**Essential Questions**

***Essential questions*** provide an important anchor for each unit. They should be posted in the classroom throughout the unit. Students can be redirected to the ***essential questions*** throughout the unit through questions, discussions, and math journal entries.

As you formulate your ***essential questions***, it’s important to distinguish them from nonessential questions. Think of ***essential questions*** as those that cannot be easily answered, but rather require a process of inquiry to find the answers. In contrast, questions that are nonessential lead to more specific answers or even to a single, correct answer.

Wiggins and McTighe (2011) explain that questions are not considered essential if they have a straightforward answer or elicit factual recall. Such questions “are more likely to be asked by a teacher or a textbook than by a curious student or person out in the world” (p. 77). For example, questions like “What are the elements of a story?” or “What three events led to the Civil War?” or “How does the water cycle work?” all have answers that could be clearly defined; in each instance, students would not need to engage in extended inquiry to answer them. In contrast, ***essential questions*** point to big ideas in life or in a discipline. By asking them, you promote inquiry, consideration, and exploration.

Examples of essential question include:

Social Studies

* Why do people move?

Science

* How does weather affect our lives?

English

* What do the decisions and actions of people tell us about their characters?

Math

* In what ways will you use proportional reasoning for personal finance/making purchasing decisions?