Principal often tell me that they miss their time with students, those times when we are privy to the wonder of young minds learning and growing, the times that energize us and make our work worthwhile. Stuck in their offices with deadlines looming and seemingly endless meet- ing days to attend, administrators can sometimes feel isolated and out of touch. However, at a recent CFG meeting in Philadelphia, our group was treated to a heartwarming story of the power of the principal’s role and a glimpse of the exponential power of principals who collaborate across the city and beyond.

During Connections, one member, Mr. Nelson Reyes, shared the story of a new student, a student who was not happy about changing schools midyear. The child was having a tough time and his new principal was at his wit’s end. The new principal asked the young boy, “What am I going to do with you?” To which the young boy replied, “Ask Mr. Reyes, be knows what to do.” The principal then called Nelson and they had a brief conversation, and once again, Nelson was able to speak to the child and help him calm down. It has been months since Karen and Nelson shared these stories in our CFG meeting, but I find my thoughts returning to that young boy’s words whenever I’m feeling overwhelmed or anxious about the next steps I need to take in my work. “Ask Mr. Reyes” has become a code for me, a reminder that I may not know what to do alone, but I can always turn to my CFG colleagues for the personalized support and encouragement I need.

Nelson Reyes and Karen Dean

Winter Meeting Reflections
Sarah Childers, Indiana

Another January has come and gone, and with it another Winter Meeting. After 400 of us gathered in Seattle, we’ve now gone back to our homes and begun the process of sorting through our learning and experiences from those jam-packed two and a half days that are the Winter Meeting. All of us, I believe, have come home changed from our experiences in Seattle. We’ve learned, laughed, cried and come to a renewed commitment to our work together for the sake of students.

Throughout the exciting two and a half days, participants could be seen talking in small groups in the lobby and hallways of the buildings, or taking part in activities such as the zones of comfort, risk and danger in the foyer. Also seen in the halls during the Winter Meeting were some wonderful people from Youth In Focus, a Seattle area group that works with young photographers and filmmakers. We were very happy to have them working with us and taking wonderful pictures to document our experiences. All of the pictures throughout this piece were taken by our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographers are viewable on our website.

Linda Christensen

Teachers who want to construct more equitable, more meaningful, and more lively educational experiences for children must also concern themselves with issues beyond the classroom walls. - Linda Christensen

Most of the true highlights of the Winter Meeting took place in home groups, and often were personal realizations, affirmations or epiphanies. Some of the comments from participants give us a glimpse of these highlight moments that people experienced.

“For the past three years I have attended the Winter Meeting and each year I have been amazed by the amount I get out of these short days. Being in an environment with so many educators from around the country is energizing, motivating and grounding. Each year the dynamics and the chemistry within my home group that are formed give me motivation to bring that same energy, focus and enthusiasm back to my school and district. In addition, I am exposed to new tools that have an immediate impact on my coaching facilitation. I learn about myself as a coach and a teacher. I have deep and meaningful discussions about equity and leadership within my classroom and the school as a whole.”

- Sarah Smith

“I’m pleased to be gently encouraged to be a facilitator. (I probably would not have done that otherwise.) Being expected to share and facilitate this week put me out of the comfort zone and into the risk zone. I needed that.”

- Linda Geist

This year, we used a new structure for home groups – strand topics. Participants were able to select a topic to focus on in their home group.

**Highlights**

- Today has created a comfort with talking about and handling issues of race/ethnicity. I have never really had a problem with it in the past but today’s experience put it at a different, higher place when dealing with this issue. It brought out an awareness and connection of how it resonates in my own life which provides power and confidence when dealing with it in the future.”

- Bennie Patterson

NSRF’s New Membership Model

This summer, NSRF will begin a new chapter in our organizational development by becoming a voluntary, dues-paying membership organization. This decision has been made carefully and collaboratively between the director and staff of the NSRF National Center and has been informed by a growing chorus of national colleagues. We have relied on the work and feedback from many groups including Centers Council meetings, regional summits, Accountability Council meetings, and a special summit specifically on membership. All these gatherings of national colleagues have helped us to construct a membership plan that cultivates our national reach while remaining committed to and grounded in our mission.

Watch your mailbox for the NSRF Membership Report!