



Microlab Suggestions

Developed by the NSRF National Center from a conversation among CFG coaches on the NSRF coaches listserv, February 6-8, 2007. See http://www.nsrharmony.org/conv_microlabs.html for the complete conversation.

Suggestions for a series of questions for use with Microlabs:

1. Why did you decide to become an educator and why do you stay?
 2. What are you currently working on in your practice as an educator? How are you trying to improve?
 3. What do you hope to gain from working with colleagues in this way?
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1. What were your relationships like as a young person with people of different cultures?
 2. What was helpful to you in forming relationships across racial lines?
 3. What assumptions, values, and practices of people and institutions of the dominant culture serve to disadvantage faculty members and students from the non-dominant culture?
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1. Given who you are, why are you involved with or starting a small high school?
 2. What will you offer or what are you offering each student in your small high school that is not a replication of the large traditional high school?
 3. Given who you are what does your leadership look like and sound like in order for each student and each adult to be successful in your small high school?
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1. Why did you decide to become a teacher (or an educator)? What drew you into this profession?
 2. Why do you stay? What keeps you coming back, year after year?
 3. What matters to you in your work? What is at the heart of what you do? What is the one thing you won't compromise?
 4. What will you go to the wall for?
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1. If you could be a fly on the wall in someone else's classroom, what would you want to observe?
 2. What's one thing you wish people could see you or your students doing in your classroom?
 3. If you knew that a colleague would come into your classroom — and that his or her being there would make a difference for you and your students — whom would you ask in, what would they do while they were there, and what would you want the conversation to look like afterwards?

Suggestions for other questions for use with Microlabs:

- Describe a time when you were part of a learning community. What made it so? What were its characteristics?
- What do you believe about the relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement? What led you to these beliefs?
- How do these beliefs play out in your practice? What, if anything, would need to change for you to have a closer match between what you believe and what you do?
- Who is the one teacher — inside or outside of your formal schooling — who stands out as having made

a difference in your life? If you could write to him or her right now, what is the one thing you would like to tell him/her? OR

- Think about your career as an educator. Describe one student from whom you learned something significant about your work as an educator. What did you learn? How did you learn it?
- Why did you decide to work in education? What were your early aspirations?
- In terms of your practice, what do you want your legacy to be?
- What were your hopes and aspirations as you began your work as an educator?
- When you tell friends and family members “what you do”— what do you say to them?
- When you think about your work, what one aspect/element of it would you give up last? What’s at the heart of what you do?
- In terms of your practice, what are your hopes for this year?
- Come next June, what would you want your students to say about their learning this year under your stewardship?
- If there were only one thing for you to learn this year — and you knew that one thing could make a difference for your students — what would it be?
- As you think about the upcoming school year, what are you looking forward to? What excites you?
- What’s one thing of significance — related to your work or teaching — that you learned last year? How did you do that learning? What made the learning significant?
- When you think about your practice, what one element of it won’t you give up? What’s at the heart of what you do? What do you stand for?