number of us had been to the NSRF Winter Meeting three years earlier. We found the World Café experience enlightening and refreshing. We thought that it was important to begin the discussion about what Critical Friends Groups could do for our failing school. One way we tried to make a fundamental difference in the school’s collaborative climate was to have a World Café during Common Planning Time on a Thursday last school year. The hope was to find promise for our future. We had asked to have every 4th Thursday of our school’s Thursday Common Planning Time set aside for CFGs. This would give one hour each month to those teachers who were interested in meeting in CFGs. Our World Café was our launching pad. All teachers were invited. We had refreshments and flowers. We lowered the lights and read a poem. We put up paper on the tables for doodling and we began our World Café conversations.

We had about 30 teachers attend. Directly from that experience four new CFGs formed. Every 4th Thursday until the end of the school year, those CFGs met regularly, as did three others that had already formed before the World Café experience. We had seven active CFGs in all. The attitude among participants was that the groups had dedicated members who would get together to talk about their particular programs. Programs were spawned and grew and others flourished as a result of this enthusiastic, collaborative work. For example, one group, our school preparatory program, began and our Academic English Mastery Program was strength- ened. The core of these programs, such as our school’s Environmental Academy, now had a venue to focus on their needs and their direction. Each group worked hard and found the rewards gained from collabora- tion on their work with colleagues.

Sadly, when we returned this year, we found that this CFG time had been taken away with mandatory team, grade level, and department meetings.

Our World Café
Gregory Foote, California

 Sadly, when we returned this year, we found that this CFG time had been taken away with mandatory team, grade level, and department meetings.

The central perspectives advanced in Because of the Kids: Facing Racial and Cultural Differences in Schools are:

• Teacher beliefs, intentions and per- sonalities are the most powerful fac- tor in the determination of individual student success or failure, surpassing the role of the curriculum or other structural factors in schools.

• White teachers, because of their unconscious racial and cultural biases, may in fact be unwittingly under-mining the success of their students of color.

• Given the disproportionate number of white teachers responsible for the education of poor children and children of color, and the profound impact of their behavior and beliefs on these students, white teachers have a special role to play in the disrup- tion of the achievement gap.

This collaborative inquiry began when Karen approached Jennifer while the two were graduate students at Berkeley. As a previously successful white teacher of mostly white, middle class adolescents, Karen was deeply troubled by her later less-successful efforts to teach African-American youth. Karen knew that Jennifer, a West Indian immigrant and teacher, had a special perspective as a successful teacher of inner-city youth and consequently invited Jennifer into her classroom on a regular basis to observe and analyze the disconnect that Karen felt existed between her and her new students.

In the study, the two teachers met biweekly to compare notes and discuss what it was to meet in this era of heightened accountability and rigor. The issue was how to teach in a world for the children of my school. So what does the mandated meeting scenario I’ve described have to do with equity? Specifically, Karen designed a simulation about feudal empires for her history class and designated student roles, i.e. barbarians, slaves etc. When a student balked at being “called a bar- barian,” Karen was upset with his “atti-tude” and unaware of her role in their conflict.

In Karen’s words: “I was convinced of the ‘rightness’ of the activity ... and had taken time to prepare it with the ... behavior, even though their behavior was in direct response to Karen’s actions, which did not take into account her ...  

Our school’s AVID ...  

AVID program and the AEMP program do this. Without the time to carefully look at the work we and students do, these programs and others will go by the wayside. Our school’s AVID program is in doubt for next year, as are many other programs that help students to succeed. We may not be able to answer what equity in educa- tion looks like, but it is quite clear to most when they don’t see it. Today, I sometimes wonder if it is too late to make the changes needed to stop the inertia of the state’s taking control of our school; but then I still hope that we can be honest about our direction. I hope that we can look at the children we teach and give them, all of them, the education they deserve.
How does it work? As the name implies, everyone participating in the protocol - presenter, facilitator, and participants - is paired with a partner. Each pair has one member sitting in the inner circle and one member sitting in the outer circle at any given time; each participant pair decides which of them will start where (though the presenter and the facilitator will necessarily be in the inner circle). During the protocol, the facilitator stops the conversation at certain points and has the partners consult with each other. Pairs can switch circles during these stopping points if they so desire. We have found that the partner fishbowl is a very helpful tool for beginning groups in that the presenter can get support, preferably from an experienced CFG member. While the participant partners are discussing responses, the presenter's partner should find out how the presenter is responding to the feedback, help the presenter to clarify his/her learning from the protocol, and make any requests of the facilitator for advice on the protocol. This is a very helpful resource for people who may not be accustomed to having their work critiqued by peers.

