

What the Big Idea? Exploring Big Ideas.

Big Ideas from 2025-26

How can I use my unique abilities and sense of self to explore and discover the world around me?
How do we come together to form meaningful connections and build community? (From Me to We)
How can we use creativity and curiosity to understand Calgary's diverse community and inspire positive change through our voices, ideas and actions?
How do our choices impact our development and how do they promote a better world around us?
The best learning happens when we slow down, observe, reflect, and take our time
How do energy, forces, and human choices shape our environment and future?
How can we make inclusive spaces more accessible?
How are our stories connected?
How can listening to the stories of people and places help us build a more connected and caring community?
What secrets do Earth's life-support systems hold - and how can we protect them?
How does curiosity impact our mind and our world?

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Big Ideas from 2024-2025

How does science and innovation meet the needs of the community?
How do we become informed citizens?
What is creativity?
How does challenge/struggle lead to change?
How do you see yourself as a changemaker?
How do you see yourself as a changemaker?
How does human ingenuity affect our shared spaces to build strong communities?
How might we use design thinking in our lives?
How am I an explorer?
What is community and how do I fit into it?
How do we nurture community?
“How do stories shape our understanding of ourselves, others, space and place?”

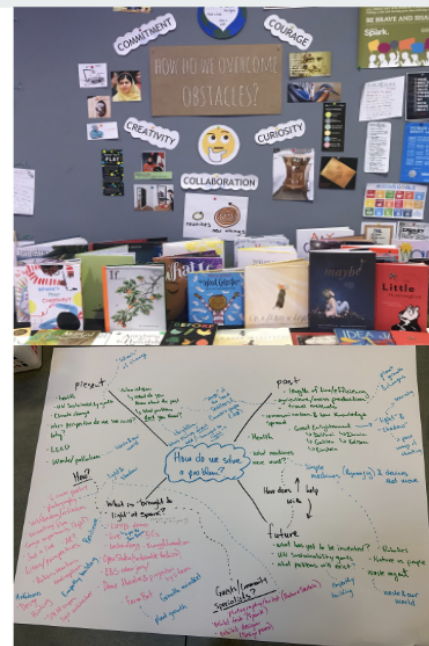
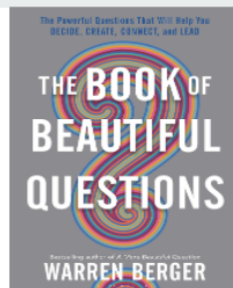
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How do we get a big idea?

What's the big idea?



- What stirs me?
- What bugs me?
- What's missing?
- What do I keep coming back to?
- What is ripe for reinvention?



Can you get inspiration from quotes, song lyrics, books? Yes!
Podcasts and youtube or other social media videos are also great!

Brainstorm with AI

Use an AI chatbot to brainstorm potential issues or themes related to your PBL topic.

Ask:

- What are five real-world problems connected to [topic]?
- What questions do experts or communities ask about [topic]?

👉 To-Do:

List 3-5 interesting questions or problems suggested by the chatbot. Highlight the one that excites you most.

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Ask the Chatbot to Help Refine Your Question

Prompt for the Chatbot:

I'm working on a PBL project. This is my draft question: [Insert your question here]. Can you help me make it more open-ended, critical, or real-world connected?"

👉 **To-Do:** Copy/paste your question into the chatbot and refine it based on feedback.

Tips for developing Big Ideas/Essential Questions: (**involve students in the process**)

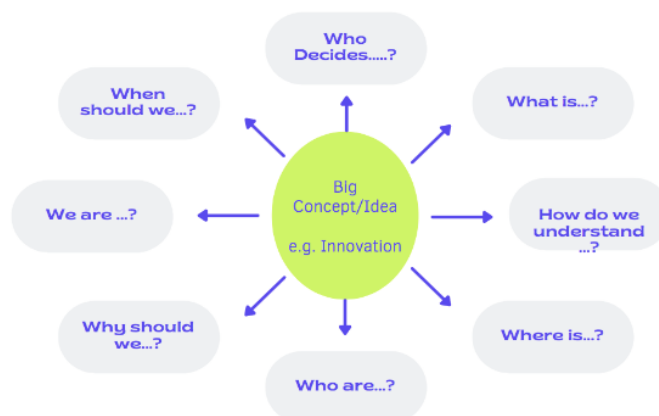
- Brainstorm Key Concepts/Ideas to generate a list of meaningful words
- Define/explain any words as needed
- Play around with forming questions from the words (example below) and/or play around with the words/questions in a hexagonal thinking web.

