

## **OPEN FORUM**

The purpose of the forum was to offer a space for interaction between NSRF members and the Accountability Council. Jackie Mitchell facilitated the Open Forum. Everyone who would like to speak would have ten minutes to do so, followed by five minutes for clarifying questions. Jackie offered that the protocol was designed to allow us to listen closely and carefully to one another.

The Accountability Council is leaving it up to those who participated either in writing or in person in the Open Forum to share their statements publicly, if they choose to do so.

Open Forum Participants: Tarrey Banks, Fred Bay, Brandon Cosby, Sue Horan, Scott Hutchinson, and Kevin Horton.

Statements from: Michele Mattoon, Gene Kadish, and Josephine Rice

At the conclusion of the forum, the AC convened with only council members to continue its work.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL MEETING**

*General guiding question for the AC meeting: How do current NSRF structures and processes support or challenge realizing our vision?*

Present: Daniel Baron, Roc Bonchek, Angela Breidenstein, Lois Butler, Frances Hensley, RoLesia Holman, Jackie Mitchell, Maria Elena Rico, Steven Strull, and Heidi Vosekas

The first day was spent gathering information and determining the current state of the organization.

### **Current State of NSRF Governance and Finance:**

*Specific guiding questions: What is the current state of the organization? What possible modifications are indicated and/or suggested?*

**Harmony Education Center (HEC) and National School Reform Faculty** - Steven, Heidi and Roc offered an overview the relationship between NSRF and HEC.

The Harmony School Corporation (doing business as Harmony Education Center - HEC) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of Indiana. NSRF is a division of HEC. The other divisions of HEC are: Harmony School, Rhino's Youth Media Center, and the Institute of Research.

### **NSRF governance and advisory bodies**

- HEC Board of Directors: Steve "Roc" Bonchek, Executive Director of HEC; Lois Butler, NSRF National Facilitator and AC member; Jesse Goodman, Indiana University

Professor of Education and Director of HEC Institute of Research; Libby Gwynn, Assistant Director of HEC.

- HEC Finance and Governance Committee: In addition to the 4 members of the Board, this committee also has representatives from each division of HEC: Steven Strull, NSRF Director; Brad Wilhelm, Rhino's Youth Media Center Director, Ursina Hastings-Heinz, Harmony Middle School teacher; Sallyann Murphy, Harmony High School teacher.
- NSRF Accountability Council (AC): (see governance document on website for full description of purpose and roles) <http://www.nsrffharmony.org/governance.html#ac>  
There are currently 12 elected seats, 3 permanent seats, and 2 special seats on the AC.

Regarding the HEC Board of Directors, Roc announced that the HEC Board of Directors has endorsed his recommendation to restructure the Board.

*Action: The AC strongly recommended that 1) the current Board dissolve itself and a new Board reconstitute itself as soon as possible, not to exceed a timeline of 6 months; and 2) each division of HEC have voice in selecting new Board members. The Accountability Council will assist the NSRF director in selecting Board members.*

**Accountability Council** - Steven clarified the role of the AC as the advisory body for NSRF with de facto, not de jure, ability to hire and fire the director of NSRF. The AC did make the decisions about multiple directors and the shift to one director that occurred several years ago. It was also pointed out that NSRF has never been an autonomous organization: first it was a program of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and now it is a division of the HEC.

There was discussion about the difference between a program and an autonomous division and the difference in independence between the two. However, there was a question as to how autonomous a division of a larger organization could really be. In the case of NSRF, it was discussed that NSRF has no by-laws, employer id, or IRS nonprofit status separate from HEC. There was, however, general agreement among the group that within our membership and general education community, NSRF is a brand that is separate from HEC. It was concluded by the AC that these understandings of the governance and legal status of NSRF would need to be considered in any future consideration of changes in governance.

