Heart of Life |
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And did you get what  
you wanted from this life, even so?  
I did.  
And what did you want?  
To call myself beloved, to feel myself  
beloved on the earth.

- Raymond Carver

## IV. Workshop & Share

### Design Time!

*Design an essential question with a focus on an upcoming unit or project in your classroom or division.*

*Design an essential question with a focus on aligning to the educational mission of your school.*

*Design an essential question that can focus on maintaining a positive school culture.*

## V. Cool Question: Now What?

Consider, now that you have a great question.....

- What should the student have learned prior to the teaching task?
- What will the student need to know in order to answer the question?
- What strategies will actively engage the student as they work toward the answer?
- What formative assessments will inform if the students are learning the information?
- What skills will the students need in order to demonstrate their response to the question?



## VI. Session Adjourns..... with two more questions...

How might an essential question make learning feel messy?

How might an essential question make learning feel authentic?

**Figure 1.2 Characteristics of Four Types of Classroom Questions**

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| <b>Questions That Hook</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asked to interest learners around a new topic</li><li>• May spark curiosity, questions, or debate</li><li>• Often framed in engaging “kid language”</li><li>• Asked once or twice, but not revisited</li></ul>   |
| <b>Questions That Lead</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asked to be answered</li><li>• Have a “correct” answer</li><li>• Support recall and information finding</li><li>• Asked once (or until <i>the</i> answer is given)</li><li>• Require no (or minimal) support</li></ul>   |
| <b>Questions That Guide</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asked to encourage and guide exploration of a topic</li><li>• Point toward desired knowledge and skill (but not necessarily to a single answer)</li><li>• May be asked over time (e.g., throughout a unit)</li><li>• Generally require some explanation and support</li></ul>                          |
| <b>Essential Questions</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asked to stimulate ongoing thinking and inquiry</li><li>• Raise more questions</li><li>• Spark discussion and debate</li><li>• Asked and reasked throughout the unit (and maybe the year)</li><li>• Demand justification and support</li><li>• “Answers” may change as understanding deepens</li></ul> |

Figure 1.2 accessed from: Wiggins, G. and McTighe, J. (2013) *Essential questions: Opening doors to student understanding*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD (Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development)

## References

- Dougherty, E. (2008) *Assignments Matter*. Tucson, AZ: EDThink, LLC.
- Jacobs, H. (1997). *Refining the map through essential questions*. In *Mapping the Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum & Assessment K-12* (25-33). Alexandria, VA: ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).
- McTighe, J. (2017) ***Designing and Using Essential Questions*** (Quick Reference Guide) Pamphlet. Alexandria, VA: ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).
- Ryan, J. (2016). *Dean James Ryan's 5 Essential Questions in Life*. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Accessed from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bW0NguMG1bE>
- Wiggins, G. and McTighe, J. (2013) ***Essential questions: Opening doors to student understanding***. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

### More examples of essential questions:

- <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/examples-of-essential-questions/>
- <https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/100-awesome-essential-questions>
- [Jamie McKenzie \(2005\) essential questions chapter with examples from all grades](#)

Session Evaluation Form for Essential Questions

Date: November 7, 2019

ISACS 2019 Conference

Presenter's Name: Korin Visocchi, Ph.D

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| Use the following scale for questions 1-6: |  | Strongly Agree        | Agree                 | No Opinion            | Disagree              | Strongly Disagree     |
|--|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1.   | The workshop provided me with valuable or useful information that I can use on the job.                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2.   | The presenter actively engaged me and encouraged me to participate.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3.   | The presenter was knowledgeable of the topic.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4.   | The environment was conducive to learning (ie: room temperature, seating, lighting, use of audio/visual aids). | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5.   | I would suggest a follow-up or advanced level for this workshop.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6.   | The learning outcomes for this workshop have been met.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

7. How will you apply what you have learned?

8. Please provide any additional comments you have in the space below.

*..... so why ask questions?*