What's the big idea?

Ideas

Mind Map

-Who decides **innovation**?
-When should we **innovate**?
-We are **innovators**!
-Why should we **innovate**?
-Who are **innovators**?
-Where does **innovation** happen?
-How do we understand **innovation**?
-What is **innovation**?

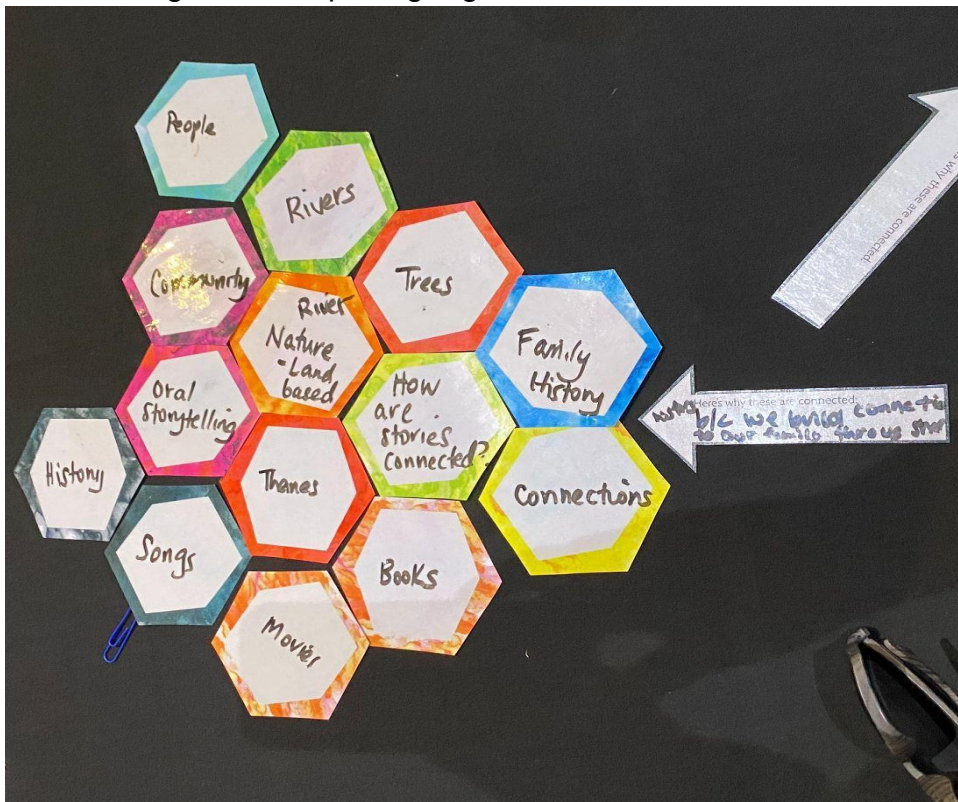


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Once you have a question – brainstorm ways that this essential question could be “lived” in the classroom? School? Community? Telus Spark? (Do this with students to get their voice) (a giant mind map on the board/wall or hexagon web may be a great visual way to brainstorm)



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Hexagonal Thinking Additional Resources:

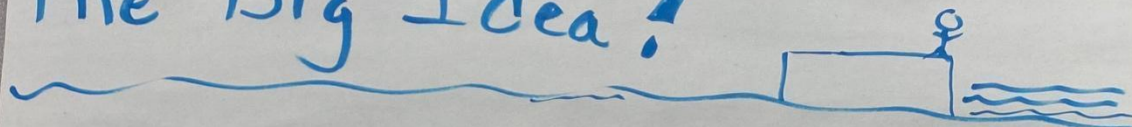
[Online hexagon generator](#)

[Hexagon template \(printable blank hexagons\) – free on Teachers Pay Teachers](#)

What the Big Idea? Exploring Big Ideas.

