

Ensuring a Researchable Question

Students must evaluate the inquiry questions that they have raised to ensure that they have a good, researchable question. Students need to understand that researchable questions require more thinking and extensive research—they are deeper-level questions.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:

- list of evaluating questions on chart paper (see step 2)
- some questions to model (see step 3)
- set of questions for students to discuss and evaluate (see step 4)

Grouping: whole class and small groups

Procedure:

1. Explain to students that you are going to look at various inquiry questions to see if they are good questions for research.
2. On chart paper, show students some evaluating questions that will help them decide if a question is one that could be explored deeply. Some evaluating questions might include:
 - Could we find information on this? Where?
 - How easy or difficult will it be to find the information?
 - Do we need to look in more than one place for the information? Why?

Teaching Tip: Display the chart in the classroom for individual student use.

3. Model some inquiry questions and discuss if each would make a good, researchable question and, if so, how to go about researching it. Ask students to help evaluate the questions and give reasons for their ideas. Remind students of the questions they can ask to evaluate the inquiry questions. You might use the following inquiry questions:

Let's look at these inquiry questions and determine how easy it would be to find the information to answer each one.

- What are some issues for kids in our school or community?
- How can math help us reduce the amount of garbage we create?

This question is a deeper-level question. What would we need to do to research it? Would the information be easy to find?

4. Once you've modelled evaluating several questions, provide small groups of students with questions to discuss and evaluate, then bring ideas back to the whole-class discussion. You can use the "Wonderings" or "Questions" column from a class organizer developed during the inquiry units to find questions for students to evaluate.

5. If you're working on a whole-class inquiry, you may wish to ask students to review their choice of inquiry question at this point. Would they like to revise the question, or is it a question that would lead to a deeper-level inquiry as is?

Teaching Tip: If students are researching in small groups, pairs, or individually, ask them to go back to their own list of questions and evaluate which of them would be the best question to research. They can present their choice to other students or the class to obtain feedback.