**Interview with Gene Thompson-Grove**
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G: My hope is that we can assemble the kind of relationships among us to bring together the expertise and knowledge that’s in our network, as well as in our partner organizations. I think collectively we have a lot of knowledge and experience that we don’t benefit from sufficient and we should direct all of our resources toward the changing our culture for the better. I hope we can get to the point where that happens, and it is possible. I believe the outcomes generated and documentation initiatives will be key. We need to all reach for that success in our work—and we will certainly be able to do that.

K: My fear is that CPGs and Professional Learning Communities will go the way of Cooperative Learning and Multiple Intelligences, where people do the work at a superficial level. We need to tell the story about the roots and the principles underlying this work. I am less interested in having our work described in the educational literature, just for the sake of having our name out there. What I do care about is that our work is cited in the literature in a substantive way. I want this work to change the culture of our profession. I want our work to be a real difference for our students.
Learning to See with a Third Eye

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Learning of the protocol; and (4) if I take the role of the teacher, make her less confident and perhaps somewhat defensive during the debriefing.

When David and I had debriefed both of our observations, we reflected on the process as a whole. We both found it very valuable and plan to engage in it regularly. David also noted that the strength of the protocol as we experienced it was in our asking probing questions of one another during the debriefings, yet the protocol itself makes no mention of probing questions as a debriefing tool. I found that to be a weakness in the protocol and will make that revision when we use it in the future.

We see a number of implications for our peer observation work with a group of new CFG coaches. First, when the 18 students in our seminar begin to engage in peer observations in their schools, we hope that classroom doors will begin to open wider throughout our schools. Second, in our roles as CFG coaches, as NSRF Coaches Seminar facilitators and as instructors in higher education, our own coaching, facilitation and teaching will improve as a result of our peer observation practice. We look forward to our future learning together.

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Interviewing and Practicing Peer Observation...

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The following interview with Gene Thompson-Grove, Co-Director of NSRF, was conducted on November 11th, 2004, by Katy Kelly, National Coordinator of the NSRF National Office.

Katy: Gene, you are one of the founders of NSRF. How did that come about?

Gene: Faith Dunne, Paula Evans and I were working for the Citibank Project at the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University.

K: Let’s back up a bit. How did you get involved with the Coalition?

Gene: In 1987 I was working for the Boston chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility. I had announced my resignation effective the end of the school year. Joe McDonald, who was a Clinical Professor in Brown University’s Education Department was going on sabbatical and invited me to apply for his position while he was on leave for two years. Ted Sizer was chair of the Education Department at that time and he hired me. At the time the Coalition was not a separate organization from Brown’s Education Department. As the Coalition grew, it moved across the street to a separate space. It had some of its own staff, but the chair of the Coalition (Sizer) was also the chair of the Education Department at Brown.

K: Okay, now back to the Citibank project. Was the purpose of the Citibank project to offer support to teachers in Coalition schools?

Gene: Yes. What we did was to bring together a group of teachers from around the country that met for one week in the spring. They developed a curriculum that was based on the idea that only that was addressed sporadically, as an “add-on.” Yesterday, I facilitated a series of “Lunchtime Learning” sessions about professional development that was job-embedded, and done within the context of one’s daily practice. We knew that summer institutes, where you go to get re-energized or maybe even transform, were in many cases ineffec- tive. Practitioners said that even though they had made a commitment to be different when they got back to school, by October they pretty much did things the way they always had, because they hadn’t made a commitment to do things differently, but because it was too hard to change one’s practice all at once.

We knew the professional development needed to be in the context of the classroom and counter to the way schools are set up in which teachers work in isolation, don’t make their practice public, and are not account- able to each other and there are no norms in place for giving or receiving feedback on their practice. So, in 1995, the National School Reform Faculty and its Critical Friends Groups became the first professional-development initiative of ASRF. Paula Evans, Faith Dunne and I were the first co-directors of the program. Financially, the program was well supported by Annenberg, but our focus was on developing work that would eventually be self-sufficient.

K: What are some differences between how you envisioned the work then and now?

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