Keeping the big idea going before/during and after Science School

Introducing (Sparking) the Big Idea!



Provocation
- Book
- Artifact
- Walking Trip
- Video
- That brings away
to a question

spark
Books
change
Stories
Primary
School

spark
change - chemical
- experiments
what other types
of change? are there

**Guest Speaker
Book
Curiosity**

asking questions
making challenges
adding reflection

Let them
listen to a
pod-cast about
positive technology.

⑤ What is the deeper
meaning?
- using platform
to create new
version
⑥ What things were hard
How do we clean up?
How do we fix it?

- Visit SPCA
- Invite experts
- Guide dogs

⑦ **Spark**
Read aloud:
"Song for a Whale"
- connecting with
nature
- humans being
hurtful or helpful
- Idea of Empathy

⑧ **Summer Nature**
How did we exist
in Nature in the
Summer? How were
we helpful? Were
our actions hurtful?
Considering perspectives
New

Ask the
students to
list some
forms of
technology

Spark:
Intro big
idea question +
have them
brainstorm.

**Inviting in
experts**

**Guest
Speakers**
- food waste
- bike lanes
- SOLUTIONS

**Famous
Failures**
book, storytelling

**How to
cultivate
creativity**

**Youtube
series**

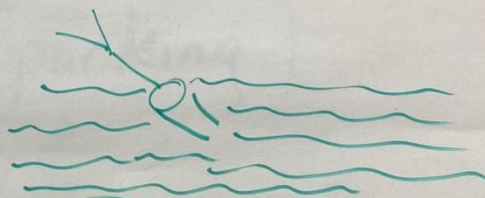
Spark: Ask
What skills
make a good
Scientist?

What is the
story of our
community?
- storybooks
- photographs
of community
past + present

**Visit to
SPCA**

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Diving Deeper into the Big Idea!



Curricular Connections

- Horizontal Thinking
- Cross curricular connections
- Skills - not just
- Apply to real life

Ask students what they would like to see/do/ experience to help them answer the question

Famous Failures
5 senses of failure
Books/podcasts/resources

Journaling Strategies

Practice journaling skills w/ familiar objects
ie. observe, label, inference

Learning into challenges when challenges are hard (Tasks/Tests)
↓
Growth mindset through collaboration and individual performance

Ask students which technologies affect how humans leave a footprint on the environment?

Journaling Guest speakers Questions

② Participation in Natural Spaces:
- Confederation Park
- School field/garden
- Community Centre Walk

Show students which technologies impact human lives the most.

Dig deeper
- what has changed in our community
- want to change in our community
- change in world

How does design relate to scientific method

② Critical Thinking
- Journaling
- observing
- Questioning
- Provide artifacts from Nature - Bird Nest

Keeping the Momentum going (before/after Science School)

Just
Keep Swimming

Demonstration
of learning.
Share with
a younger grade
to teach them

morning
provocations
related to
9!
(during soft
entry)

③ Considering Topics
in Nature as
Seasons Change
- Wildfires in summer -
what will we see in
fall/winter/spring?
- Changing Needs - food/warmth
④ Maintaining Perspective
as the year progresses
- During outdoor school
- During Fish Creek
Park visit
- During conversations
with experts in
Natural Fields

Class
goal or
project

Involve
Families

PREDICT
PREDICT
PREDICT ...

Testing
questions in
classroom early
get students to
contribute
ideas

Keep big idea
question up
in the room
before + after

Journaling
Questions to
start new
units
Deepen dive into
innovation

Provide monthly/
bi-weekly inquiry
to questions.
Hands on lay
in mental logs.

What change
do you want to
see in school -
how/who will
make them happen
--> bigger changes

Longitudinal
Data
Collection

Walking
Wednesday
- engaging in
our communities
- different focal
every week

Life
Skills!

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