Questions Worth Pursuing

Narrow an idea until the available evidence can support an investigation.

12.6.W.1 "Students will formulate and refine a viable research question."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each research question in the passage, then circle the words in the final paragraph that name available evidence. Number the four starting questions in the order they appear so you can revise them in Part 2.

From Curiosity to Inquiry

(1) A student notices that one bus stop has no shade at midday and wants to study the problem. Her first question is, "Why is public transit so bad?" It assumes a judgment, spans an entire system, and points to no particular evidence. She narrows her attention to one corridor and asks how shade at its bus stops relates to riders' reported comfort during summer afternoons. That question identifies a place, a season, and two things to investigate. Still, she has not checked whether anyone has recorded riders' experiences.

(2) Before she commits, she checks what she could actually obtain. A transit agency publishes stop locations, and her class can conduct brief, voluntary interviews at two stops with different amounts of shade. She cannot claim that shade causes higher ridership from those materials, because interviews at two stops would not isolate other influences on travel. She therefore asks, "How do riders at two stops on the Oak Street corridor describe the effect of afternoon shade on their comfort in July?" The question invites comparison without assuming the responses. If interviews are not permitted, she will need to revise it again.

(3) Now imagine a city library that lends vegetable seeds. For a research proposal, you can consult lending logs from the last two spring seasons, anonymous patron survey responses from both seasons about whether borrowed seeds were planted, and the program's annual budgets for those two years. Four possible starting questions are "Why are seed libraries the best solution to food insecurity everywhere?" "Do seed libraries matter?" "How did the program transform every household in the city?" and "How many seed packets were borrowed last spring?" A stronger investigation would use what these sources can show while leaving room for unexpected findings.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Revise starting question 1 to remove its claim about the "best solution" and focus on something the lending logs can show.

2. Revise starting question 2 into a question about the program's spending that the available budgets could help you investigate.

3. Revise starting question 3 so it asks about the people represented in the available surveys, rather than every household.

4. Revise starting question 4 into an analytical question that uses both lending logs and annual budgets.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a local issue you could investigate using records, public documents, or a brief voluntary survey. Write a broad starting question, a more viable research question, and two sentences explaining the scope of your revision and the evidence you could use.

ANSWER KEY

Questions Worth Pursuing

GRADE 12 · 12.6.W.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each research question in the passage, then circle the words in the final paragraph that name available evidence. Number the four starting questions in the order they appear so you can revise them in Part 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Revise starting question 1 to remove its claim about the "best solution" and focus on something the lending logs can show.	**How did the number of seed packets borrowed change between the last two spring seasons?**
2	Revise starting question 2 into a question about the program's spending that the available budgets could help you investigate.	**How did the seed-lending program's annual spending change between the two years?**
3	Revise starting question 3 so it asks about the people represented in the available surveys, rather than every household.	**How did the share of surveyed patrons who reported planting borrowed seeds differ between the two spring seasons?**
4	Revise starting question 4 into an analytical question that uses both lending logs and annual budgets.	**How did annual program spending per seed packet borrowed change across the two years?**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My starting question is, "Why are my city's streets always unsafe?" My refined question is, "How did the number of pothole complaints submitted through my city's 311 system change from 2023 to 2025?" I would first check whether the city publishes dated 311 complaint records for those years. The revision limits the place, dates, and measure without assuming that street conditions got worse.

Accept other focused, neutral questions if the named source could provide the needed evidence. For Part 3, look for a genuine revision and a realistic plan to check or obtain evidence.