



Microlabs

Developed by Julian Weissglass for the National Coalition for Equity in Education based at the University of California, Santa Barbara; adapted in the field by educators.

Purpose

Microlabs addresses a specific sequence of questions in a structured format with small groups, using active listening skills.

Time

About 6 minutes per question — this works best with a series of no more than three questions.

Group Format

Form triads with people from your school or people you are sitting near if you don't have others here from your school. Number off within your triad: 1, 2, 3.

Facilitation Tips

"I'll direct what we will talk about. Each person will have **two minutes** to talk about a question when it's their turn. While the person is speaking, the other two in the group simply listen. When the time is up, the next person speaks, and so on. I'll tell you when to switch." Emphasize that talk has to stop when you call time, and conversely, that if the person is done speaking before time is up, the three people should sit in silence, using the time to reflect.

The quality of the questions matter in this exercise. The questions should be ones that are important to the group, and that spiral in depth from first to last.

It's nice to have a chime to ring to indicate that time is up.

Process

After instructing the group, read the first question aloud (twice). Give everyone time to think or write in preparation. Then, tell people when to begin, and then tell them when each one/two minute segment is up. On the first question, begin with person #1, then #2, then #3. Then read the next question aloud. On the second question, begin with #2, then #3, then #1. On the third question, begin with #3, then #1, then #2.

Debrief Questions

- What did you hear that was significant? What key ideas or insights were shared?
- How did this go for you? What worked well, and what was difficult? Why?
- How might your conversations have been different had we not used this protocol?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of using this activity? When would you use this protocol?
- What would you want to keep in mind as someone facilitating this activity?