Questions That Work

Turn an interesting topic into a question you can investigate.

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

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Jada's first question and circle the question she writes next. Number two details that show what evidence she could gather.

After the Rain

1. After a storm, Jada notices that one corner of the school courtyard still has puddles when the center is dry. She wants to study the problem, but her first question is, "Why is our courtyard a mess?" That question shows her interest, yet "a mess" is an opinion, not something she can measure. Jada changes it to, "Which parts of the courtyard stay wet longest after rain?" Now she has a place, a condition, and a result she can observe. The new question also leaves room for more than a yes-or-no answer.

2. Jada realizes that watching one storm may not be enough. A light shower and a heavy downpour could leave different puddles. She could check local rainfall reports, then note when each puddle disappears after several storms. She could also look for sloped ground and nearby drains without guessing what caused the water to collect. Her teacher reminds her that a research question should be narrow enough to investigate but open enough to need evidence. A question about every schoolyard on Earth would be too wide for Jada's project.

3. Before choosing a final question, Jada lists other paths she might investigate. She could compare the paved path with the grassy edge, or ask the school custodian where water usually collects. She cannot dig up the courtyard or claim that a drain is blocked just by looking at a puddle. A useful question must match the evidence she can actually gather. If her observations do not fit her first plan, she can refine the question again instead of forcing the evidence to fit it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Jada wants to study whether the amount of rain changes how long puddles last. Write a focused research question she could investigate using evidence named in the passage.

2. Write a research question that compares the paved path and the grassy edge using something Jada could observe.

3. Jada cannot tell whether a drain is blocked just by seeing a puddle. Turn this claim into a neutral research question she could investigate: "A blocked drain causes the puddle."

4. A classmate asks, "Why do all schoolyards flood after every storm?" Rewrite it as a question Jada could investigate at her school using evidence named in the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school topic other than rain or puddles. Write a broad first question, refine it into a focused, neutral research question, and name two kinds of evidence you could gather.

Questions That Work

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Jada's first question and circle the question she writes next. Number two details that show what evidence she could gather. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Jada wants to study whether the amount of rain changes how long puddles last. Write a focused research question she could investigate using evidence named in the passage.	**How does the amount of rain reported locally relate to how long puddles last in the school courtyard?**
2	Write a research question that compares the paved path and the grassy edge using something Jada could observe.	**How long does the paved path stay wet compared with the grassy edge after rain?**
3	Jada cannot tell whether a drain is blocked just by seeing a puddle. Turn this claim into a neutral research question she could investigate: "A blocked drain causes the puddle."	**Where do puddles collect in relation to nearby drains in the courtyard after rain?**
4	A classmate asks, "Why do all schoolyards flood after every storm?" Rewrite it as a question Jada could investigate at her school using evidence named in the passage.	**How do slopes in Jada's school courtyard relate to where puddles collect after rain?**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

First question: Why is our library so confusing? Refined question: How do sixth graders use shelf signs to find books in the school library? Evidence: I could observe students looking for books and ask them which signs they used.

Accept other focused, neutral questions supported by evidence Jada could gather. For Part 3, the refined question must be narrower than the first question, and both proposed kinds of evidence must fit it.