



A program of Shelburne Farms



## The Big Ideas of Sustainability and Essential Questions

Big Idea	Essential Questions
<p><b>Community</b> A group of living and non-living things sharing a common purpose or space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a community?</li> <li>• What is our community made of?</li> <li>• How can we help our community?</li> <li>• What makes a sustainable community?</li> <li>• What is your responsibility to the community?</li> <li>• Who lives in our human and natural communities?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Systems</b> Parts are connected through larger patterns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is our community made of?</li> <li>• What role do economics play in shaping our world?</li> <li>• What is a system?</li> <li>• What systems are you a part of?</li> <li>• How does change happen in a system?</li> <li>• How do systems and changes in systems affect you?</li> <li>• How do you affect and make changes in systems?</li> <li>• What patterns can we find in our community?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Diversity</b> All systems and places function because of variety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways is human diversity related to bio-diversity?</li> <li>• What makes a place diverse?</li> <li>• How does the diversity of a system affect its health?</li> <li>• What is our community made of?</li> <li>• Why is diversity important?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interdependence</b> All living things are connected. Every organism, system, and place depends on others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do our choices affect us our community, and the world?</li> <li>• How are human and natural systems interrelated?</li> <li>• What can communities learn from natural systems to improve our common future?</li> <li>• In what ways do you depend on others?</li> <li>• In what ways do you depend on natural systems?</li> <li>• How are we all connected?</li> <li>• Who or what depends on you?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Equilibrium</b> A state of balance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do animals or humans move from place to place?</li> <li>• What makes a system balanced? What throws off its balance?</li> <li>• How do systems achieve equilibrium?</li> <li>• What happens in a system when it is out of balance?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between diversity and equilibrium?</li> <li>• What happens when you or your community is out of balance?</li> </ul>

<b>Big Idea</b>	<b>Essential Questions</b>
<p><b>Cycles</b> Every organism and every system goes through different stages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What cycles can we find in our community?</li> <li>• In what ways do we impact cycles?</li> <li>• What cycles are we a part of?</li> <li>• What and how are cycles related to one another?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Change over time</b> All organisms, places, and systems are constantly changing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can we learn from the past?</li> <li>• Whose story is it?</li> <li>• How do living things adapt to changes in their environment?</li> <li>• How do we shape the land? How does the land shape us?</li> <li>• How has our community changed over time?</li> <li>• How have you changed over time?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limits</b> Every system has a carrying capacity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do living things move from place to place?</li> <li>• Who decides what limits something?</li> <li>• What determines limits in the natural world? In economic systems? In social systems?</li> <li>• What happens when a system reaches its limits?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fairness / Equity</b> Resources are shared to meet the needs of living things across places and generations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who decides what is fair or equitable? Who should decide?</li> <li>• What is the difference between fairness and equity?</li> <li>• How should we balance the rights of individuals with the common good?</li> <li>• What determines value?</li> <li>• Is there a difference between wants and needs?</li> <li>• What happens in a system when resources are limited?</li> <li>• What happens when resources are inequitably allocated?</li> <li>• Why is it important to think about the future?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Place</b> Natural and human communities together make up one's place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are we shaped by the land/How do we shape the land?</li> <li>• How do humans and the natural world interact?</li> <li>• How does where we live impact how we live?</li> <li>• How are people connected to the past?</li> <li>• What stories are here?</li> <li>• What makes up your place? Who makes up your place?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ability to make a difference:</b> Everyone has the ability to change or impact a system, community, and themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do our choices affect our communities, the world, and ourselves?</li> <li>• What is your responsibility to yourself, your community, and the world?</li> <li>• How can one individual make a difference?</li> <li>• How can a group of individuals make a difference?</li> <li>• What does it mean to be a citizen in our neighborhood?</li> <li>• What can you do to make change in a system?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Long-term effects</b> Actions have effects beyond immediate reactions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do living things adapt to changes in their environment?</li> <li>• In what ways does how we live today impact how people live in the future?</li> <li>• What choices did our elders make that affect the way we live today?</li> <li>• How can we make choices to ensure a healthy future?</li> <li>• How do your actions impact the future of others?</li> </ul>