**NSRF budget** - Steven shared and reviewed the current NSRF budget:

- NSRF maintains a separate budget from HEC and its other divisions but shares some expenses. Each division allocates a percentage of its budget to the shared expenses of HEC's Central Operations such as office space, utilities, technology and some staffing.
- Current NSRF budget has a 38% allocation to HEC Central Operations and a commitment was made to look for ways to reduce this overall expense burden to the corporation.

- There was a discussion related to receipt of payment from the Bay and Paul Foundations and the allocation of those funds within HEC, including NSRF.
- HEC commissions an annual audit and accepts the findings.

### **How NSRF generates income -**

- Membership
- National projects income:
  - A spread between what client pays for facilitation services and what we pay contracted facilitators, about \$200 a day – current fiscal year projects project income at \$365K and project expenses at \$305K the balance used as income in the NSRF budget
  - Administrative support percentage built into contracts that the National Center manages
- Winter and Facilitators meetings
- Grants and contributions, (e.g. Bay and Paul Foundations, Faith Dunne/Nancy Mohr Scholarship Fund)

Roc pointed out that it had been awhile since there was a focus on the Campaign for Harmony or the bottom-line of NSRF. The Campaign goals: \$31 million in ten years, including the establishment of a \$10 million endowment for HEC (includes NSRF).

*Action: The AC developed greater understanding of the financial status of NSRF and strongly encouraged that this information be shared with the NSRF members.*

*Heidi and Steven advised the AC that the National Center will publish the first of what will be an annual report this fall that they anticipate will begin to communicate and clarify governance and financial status of NSRF.*

### **Emerging issues and questions**

- How might the responsibility be shared between national and centers to promote the work of NSRF and to partner on contracts for NSRF seminar experiences and consulting services?
- How might our centers support attendance at the annual Winter Meeting?
- Our membership strategy has begun to gain momentum, but what might we do, and by when might we do it, to encourage National Facilitators and other leaders of the network to pay annual membership?
- There is a critical need for a system of mutual accountability. To what systems might we hold ourselves accountable?

**NSRF Leadership** - Steven clarified that in addition to his role as Director of NSRF, he is also working part-time for the Leadership Academy in New York; a decision Steven reached this past year to more concentrate his school-based practice on local NYC schools.

*Action: Frances will work with Teri Schrader to continue work on an evaluation and feedback process for the NSRF director that will include a job description for the director(s).*

**NSRF Membership** - Members of the AC asked for clarification about the levels of membership \$25, \$50, \$75 and \$150. Steven explained that the levels reflected no differences in service. NSRF adopted the strategy from BAEO. The concept of NSRF membership is that a member doesn't pay dues to get stuff, but rather to support the availability of stuff. Steven clarified that the \$150 membership for national facilitators was not voluntary but an expectation for all national facilitators and that at some point in the near future we would need to make a decision about the status of current national facilitators who have not paid their dues. Jackie offered that explaining what the dues have paid for, in terms of service to others, would be helpful and was a good public relations strategy.

Some AC members raised the issue that there was a lack of clarity at the Center's Summit about implementation of the membership strategies and the strategies for National Facilitators and Centers of Activity. Heidi and Steven expressed hope that the membership report this fall will help settle some of these issues and financial questions in a print document that would also be available on the web site.

AC members raised the issue of collecting racial information. Heidi explained that racial information is optional on the membership application and the Winter Meeting registration but not enough data is collected for NSRF to know whom we are serving. Other AC members suggested that this information from the Centers of Activity.

**Programmatic and Theoretical Challenge Facing NSRF:**

To underscore what has become a great challenge within the programmatic and theoretic assumptions embedded in our mission statement, Steven shared that at least one Center of Activity, and several national facilitators have expressed the opinion that the work some members pursue in the name of NSRF is not equity based. Steven articulated that he believes the core question becomes a philosophical distinction between fostering equity and interrupting inequity. There are members that might say CFGs and LASW work are equity based while others might say otherwise and that only certain kinds of work are equity based.

