

CONNECTIONS

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Gene Thompson-Grove, Co-Director

The past four years have seen tremendous growth in the scope of NSRF's work. What started as a program that focused on the professional development of K-12 teachers and principals has expanded to include post secondary institutions, district-wide initiatives, and long-term partnerships with school reform organizations.

Since its inception, NSRF has aspired to be a democratic learning community, a community that is - in the words of one of NSRF's long-time schools - committed to relationships based on respect, trust, and courage. In 2000-2001, as NSRF moved from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform to the Harmony Education Center, we agreed on a new mission statement:

The mission of the National School Reform Faculty is to foster educational and social equity by empowering all people involved with schools to work collaboratively in reflective democratic communities that create and support powerful learning experiences for everyone.

Our commitment to this mission has included diversifying the leadership of NSRF so it more closely resembles the diversity of our constituency - that is, the children in the schools where NSRF has a presence. By leadership, we mean our national project "point people," national task force and planning committee members, national NSRF facilitators, and perhaps most important, the Co-Directors of NSRF.

So on behalf of NSRF's National Center and its Accountability Council



- I am delighted to announce that Debbi Laidley has accepted a position as Co-Director of the National School Reform Faculty, effective September 1, 2004.

Debbi has been with the UCLA School Management Program since 1996, where she coordinates the Critical Friends Groups New Coaches Seminars. A graduate of Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles with a master's degree in educational administration, Debbi began her career as a teacher in 1978 and has taught English, English as a second language, student leadership and journalism in grades 7-12. In addition to her ongoing position with the UCLA School Management Program, Debbi is a secondary literacy specialist with the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Debbi has served on NSRF's Accountability Council since its inception in 2003, and is an active NSRF national facilitator, having led and participated in numerous national and local NSRF events. She has coordinated CFG Coaches Seminars for the Southern California area, assisting schools and districts with developing professional learning communities, developing the skills and building the capacity of the CFG coaches there, and supporting efforts to sustain CFG and related school wide reforms. Those who know her all

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agree that she brings distinct qualities of leadership to NSRF that will complement our existing governance structure and will serve our national community well.

Debbi will take over the Co-Director position held by Steve Bonchek (Roc) for the last four years. As a result of the growth of Harmony Education Center (HEC) and NSRF, Roc will work full-time as Executive Director of HEC, and thus have more time available to invest in guiding the upcoming multi-million dollar Capital Campaign for HEC (which includes NSRF), which will ensure a permanent national presence for our school reform work. We expect that Roc will play a vital role in NSRF, continuing many of the networking responsibilities he had as an NSRF Co-Director. In addition, he will serve as a member of the NSRF Accountability Council.

I will continue to serve as NSRF's founding Co-Director, working closely with Daniel Baron and Debbi Laidley, as well as with the Chair of the Accountability Council, Frances Hensley. While our working relationship will continue to be collaborative and democratic, the Accountability Council has requested that I assume the title "Facilitating Co-Director," in acknowledgment of the organization's need for one co-director who is ultimately accountable. All three co-directors will serve part-time.

We look forward to Debbi's tenure in her new position and to Roc's service in his expanded role with HEC. ■

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Some Highlights of NSRF's History

March 1995

NSRF was established at Brown University by the Annenberg Institute established for School Reform (AISR), with Paula Evans, Faith Dunne, and Gene Thompson-Grove as its Founding Co-Directors. Paula was also the Director of Professional Development at AISR; Gene and Faith were Principal Associates.

January 1999

NSRF's Founding Co-Directors Faith Dunne and Gene Thompson-Grove announced that NSRF would be leaving AISR, and that the Harmony Education Center in Bloomington, Indiana would assume responsibility for being the National Center for NSRF.

June 2000

The first NSRF council met and formed the foundation for the organization, including:

- A draft mission statement
- Agreed-upon goals of CFGs
- A governance structure for the organization that included:
 - National Center
 - Centers of Activity
 - Council
 - Clusters of Interest

June 2001

A mission statement was agreed upon: *The mission of the National School Reform Faculty is to foster educational and social equity by empowering all people involved with schools to work collaboratively in reflective democratic communities that create and support powerful learning experiences for everyone.*

Gene Thompson-Grove, Faith Dunne, Daniel Baron and Steve Bonchek assumed the responsibility for being NSRF's Co-Directors.

August 2001

Faith Dunne passed away; her position as Co-Director was not filled.

December 2002

At the recommendation of the NSRF Council, the Co-Directors invited a group of NSRF facilitators to revisit the NSRF governance structure. This retreat created the new governance structure that was approved at the January 2003 Council Meeting. It included

- Three co-directors as responsible for decisions
- The formation of an NSRF National Accountability Council that would hold the directors accountable for decisions made
- A NSRF Centers of Activity Council

May 2004

Acting on the charge to actively seek out leaders who reflect the diversity of the NSRF constituency, the Accountability Council recommended the nomination of Debbi Laidley as Co-Director of NSRF.

The Accountability Council endorsed Roc Bonchek's move from Co-Director of NSRF to Executive Director of Harmony Education Center.