The Big Ideas of Sustainability and Essential Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Idea</th>
<th>Essential Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>• What is a community? &lt;br&gt;• What is our community made of? &lt;br&gt;• How can we help our community? &lt;br&gt;• What makes a sustainable community? &lt;br&gt;• What is your responsibility to the community? &lt;br&gt;• Who lives in our human and natural communities?</td>
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<td><strong>Systems</strong></td>
<td>• What is our community made of? &lt;br&gt;• What role do economics play in shaping our world? &lt;br&gt;• What is a system? &lt;br&gt;• What systems are you a part of? &lt;br&gt;• How does change happen in a system? &lt;br&gt;• How do systems and changes in systems affect you? &lt;br&gt;• How do you affect and make changes in systems? &lt;br&gt;• What patterns can we find in our community?</td>
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<td><strong>Diversity</strong></td>
<td>• In what ways is human diversity related to bio-diversity? &lt;br&gt;• What makes a place diverse? &lt;br&gt;• How does the diversity of a system affect its health? &lt;br&gt;• What is our community made of? &lt;br&gt;• Why is diversity important?</td>
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<td><strong>Interdependence</strong></td>
<td>• How do our choices affect us our community, and the world? &lt;br&gt;• How are human and natural systems interrelated? &lt;br&gt;• What can communities learn from natural systems to improve our common future? &lt;br&gt;• In what ways do you depend on others? &lt;br&gt;• In what ways do you depend on natural systems? &lt;br&gt;• How are we all connected? &lt;br&gt;• Who or what depends on you?</td>
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<td><strong>Equilibrium</strong></td>
<td>• Why do animals or humans move from place to place? &lt;br&gt;• What makes a system balanced? What throws off its balance? &lt;br&gt;• How do systems achieve equilibrium? &lt;br&gt;• What happens in a system when it is out of balance? &lt;br&gt;• What is the relationship between diversity and equilibrium? &lt;br&gt;• What happens when you or your community is out of balance?</td>
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<td><strong>Big Idea</strong></td>
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| **Cycles**  | - What cycles can we find in our community?  
             - In what ways do we impact cycles?  
             - What cycles are we a part of?  
             - What and how are cycles related to one another? |
| **Change over time** | - What can we learn from the past?  
                             - Whose story is it?  
                             - How do living things adapt to changes in their environment?  
                             - How do we shape the land? How does the land shape us?  
                             - How has our community changed over time?  
                             - How have you changed over time? |
| **Limits**  | - Why do living things move from place to place?  
             - Who decides what limits something?  
             - What determines limits in the natural world? In economic systems? In social systems?  
             - What happens when a system reaches its limits? |
| **Fairness / Equity** | - Who decides what is fair or equitable? Who should decide?  
                             - What is the difference between fairness and equity?  
                             - How should we balance the rights of individuals with the common good?  
                             - What determines value?  
                             - Is there a difference between wants and needs?  
                             - What happens in a system when resources are limited?  
                             - What happens when resources are inequitably allocated?  
                             - Why is it important to think about the future? |
| **Place**   | - How are we shaped by the land/How do we shape the land?  
             - How do humans and the natural world interact?  
             - How does where we live impact how we live?  
             - How are people connected to the past?  
             - What stories are here?  
             - What makes up your place? Who makes up your place? |
| **Ability to make a difference:** | - How do our choices affect our communities, the world, and ourselves?  
                             - What is your responsibility to yourself, your community, and the world?  
                             - How can one individual make a difference?  
                             - How can a group of individuals make a difference?  
                             - What does it mean to be a citizen in our neighborhood?  
                             - What can you do to make change in a system? |
| **Long-term effects** | - How do living things adapt to changes in their environment?  
                           - In what ways does how we live today impact how people live in the future?  
                           - What choices did our elders make that affect the way we live today?  
                           - How can we make choices to ensure a healthy future?  
                           - How do your actions impact the future of others? |

*Adapted from Shelburne Farms' Sustainable Schools Project ©2013*