Steven considers this issue to be an unresolved tension within NSRF (i.e., differentiating between fostering equity and interrupting inequity and the subsequent programmatic decisions that follow) that has, at times, led to a shutdown of the listserv and has created great tensions at national meetings. As a community, he believes that we must resolve this issue within NSRF and he believes that NSRF Centers of Activity and National Facilitators ought to help reconcile this issue for NSRF.

**Data-Driven Dialogue – Looking at the Survey Data:**

*Guiding Question: What do members think about the current state and operation of NSRF. Specifically how do they do current NSRF structures and processes support or challenge realizing our vision?*

Survey data and the Data-Driven Dialogue process were shared with AC members prior to meeting. Questions that guided the process included:

- What did we expect to see?
- What did we see?
- What did we learn related to our essential questions, themes and concerns from the field?
- What does it mean?

Frances facilitated the examination of the survey data using a modified data driven dialogue process. Sections of the survey were divided among pairs of AC members for examination. The data were divided into sections including demographics, National Facilitators, priorities and responsibilities, governance, structure, and Centers of Activity, association with HEC, and additional comments. We used a four step process that included (1) predicting what data would say; (2) creating a visual representation of the data; (3) observing each other's presentations of data; and (4) informative questions.

The survey results provided rich and valuable insights into the understandings, concerns and feedback of the NSRF Facilitators who responded. The results were valuable in guiding and informing the work of the AC and will continue to be used as a source of information in future efforts. The data will be shared with members of the NSRF Facilitator Listserv for their own review and consideration.

Note: It is difficult to convey how the AC made 'sense' of the data without sharing all of the visual representations and accompanying explanations, clarifying questions, etc. Since it was not possible, within the confines of these notes to do so during the editing process it was decided to omit these references. The originals of the visual representations and the accompanying data observations from each team are available upon request.

*Action: Survey data will be used to inform and guide the creation of an agenda for the Centers meeting in January. Additionally, the AC will use the data to help shape proposals related to possible changes in governance and in the shaping of an accountability system for the director, national staff, centers of activity, and accountability council.*

**Resignation from the Accountability Council offered by Roc Bonchek:**

In a statement read to the Council, Roc offered his resignation as a member of the AC so that he could turn his attention to the work of reconstituting the Board of Directors and meeting the goals of the Campaign for Harmony and allow the AC to focus on the work of NSRF. After hearing from Roc, the council deliberated and made the following decisions:

- The council accepted Roc's resignation.
- The council recognizes NSRF needs a transition period for this resignation and believes the time between now and the re-constitution of the new Board of Directors of the HEC as the transition period.
- During this transition period, at the invitation of the Chair of the AC, Roc may be invited to attend AC meetings as Executive Director of HEC and not as a council member.

Note: Due to his travel schedule, Daniel Baron was not present for this discussion or the discussion about the Tampa Facilitators Meeting (see below) Both Roc and Scott Hutchinson left the room for these discussions.

*Action: The AC communicated it's strong support for reconstituting the Board of Directors of the HEC and urges the Board to take action on this as soon as feasible and with utmost urgency and in any case, this transition period shall not exceed 6 months.*

*During this transition period we realized that Lois Butler serves on both the AC and the HEC Board of Directors, therefore, she will serve as a liaison to both bodies.*

### **Response to the Facilitators Meeting in Tampa:**

The AC took up the issues surrounding incidents related to the Facilitators Meeting in Tampa and generated the following statement:

- The Tampa meeting was a tipping point and a call to action for the organization and the Accountability Council. Members of the AC received multiple viewpoints of what occurred during the Facilitators Meeting. We believe there were multiple incidents of behavior inconsistent with our mission statement. We believe these incidents reveal conflicts and tensions regarding power and race in NSRF.
- New learning:
  - There needs to be healing for individuals and the organization
  - NSRF must develop effective ways to address grievances
  - New structures and processes are needed to help us realize our mission and hold members accountable
- We find hope in the fact that individuals have committed to mediation. We urge individuals who were challenged or negatively affected to take steps toward reconciliation, healing, and renewal.

