

People in the NSRF network who have developed the habit of reflection in their practice often use the NSRF Coaches listserv to push their thinking or to share ideas with colleagues. An example of the kind of cross-country collegial sharing of practice comes from an on-line discussion about “Quinn’s 6 Questions.”

The CFG coach who wrote that she uses Quinn’s 6 Questions regularly to check her own teaching, as well as having her interns use them during their internships, but doesn’t know their source (she’s had “...multiple copies floating around for years and found them in our CFG tools notebook uncited”) elicited a response from the list that reveals the broad scope of the work of NSRF.

Juli Quinn is a professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Cal State University, LA. She has been a CFG Coach since the first summer of training in 1995, she is a “Center of Activity” for NSRF in California, and works with lots of school folks in building Professional Learning Communities. Juli developed “Quinn’s 6 Questions” from a set of personal life questions, but the questions, as we know them, were developed in 1991-1992 when her sister was a new teacher, teaching first grade. Juli would meet with her every Sunday to help her plan for the following week, and since Juli had no idea

about the curriculum for first grade, she had to conduct an inquiry to help her sister think aloud. From there the rest is history.

These deceptively simple questions – Quinn’s 6 – have been passed around the NSRF network, adapted and revised in ways that have made them relevant for different settings:

Quinn’s Original 6 Questions

1. What am I teaching?
2. Why am I teaching it?
3. How am I teaching it?
4. Why am I teaching it that way?
5. How do I know the kids are getting it?
6. How do the kids know they are getting it?

John Newlin of the Southern Maine Partnership wrote about a spin off of the Questions that reflect a broader school application:

1. What are we doing?
2. Why are we doing it?
3. How are we doing it?
4. Why are we doing it that way?
5. How do we know how well we’re doing it?
6. How do others know how well we’re doing it?

Here is a version of the Questions that was adapted for meetings:

1. What are we meeting about?
2. Why are we meeting about it?
3. How are we running/conducting our

meeting?

4. Why are we running/conducting that way?
5. How will we know the meeting was a success?
6. How will others know the meeting was a success?

Another colleague, working with new teachers, has adjusted the order of the original Questions to match with backward mapping from standards (content) to rubrics and assessments (quality performance) to curriculum and instruction (pedagogy)...so form follows function:

1. What am I teaching?
2. Why am I teaching it/that?
3. How will I know the students get it?
4. How will the students know they got it?
5. How am I teaching it?
6. Why am I teaching it that way?

This revision of unknown origin caused the writer to reflect upon the need for personalization in our work. She shared her revision with the list “because I think that while lots of us might be reflexively adding it already, making it explicit will help surface assumptions, both ours and others, and deepen the conversation.”

1. What am I teaching and to whom?
2. Why am I teaching it?
3. How am I teaching it?
4. Why am I teaching it that way?
5. What evidence will I collect to show my kids are getting it?

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NSRF 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.

CONNECTIONS

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Editors— Debbie Bambino & Katy Kelly
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Layout & Design— Sarah Childers

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If you have any feedback or are interested in contributing to *Connections* contact us at 812/330.2702, kkelly@harmonyschool.org, dbambino@earthlink.net

Who is Quinn? (continued from page 3)

6. How will my students know they are getting it?

Here is what Juli wrote about these revisions and uses: "I do like the notion of making the question of TO WHOM, explicit. It was embedded in the question about how I am teaching and why...but there seems to be additional power in bringing the students into the questions in a more personal, real way...up front.

"Another way I am using the Q's 6's is as an organizing framework for integrating the variety of 'professional development' one of my schools is trying to integrate. We are deconstructing the theory and 'directions' for classroom implementation into Curriculum, Assessments, and Instruction and Pedagogy by fitting the attribute and strategies into the frame of the 6 Questions...it has helped us SEE that what we are doing is building our repertoire of connected ideas and strategies VS implementing a number of 'stand-alone' PROGRAMS that are unrelated...

"So, the Quinn's Six Questions are helping us feel wealth and abundance in starting our new year rather than overwhelmed with the age-old question of 'how will I get everything in!'

"Hope this helps, and please feel free to adapt and share any way these questions are being used!"

I'd like to add as an addendum

the full text of one posting by Teri Schrader, Principal of Francis W. Parker School in Devens, MA. I think it underscores how tools like "Quinn's 6 Questions" can influence the culture of a school – especially when practitioners take the opportunity to reflect on how these tools apply to their own work and are pushed in their thinking by colleagues using different approaches.

"We are in our third and final week of faculty summer planning here at Parker School-- and tomorrow we will spend our mornings in domain (interdisciplinary subject-based) meetings to share our curriculum across divisions (integrated grade levels--middle, intermediate and upper high school) and plans for what we're about to ask the kids to do this year... so, I'm thinking about how timing really is everything. I'm struck by re-looking at Juli's questions on this particular day, given what we're up to here.

"The questions posed in Quinn's 6 make me think about framing our sessions tomorrow differently-- rather than convening separate conversations about curriculum and instruction and assessment, these questions frame a comprehensive discussion that may allow us to talk together about the academic program in a multi-dimensional way and revise our thinking on

any aspect of the work. Terrific curriculum is only as terrific as the means by which we assess it, and great ideas that aren't thoughtfully framed or translated into developmentally appropriate class activities or comprehensible projects don't help kids learn. So... it strikes me that using the questions here allow presenting teams of teachers to talk about the curriculum, yes, but also we can think alongside about the factors that must prevail upon our curriculum building--the questions about intention, "audience", anticipated reaction and potential bonuses or pitfalls we face in instruction and assessment.

"I will be interested to see how the deliberate posing and thinking about these questions helps push us to revise, change or affirm what we're thinking. Sometimes we wait till a unit or a project is fully designed before tending to deeper instruction or assessment questions, but it seems like we can consider the full array at the design stage.

"It's also a nice, concise format to frame and discuss.

"Hope the beginning of the year is a time of real energized renewal and creativity, and optimism for everyone in all our schools." ■

Katy Kelly is the Director of the NSRF National Center . She can be reached by email at kkelly@harmonyschool.org

NSRF Research Project Carrie Brennan, Arizona

The National School Reform Faculty is taking stock of the various research efforts that have been conducted and articles that have been written about Critical Friends Group over the past decade, and we need your help. Is your school or district implementing CFGs as a critical component of a larger restructuring effort that requires careful documentation, such as the Small Learning Communities or Comprehensive School Reform federal grants? Is your Center of Activity recording the impact of your work, using either quantitative or qualitative measures - e.g. the number of coaches trained each year, the number of schools using CFGs as part of their professional development program, or case study narratives of teachers changing their practice? Has your CFG documented the growth of the teachers involved or the impact of their collaboration on their students' work in the classroom? Have you come across an article about Critical Friends Groups that you think others might not be aware of? Are you conducting research related to the work of NSRF as part of your graduate studies, perhaps even writing a dissertation on Critical Friends Groups? If you answered yes to any of the questions above, please contact Carrie Brennan and share your "leads." Call her at (520) 884-1548 or email her at carrie@cityhighschool.org. The National School Reform Faculty enters its tenth year next fall, and it is essential that we are able to demonstrate to others the power of our collective work. ■