Participants beginning to use protocols have remarked that the partner fishbowl was very helpful in their learning about how to participate in a protocol effectively and that the collaboration with a partner reduces the stress of doing protocols.

Partner Fishbowl: A Structure to Start and Deepen the Conversation
Melissa Kagel, Vermont

Both beginning groups who are using the protocols for the first time, and for experienced groups hoping to push the conversation deeper.

Partner Fishbowl for Groups New to Protocols
With new groups, the aim of the partner fishbowl is to familiarize the group with the protocol and to allow reflection on how to effectively engage in the protocol. During the protocol, the facilitator, who should be an experienced CFG member, stops the protocol at each major conversation transition and asks the presenter and participants, to be an excellent way to introduce the use of protocols and to be effective for pushing the conversation deeper during protocols.

The partner fishbowl was very helpful in their learning about how to participate in a protocol effectively and that the collaboration with a partner reduces the stress of doing protocols.

Partner Fishbowl for Experienced Groups
The partner fishbowl is also an effective way to push experienced groups to deepen the conversation. With an experienced group, the facilitator asks the partners to consult with each other about what questions or comments might push the conversation deeper at different points during the protocol. We have found this practice to add significant depth to the ensuing conversation because everyone involved in the protocol is focused and proactive about this goal.

The facilitator’s partner should help the facilitator make decisions about how to lead the protocol with an emphasis on getting to the harder questions. The role of the presenter’s partner is critical in experienced groups because pushing the conversation deeper involves a greater risk for the presenter. The partner gives the presenter, through frequent check-ins about comfort level and learnings, the necessary support so that participants can push harder. Another advantage of a partner for the presenter is that it allows the facilitator to concentrate his/her efforts on deepening the conversation as the presenter’s needs are met by someone else. In my experience as a facilitator, being relieved of the duty of assuring the comfort of the presenter has helped me to lead protocols more effectively.

We hope you will try out this way to structure protocols and we would love to hear about other uses groups find for it.

Melissa Kagel can be reached at nissa@vermontel.net

public our inferences as members of groups. In another section he addresses intervening in groups and articulates clearly the ways in which group members can express emotions so that it increases the effectiveness of the group’s work. This section had great appeal to me personally because emotional energy is so powerful and has so much potential for doing great work with a group. The sticker is that power, as defined by Ken McLeod in ‘Wake-Up to Your Life’, is the ability to be present in intentional action. This is why facilitation is both cognitively and emotionally demanding.

So What? Now What?
The biggest challenge for each of us as coaches, facilitators, and human beings is to act congruently with our expressed core values.

Here are two other sets of core values that Schwartz describes as a contrast to the Mutual Learning Model that he espouses.

Set One:
1. Achieve your goals.
2. Maximize winning and minimize loss.
3. Minimize generating or expressing negative feelings.
4. Act according to what you consider rational.

Underlying assumptions: I understand the situation. I have pure motives. My negative feelings are justified.

Set Two:
1. Everyone participates in defining the purpose.
2. Everyone wins and no one loses.

When Jennifer decides to publish her work in the study, her dissertation, as part of her plans to enter academia and Karen tries to block Jennifer’s plans. Karen begins the exchange by demanding a co-authoring credit and the kid gloves get dropped. Jennifer’s feelings of risk and pain as she’s being threatened by Karen are devastating.

“I was being encouraged by my professors to publish my dissertation as a natural aspect of making myself marketable for the profession ... Karen felt disillusioned by my actions and her hurt led to her being a threat to the publication of my dissertation (p. 74).” As I read this part of the book, I found myself wondering about the risks that colleagues of color take each time they form professional and personal relationships with white colleagues like me.

However, just when it looks like a legal battle is about to heat up between the two women, Karen apologizes and the collaboration continues. Later, with the help of an interview with Lisa Delpit, both teachers are able to understand the role of their cultural differences in the ways they define conflict and either embrace or avoid it. Here’s a sample of Lisa Delpit’s analysis:

(continued from page 6)