Questions Worth Asking

Turn a broad idea into a question evidence can answer

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

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the four cafeteria questions students propose. Circle words that need changing to fit the available evidence, and number the two sources of data the council can use.

Before the Council Decides

1. Maya wanted to study noise in her town's public library. She first wrote, "Is the library bad for studying?" That wording asks for a judgment without saying what she would examine. She revised it to ask, "How do noise levels in the reading room change between after-school hours and Saturday mornings?" She could record sound levels at the same spots during each time period and consult the library's posted rules. If her records covered only one week, she would keep that limit in her conclusion rather than claim every week works the same way.

2. At Eastbrook High, the student council wants to investigate lunch waste before proposing any changes. The cafeteria manager has agreed to share daily counts of unopened milk cartons placed in the trash after each of the two lunch periods for one school week. Student volunteers can also tally whole apples left on cafeteria trays during those five days. They cannot inspect food thrown away last year, and they have no way to count individual bites. On a planning sheet, two students have written, "Why do students waste food?" and "Exactly how many bites of every lunch were thrown away last year?"

3. Other students propose, "Why do lazy students throw away perfectly good lunches?" and "Does throwing away milk cost the school too much money?" The manager's records show carton counts, not purchase prices or reasons students leave food uneaten. The volunteers can sort their apple tallies by lunch period, but they cannot interview every student about personal choices. Before the council writes a recommendation, it needs a question whose terms point to evidence it can actually gather. The answer may show a pattern or no pattern at all. Either result could inform a later decision.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Revise "Why do students waste food?" to focus on whole apples and a time span the volunteers can study.

2. Revise the question about last year's individual bites so the council could answer it using the manager's records.

3. Rewrite the question about "lazy students" as a neutral question the volunteers' apple tallies could help answer.

4. Revise the question about milk costs to ask how milk waste changes from Monday to Friday. Use only information the manager's records provide.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school-life topic other than cafeteria waste or library noise. Write an initial research question, a more focused and neutral version, and one sentence naming evidence you could realistically gather to answer the revised question.

ANSWER KEY

Questions Worth Asking

GRADE 9 · 9.6.W.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the four cafeteria questions students propose. Circle words that need changing to fit the available evidence, and number the two sources of data the council can use. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Revise "Why do students waste food?" to focus on whole apples and a time span the volunteers can study.	**How many whole apples are left on cafeteria trays at Eastbrook High during one school week?**
2	Revise the question about last year's individual bites so the council could answer it using the manager's records.	**How many unopened milk cartons are placed in the trash after each lunch period during one school week?**
3	Rewrite the question about "lazy students" as a neutral question the volunteers' apple tallies could help answer.	**How does the number of whole apples left on trays differ between the two lunch periods during one school week?**
4	Revise the question about milk costs to ask how milk waste changes from Monday to Friday. Use only information the manager's records provide.	**How do the counts of unopened milk cartons placed in the trash on Monday and Friday compare?**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Does our school have a terrible hallway problem? How does the number of students passing through the second-floor hallway compare during the five minutes before first and fourth periods over one school week? I could count students at the same hallway entrance on each school day during those two time slots.

Accept other neutral revisions that match the stated time limits and available counts or tallies. For Part 3, look for a focused question and evidence the student could reasonably gather.