with colleagues and students changed. Formal leadership looked at how they supported staff, worked with teacher-leaders and helped others develop skills and begin to change habits. The cycle repeated twice.

Throughout the process, par-

ticipants were encouraged to pursue NSRF NY Endorsement by ultimately presenting a portfolio of their work demonstrating their facilitation skills in action. Five of the twenty-five par-

ticipants received endorsement. ALL participants left more skilled.

We see examples of formal and informal leaders at all levels within the district applying NSRF principles and practices:

- We model and encourage the use of feedback as teaching/learning and community-building tools. Not only does this allow us to take the pulse of the group, it engages everyone in a reflective process in which we experience how feedback can shape future events. This happens when a good leader is able to synthesize input and feedback from all of those they lead and is an essential dimension of building a reflective community of learners.

- Our practice of "transparent facili-

tation" (characterized by public reflection and sharing your thinking as facilitator regarding choices and intention) allows the group to see us as leaders who with all the answers but as colleagues striving to help members learn to ask bet-

ter questions and take increasing responsibility for their own learning and the learning of peers.

- In Vivian's school (Landmark HS) the teachers have undertaken an extensive re-examination of their twelve-year-old portfolio process. This inquiry makes extensive use of feedback and NSRF structured pro-

tocols to guide them in this work. Staff trained as facilitators have emerged as leaders of this process of investigation and reform.

- Two of Alan's largest high schools are engaged in the process of form-

ing smaller learning communities. They believe that facilitation skills acquired through applying NSRF principles and practices are abso-
lutely necessary to sustain any change from within.

- Local Endorsed Facilitators have gone on to form Critical Friends Groups and still others have taken on teacher-leadership roles in their schools or stepped up to help plan and facilitate a variety of profes-

sional development opportunities.

- A recent series of professional development sessions for Assistant Principals (co-facilitated by Vivian, who was the only participating principal on the team of district facilitators) looked very much like a CFG coaches training, and participants went on to take responsibility for working with their colleagues in ways which closely resemble Critical Friends Groups.

These are a few examples of the way NSRF NY works. NSRF NY works almost entirely from within. You can’t go to NSRF NY, but you can find it in more places than you think.

NSRF NY Endorsement requires participants to attend approximately 30 hours of training and then to present a portfolio of their work demonstrating their ability to apply what they have learned in their work. An alternative route to endorsement is through an apprentice experience, where the "training" takes place by working along with a National Facilitator. See www.nsrfo.org for a complete description of the Endorsement Process and Standards for Facilitators.

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Discussion about the possibility of Oshkosh becoming Wisconsin’s first NSRF Center of Activity. We dare to dream.

I believe nothing happens by chance. Sometimes along the path of life an event causes an individual to pause and seek the greater meaning of his being. It is this kind of reflection that we study and contemplate the future. There was a reason why I came across Miss Kerberger’s boxes. Maybe that memo-

ry was the spark that is now allowing me to step forward in a leadership role. Maybe it was to help me remem-

ber how important teachers are in the lives of the children. Where I once only saw memories in boxes, now I see the future unfolding. Reaching the destination at the end of a journey is not the important part. What we learn, and who we share those experiences with along the way, are the things that give meaning to our journeys. Creating a smoother path for those who follow in our footsteps is the precious gift which we can offer.

I believe nothing happens by chance.

This is a standard book review; rather, it is a glimpse into my transaction with the text and Dr. Irvine's book, *Teachers for Diversity: Seeing with a Cultural Eye* by Jacqueline Jordan Irvine.

A few years ago we revised NSRF’s mission statement to include language about work-

ing to “foster educational and social equity...” and since that time I realize I have often been responsible for trying to just “add on” a focus about issues of equity. The revision of our mission statements cause me to see as a for-

ter Philadelphia Middle School teach-

er, as a current Urban Education grad student and as a facilitator of CFGs. In each of these roles I have become increasingly convinced that racism and other forms of bias are the greatest bar-

tiers we face in our efforts to positively transform the educational experiences of our kids, especially when our kids are poor, inner city, kids of color.

