

Ask Mr. Reyes

A Tribute to the Power of Principal Collaboration

Philadelphia Area Leadership CFG

Written by Debbie Bambino with the permission of Nelson Reyes and Karen Dean, principals in the School District of Philadelphia.

Principals 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 meetings 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, Karen Dean, began to share the story of a new student, a student who was not happy about changing schools midyear. The young boy was fussing and actively resisting entry at the start of his first day. Karen went into her office and looked at the child's paperwork and noticed that he was transferring from a fellow CFG member's school, so she called her fellow CFG member, Mr. Nelson Reyes. After quickly sharing the situation with Nelson, Karen handed her cell phone to the young boy, who was visibly calmed by the sound of a familiar voice. A bridge had been

shared and the child was able to trust Karen and make a new start.

Nelson spoke next. Prompted by Karen's reflection, he told us about another child who had recently transferred to a school in Florida. The child was having a tough time and his new principal was at his wits' 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, he 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

Please send tales from your CFG or school to Connections in care of dbambino@earthlink.net for publication.

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!