NSTA Focus Group Questions

1. The National Science Foundation requests certain teaching standards.

Inquiry Students formulate questions and devise ways to answer them, they collect data and decide how to represent it, they organize data to generate knowledge, and they test the reliability of the knowledge they have generated. As they proceed, students explain and justify their work to themselves and to one another, learn to cope with problems such as the limitations of equipment, and react to challenges posed by the teacher and by classmates. Students assess the efficacy of their efforts--they evaluate the data they have collected, re-examining or collecting more if necessary, and making statements about the generalizability of their findings. They plan and make presentations to the rest of the class about their work and accept and react to the constructive criticism of others

Which activities describe that process?

- Give an example of an activity that is inquiry.
- How can non-inquiry activities be made into inquiry-based activities?
- Does your district or school standards require inquiry activities?

2. One of the project's goals is to provide a seamless integration between the text and the Web – please comment on that. To what extent was that achieved? Do you have suggestions for improving that?

3. How does the Web help students understand the content?

4. Would you use Exploring Life materials for your general biology students (not honors biology students)?
Are the topics of the chapters and the modes of instruction developmentally appropriate for your students?

Note: If the response is NO, then ask: "What should be done to make the materials more appropriate for the level of your student?

5. What obstacles would you have (if any) to using this product in your school?

6. If you were going to give the developers one piece of advice going forward, what would it be?

7. How well did the Exploring Life materials meet your expectations for a new Web-based biology curriculum?

- What could be done to enhance the curriculum?

8. What is the difference about EL and your current textbook?

- Student learning
- Flexibility
- Meeting the teaching standards
- You prep time
- Interest to the students

9. Is there enough variety to adjust activities to meet your particular classroom?

- Is there enough variety in activities so that you may use whole-class instruction, small-group collaboration, and individual work?
- Are there enough activities for you to assess the understanding and abilities that students hold when they begin a learning activity?
- How flexible is the material?

10. Are the teaching styles varied?

- Are there activities that provide a basis for observation, data collection, reflection, and analysis of firsthand events and phenomena?
- Are there other activities encourage the critical analysis of secondary sources--including media, books, and journals in a library.
- Are there enough activities to deal with the different learning styles of the students, i.e. auditory, kinesthetic, whole body, visual, written, verbal, etc.?

11. Would teaching with Exploring Life address your state and local standards? How?

12. What do you think is the BEST thing about Exploring Life?

13. What do you see as the WORST thing about Exploring Life?

14. How would you use Exploring Life in your classes?