Questions Worth Investigating

Turn schoolyard observations into focused research questions

6.W.5.a "Formulate a research question (e.g., In what ways did Madame Walker influence Indiana society?)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three observations or plans that could lead to research questions, and circle two sources of evidence that could help investigate them.

A Closer Look at the Schoolyard

1. On a warm afternoon, students at Cedar School notice that the blacktop feels hotter than the nearby grass. Their teacher says a feeling is a useful starting point, but a research question needs a clear focus and evidence that someone could collect. The class could compare surface temperatures using a thermometer, taking readings at the same time of day. They would also record whether each spot is in sunlight. Without those details, a broad topic like schoolyard heat could lead their research in too many directions.

2. During lunch, some students choose benches under trees, while others sit on benches in direct sun. A tree's leaves block some sunlight, though shade moves as the sun crosses the sky. The class has access to a seating chart and can count how many students use each area on several sunny days. A question about everyone's feelings toward summer would be hard to check with these records. The counts could help the class investigate a more focused question about where students sit.

3. After a heavy rain, water collects beside the paved play area but sinks into a garden bed. The school is considering a rain garden, a planted hollow that catches runoff, and a shade sail, a fabric cover stretched above part of the yard. Each change has a different purpose, and both would need space and upkeep. The students can ask the custodian about puddles and check school records for repair costs. They cannot learn everything about both plans at once, so they must decide what evidence matters most.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Write a research question that compares the blacktop and grass using measurements the class could collect.

2. Write a research question using seating counts to compare benches under trees with benches in direct sun.

3. Write a research question about the puddles beside the paved play area that the custodian could help investigate.

4. Write a research question that compares the upkeep of the two changes the school is considering.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school issue not discussed in the passage. Write one focused research question and one sentence naming evidence you could collect to investigate it.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three observations or plans that could lead to research questions, and circle two sources of evidence that could help investigate them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Write a research question that compares the blacktop and grass using measurements the class could collect.	**How do surface temperatures of the blacktop and grass at Cedar School compare at noon on sunny days?**
2	Write a research question using seating counts to compare benches under trees with benches in direct sun.	**On sunny lunch days, how many students sit on benches under trees compared with benches in direct sun?**
3	Write a research question about the puddles beside the paved play area that the custodian could help investigate.	**How long do puddles remain beside the paved play area after heavy rain?**
4	Write a research question that compares the upkeep of the two changes the school is considering.	**How would the yearly upkeep needs of a rain garden and a shade sail compare at Cedar School?**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

How does the wait time in the lunch line compare on Mondays and Fridays at my school? I could time students' waits at the start of lunch on four Mondays and four Fridays.

Accept other focused, investigable questions that use the details named in each prompt. For Your Turn, the question must address a different school issue, and the evidence must help answer it.