A first step in moving forward around issues of equity for me has been gaining in reflection in which I work. I try to take the emotions of reflection that we study the path and contemplate the future. The emotions of reflection that we study the path and contemplate the future. There was a reason why I came across Miss Kerberger’s boxes. Maybe that memo-

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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.

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Introducing and Practicing Peer Observation...

(continued from page 3)

learning of the protocol; and (4) if I take the role of the teacher, make her less confident and perform in that role, and observe as a student observer. I reflected on the way these sessions were related to equity, as looking for these things. I realized that I needed to go beyond the generic use of metacognitive strategies of reading instruction in order to bring the role of literacy in the struggle for equity to the surface. To that end, I added the introduction of Reading, Writing and Rising Up by Linda Christensen to the resources I was using with participants. In her introduction, Christensen quotes Frederick Douglass, James Baldwin, Paulo Freire and a number of prisoner to situate the role of literacy and the impact of illiteracy in our current power structure. Christensen makes a strong statement about the purposeful use of reading and writing skills as tools needed to challenge the inequities our students face daily, in our schools and in our society. My addition of Christensen’s perspective helped me translate what I learned from Dr. Irvine’s analysis and Nancy Mohr’s questions into practice that can help kids. I hope that being given a context for the analysis of how and why these literacy strategies are keys to student success will enable far more students to actively buy into their own learning process.

For my part, I will continue to read the contributions of Dr. Irvine and other educator researchers of color as I work to develop the lens of my “third eye” whose vision depends on regular collaboration, reflection and changes in my practice.

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Connections: a Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

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?

G: 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 I invited me to apply for his position while he was on leave for two years. Tzedek 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. What was the purpose of the Citibank project to offer support to teachers in Coalition schools?

G: 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 based on an essential question. The purpose was that only those teachers really deepened their learning about teaching practices in Coalition schools. They then came to Brown for a month to teach the course that they had developed at the Brown Summer High School.

Interview with Gene Thompson-Grove
Katy Kelly, Indiana

Connections: A Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

For active listening and regular real-ity checks with “insider participants.” Being there, students of color and their families with whom I’m working. I need to “check-in” about my assumptions, to reflect on conclusions in order to examine and assess my assumptions for the inevitable bias I bring to the action-research and change processes. Basically, I hear Dr. Irvine’s words as a caution that I need to “know what I don’t know” before I can learn to co-construct valid meaning and propose positive interventions in support of “other people’s children.”

While Dr. Irvine’s analysis has given me much to chew on as a doctoral student in training, it has also moved my thinking about equity in the here and now. So I’m thinking about what I want to do differently this week in my meetings with new coaches of learning communities, and that has led me to re-examine the reflective questions that Nancy Mohr penned a few years ago. Nancy wrote:

Reflections: Whatever activity you do, reflection can be explicitly about equity.

How does this promote equity?

What does this have to do with equity?

What does this mean in terms of equity?

And I have added:

Who’s at the table? Who’s missing? Why aren’t those voices included? How can we include those whose perspectives have been silenced historically?

How does the work we’ve just done serve all of our students? How does it serve those students who have been marginalized in the past?

I don’t think these questions are “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 ineffective. Practitioners said that even though they had made a commitment to be different when going back to school, they didn’t have a clear vision or plan, and that there was a fair amount of confusion about who exactly we were.

Paula Evans, the Director of Professional Development, was visionary and action-oriented. So, we gathered about twelve teachers and administrators from around the country with whom we had been working, and said to them, “We could apply to AASR for a large grant to do professional development the way we think it ought to be done, using what we have learned over the last five years. If you could do anything, what would you do?”

We used people’s own experience - what they said they needed and what they had learned about effective professional development - and we created the research. The beauty of what we did was the kind of professional development that we described as being most effective and equity oriented was also being mirrored in the research. People like Milbrey McLaughlin, Joan Talbert, Ann Lieberman and Judith Warren Little were writing about pro-

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 ineffective. Practitioners said that even though they had made a commitment to be different when going back to school, they didn’t have a clear vision or plan, and that there was a fair amount of confusion about who exactly we were.

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