

Improving Our Questions

*Given particular subject matter or a particular concept, it is easy to ask trivial questions...It is also easy to ask impossibly difficult questions. The trick is to find the medium questions that can be answered and that take you somewhere. –Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education*, 1960, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (p. 40).*

School Museum Project Plans Include...

- **Big idea** for the museum, written as a single statement, which includes a subject, action, and consequence. The big idea generates curiosity among students and adults.
- **Focus questions** add up to a significant and coherent “story worth telling” regarding the museum topic and provide a rough outline of the content that will be studied.
- **Research questions** are comprehensive and realistic, specify subject area content students will learn and are stated in such a way that students will be able to pursue their study.

Questions are at the heart of research and inquiry in the School Museum Project!

Below are some questions to improve your questions...

FIRST...(Make sure your questions are aligned.)

- Do your **focus questions**, together, address the Big Idea of your museum project? Do they add up to a significant and coherent “story worth telling” regarding your museum topic?
- Do your **research questions**, together, address the Focus Question? Do the research questions provide a rough outline of the content students will study?

NEXT...(Improve the quality of each question...)

- **Does this question have one “correct” answer?** If so, how might it be rephrased to be more open-ended and encourage exploration?
- **Does this question point to essential questions and big ideas?** If not, how might it be rephrased to focus on what's essential?
- **Is this question designed to generate and maintain student interest?** If not, how might it be rephrased to reflect areas of interest among students (and teachers)?
- **Does this question offer enough direction and challenge for students' upcoming research?** If not, how might it be rephrased to both guide students and to challenge them?