# Exploring a Genuine Question

If you've started to think about what makes school meaningful for you, you might have questions about how to do that. This protocol is a structured way for you to get feedback from your peers about how you can make your work at school more meaningful.

**You need:**

- A question about how to make school meaningful—Here are some sample questions. They're just examples and shouldn't limit you! If you want to ask the question about a specific class, just add the words *in _____ class*.
    - When can I learn about topics that matter to me personally?
    - How can I use my creativity more often?
    - How can I contribute to more discussions?
    - How can I build better relationships with my classmates?
    - How can I build a better relationship with my teacher?
    - How will the skills I'm learning help me outside school?
    - How will the skills I'm learning help me when I'm an adult?
    - How can I see more perspectives?
    - How can I take a leadership role?
    - How can I challenge myself more?
- Pieces of work, assignments, written feedback from teachers, or anything else that will help your group understand why you're asking your question
- Three or four trusted peers
- A facilitator (another peer, a more experienced student, or a trusted adult)

**What happens:**

1. Explain what led you to ask your question. Describe particular situations or show pieces of your work, assignments, and teacher feedback. (Eight minutes)

2. If necessary, pause so your group members can examine anything you've shown them. (Three minutes)

3. Ask your question.

4. The group asks questions to get more information. These questions should have answers that are facts, not opinions or judgments. If someone asks an opinion or judgment question, the facilitator points that out and you don't answer the question. (Four minutes)

5. The group asks questions to help you think differently about your situation. You can answer them if you have an answer, or you can simply say, "I don't know," or, "I'd have to think about that." The group does not discuss your responses. The group could use these question stems. (Eight minutes)

   - What would be different if . . .?

   - What are you doing when . . .?

   - What else is happening around you when . . .?

   - Have you tried . . .?

   - What would be a different way to . . .?

   - What would be a smaller/bigger version of . . .?

   - What assumptions are you making about . . .?

6. The facilitator asks you to restate your question.

7. You are a silent observer while the group has a discussion in response to your question. Possible discussion questions follow. (Eight minutes)

   - What did we hear?

   - What stood out?

   - What do we wonder?

   - What do we think?

   - What might we do or try in this situation? What have we done in similar situations?

   The goal is to talk about the problem or issue rather than quickly coming up with solutions. If someone has a solution, he or she should frame it as a suggestion, rather than an answer.

   During this discussion, the group refers to you in the third person and does not address you directly. For example, if your name is Steve, the group will say things like, "It sounds like Steve has already tried to meet with his teacher," rather than, "It sounds like you have already tried to meet with your teacher." This can feel a little weird, but it keeps the entire conversation about the question.

8. Pause so you can reflect on what you have just heard. (One minute)

9. Share what you're thinking after hearing the group's discussion. You might identify next steps you want to take or share your reactions to the ideas that came up. (Five minutes)

10. The facilitator leads a brief discussion about this experience. (Three minutes)

   - How did you, the presenter, feel?

   - How did the group feel?

   - What did the group members learn that might help them make their schoolwork meaningful?

*National School Reform Faculty. (n.d.).* Framing consultancy dilemmas and consultancy questions. *Accessed at www.nsrfharmony .org/system/files/protocols/framing-dilemmas.pdf on June 28, 2017.*