## Matrix of Essential Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overarching</th>
<th>Topical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>• broad and deep</td>
<td>• stimulate inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• open &amp; alive; lasting &amp; recurring</td>
<td>• deepen understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cut across unit, course, &amp; often subject boundaries</td>
<td>• not answerable by unit end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding</td>
<td>• cut across unit, course, and often subject boundaries</td>
<td>• unit-specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• yield one or more desired understandings</td>
<td>• yield one or several definitive or settled core understandings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

– from Wiggins and McTighe, UbD 2nd ed., p. 116
Scope/Intent Insights

- Topical questions are necessary to focus on unit understanding but not sufficient for transfer or connections beyond the unit.

- Overarching/Open questions alone cannot link to core curriculum and can result in aimless discussion or frustrate students.

- Guiding questions alone can stifle intellectual freedom, inhibit student questions, and limit deep understanding.

- Topical questions must be explicitly matched with Overarching questions to be essential and lead students to on-going inquiry.
Misconception Alert

• A Leading Question is answerable by just remembering what was said or read, or knowing where to find the answer

• A Topical Question demands analysis, interpretation, and construction of arguments — in other words, real thought, not just recall

• The CONTEXT of use in the classroom is the key difference
The best units offer
“a delicate mix of open and
guiding as well as topical and
overarching inquiries ... 
show[ing] that intellectual
freedom and creativity are 
valued alongside the most 
powerful insights of experts.”

–Wiggins and McTighe, UbD 2nd ed., p. 118