*Next step: The AC has committed to change the governance and accountability structures of NSRF to be more aligned with our mission.*

### **Summary:**

At the close of the AC meeting, the group reviewed what it had learned, its actions, and necessary future work in light of a core question: *How do current forms and structures support or challenge NSRF realizing its mission?*

The following is a summary of the discussion among AC members related to the current status of the organization and what changes are called for.

**Shift to a membership organization** - It now seems apparent that expectations increase as we move from a voluntary to a membership organization. How we can support that shift? How do the organization and the AC, director and national staff increase the level of trust and make people feel heard. Who are we? Lois helpfully reminded the AC that we must first define our work before we set up structures to support it.

The Accountability Council is committed to providing leadership in identifying and guiding changes in current structures and processes (including the Accountability Council) specifically through the lens of NSRF as a membership organization.

**National Facilitators and Centers of Activity** - The AC concluded that the network and the formal leadership of the organization need to unpack how National Facilitators and Centers of Activity “belong” to NSRF. We need to focus on the ways individuals and Centers participate in the national organization.

*Action: Topics associated with this issue will inform and shape the agenda at the Centers Meeting in January 2009.*

Data from the survey suggest that some members believe that a strong Centers Council should be the cornerstone of an enhanced NSRF governance model. Additionally, the AC members recognized that an accountability system for the director, national staff, AC, Centers, and National Facilitators is critical.

*Action: Initial steps in developing a proposed accountability system will be developed and brought to the AC meeting and subsequent Centers meeting in January 2009. Feedback from the survey, through the listserv, and private correspondence and conversations with members emphasize the need to close the information gap, shore up governance, set priorities, and insure our financial viability.*

**Actions and Next Steps for both NSRF National Center and Accountability Council:**

- The director and the national staff will issue a membership report in the fall of 2008 detailing the membership status as well as providing information regarding the current financial and organizational status of NSRF.
- The AC posted minute summaries at the end of each day’s sessions, shared its minutes on the national facilitators listserv and posted them on the NSRF web site. In addition, data from the AC sponsored survey will be made available to all subscribers to the facilitators listserv.
- Frances Hensley and Teri Schrader will lead work on the development of an accountability system for the NSRF director, national staff, the AC, and other NSRF leadership.

*NSRF Accountability Council Meeting*

*June 27-28, 2008*

*Chicago, IL*

- Steven will work with members of the AC to convene a representative Centers group following the 2009 Winter Meeting to begin to address issues of governance and accountability.
- Frances and Steven will hold conference calls and other technology-based conversations with AC members to continue the work began at the June AC meeting. Frances and Steven will seek funding to support additional face to face and technology based meetings and convocations.
- The AC will work with Steven and the National Center Staff to better define their role and responsibility, and accordingly the role and responsibility of the centers and national facilitators. Feedback in the survey and from other conversations and personal interactions attest to the exemplary and crucial role the national staff plays in the organization. There is a need to recognize the limits of what a small staff can do in serving NSRF members and the network.
- Facilitate, advise, and participate in the restructuring process of the HEC Board.
- Update the stated composition of AC as to reflect the change of status of the HEC Executive Director as a permanent member of AC.
- Assist HEC in meeting the overall goals for the Campaign for Harmony.
- Use part of the Bay and Paul Foundations investment in NSRF to create new flexible partnerships.
- Recruit 500 participants for the Winter Meeting in Houston.
- Determine when National Facilitators and Accountability Council members should all be members of NSRF.
- Collect racial information about membership through Centers of Activity.
- Piggyback Accountability Council meetings with Winter Meetings and Facilitator Meetings, creating a separate space for governance and finance versus professional development.
- Continue the work of aligning our forms and structures to support the realization of NSRF mission.