Indicators of Enduring Ideas/Understandings and Essential Questions

Indicators of an Enduring Idea/Understanding

• If your syllabus or program were cut in half, you would still want students to explore it in depth.
• It is key to connecting and making sense of lots of discrete knowledge — it “connects the dots.”
• It is key to understanding other important ideas.
• It is unlikely to be fully understood by studying it just once.
• It is unlikely to be understood through textbook accounts only.
• There are different ways to study it, to teach it, and to apply it.
• It is not obvious, it is often misunderstood, but it is worth the trouble.
• It involves the kind of problems, challenges, and work that adults do.
• It is significant within the arts.

Indicators That an Enduring Idea/Understanding Is Not Specific Enough

• Different teachers cannot agree on exactly what is to be taught or emphasized in the unit.
• Different teachers cannot agree on what should be assessed.
• Students and parents cannot tell from the course or unit description exactly what is to be learned and how “success” will be determined.
• Students do not know what to study or how to study it.

Indicators of Essential Questions

• They have no one obvious right answer.
• They raise other important questions.
• They address the philosophical or conceptual foundation of a discipline.
• They are about concepts, not skills.
• They reoccur naturally throughout our lives.
• They are framed to provoke and sustain student interest.