As a participant grappling with the proposed new fee-based membership structure at the membership summit in Houston last year, Peggy Silva, NSRF National Facilitator and writing coordinator at Souhegan High School, expressed her belief that there should be an institutional membership category that would allow individual schools to align with the work of the national organization using their own internal structures to further the work. Although the NSRF declined to consider an institutional membership in its initial membership offering, Director Steven Strull agreed to consider Souhegan’s perspective for the first year of this new fee-based membership. Steven and Peggy decided to share their perspectives in Connections, as part of this issue’s Director’s Report, and are inviting others to comment.

Peggy Silva: CFGs serve as the foundation of professional development at Souhegan High School in Amherst, New Hampshire. All 120+ members of our professional staff and administrators, and over 30 members of our support staff, are members of CFGs, meeting monthly during a two-hour delayed opening. Our CFGs provide support to our Career Growth Process, the R & D branch of our professional development. We are a CFG school, and have been for many years. We have trained most of our own coaches, and our three National Facilitators sponsor annual trainings. We provide three days of training each year for our coaches, and send coaches to the NSRF Winter Meeting, some of whom serve as facilitators. Our National Facilitators attend NSRF meetings throughout the year and we provide articles for NSRF Connections. Yet now, despite an extraordinary commitment to this organization, we find ourselves in a dilemma with NSRF. Our organizational structure requires approximately 15 trained coaches to support our CFGs. Although we are a Center of Activity, our primary work is internal. We rely on the expertise, the research, and the professional collegiality of the national organization to augment our work and to maintain our focus. We are willing to pay for that, in the same way that we pay for our association with the Coalition of Essential Schools, another value-based organization. CES charges Souhegan an annual institutional membership fee as a school-based member of the Coalition. For the fee, Souhegan enjoys the cachet of belonging to a reform-based organization, and the opportunity to learn from others who share the same core beliefs.

As part of its shift to a dues-paying membership organization, NSRF has asked each of our coaches to join NSRF as a contributing member. As a school community, we have decided to support our coaches by paying for their participation in national meetings, by paying a stipend to our coaches, and by sponsoring and paying for their ongoing training. Our school has worked with our school board to get the time for us to work together on this essential professional development. Our National Facilitators, however, benefit in their ability to charge a fee for training others, and so our school asks them to pay for their individual membership in NSRF; we are not asking for them to be included in our school-based membership.

As a public high school here in the Live Free or Die state, we also have a very pragmatic concern about paying a contributing member (continued on page 12)
The Warrior Method: A Parents’ Guide to Rearing Healthy Black Boys
Book Review by Camilla Greene, Pennsylvania

My daughter, who became a mother in October, asked for books on raising black boys. I went to the local Barnes and Noble looking for and asking for books on raising black boys. There were no books to be found on the shelves. I Googled “raising African American boys” and a list of books appeared on the Amazon website. One title intrigued me-The Warrior Method: A Parents’ Guide to Rearing Healthy Black Boys by Dr. Raymond A. Winbush. I purchased the book for my daughter and with her permission I read it before she did.

My work as a school change coach and as an NSRF National Facilitator is in school districts across the country, in high school classrooms mostly in urban areas, and with educators, mostly white. I hear a lot of moaning about black boys and their lack of motivation; I hear stories of their “gang involvement.” I hear about and observe the black boys being disciplined and referred to as “unruly.” Most of the classroom management problems brought to my attention involve getting black boys interested in education. I notice black boys and black girls with their heads down on desks when I pass classrooms. Too often I observe a lot of adult educators controlling, disciplining and I hear a lot of adult educators refer to the medication used or needed to “subdue” black boys. Seldom do I hear a request about ways to empower, or pull out the energy of each black boy, except when I am in the company of black men of all ages who do not question the innate abilities of black boys.

Most of these black boys living in urban areas want to know how to “man up.” to use a street term. Young black men listening to media-promoted hip-hop and most young boys who are involved with gangs learn a variety of ways to “man up.” Many of the ways promoted by street gangs and media-sponsored hip-hop to “man up” are violent, misogynistic, homophobic, and dehumanizing. Dr. Winbush offers many practical and非洲 centered ways to raise black boys from infancy to adulthood. He offers a “warrior method” to black parents and to educators both black and white.

Dr. Winbush recounts the story of Sengbeh Pieh, renamed “Joseph Cinque” by his captors, who stole him and forced him to travel on the Amistad to Cuba. The story of Sengbeh is further developed in the story of Samuel Hinpa Pieh, the greatgrandson of Sengbeh Pieh. Dr. Winbush differentiates among three prevailing styles of black parenting. He identifies these styles as black parents who opt to use “white parenting,” “gray parenting,” and “black parenting.”

In addition to offering a thoughtful plan for using African rites of passage to impart the wisdom of the ancestors to young black boys, Dr. Winbush differentiates among three prevalent styles of black parenting. He identifies these styles as black parents who opt to use “white parenting,” “gray parenting,” and “black parenting.”

Particular are victims of interrupted and stolen history. It is through reconnecting with that history that young boys will be able to turn away from the murderous and suicidal effects of internalized and transferred racism and the negative effects of growing up black in racist America. Throughout the book, Dr. Winbush recounts the training young Sengbeh received in his African community, training provided by the family elders and community that demonstrated how to care for self, how to relate to others in a global sense; and taught him how, as a man, he could take responsibility for self, family and community. Dr. Winbush draws a direct link between Sengbeh’s training as an African boy and his ability to survive the ordeal of captivity and successfully learn the language of his oppressors well enough to be able to defend himself in a foreign court of law.

Yes, public schools do not have the luxury of paying for a philosophical alignment; we cannot say to our school board or to the public, “we want $25- $75 per member, we want to pay $75 per coach because we believe in the mission of the NSRF. As we are a public institution, our budget is developed in conjunction with the school board and a finance committee, and is then voted on by the town. A system which charges by the coach would lead to some pressure to have fewer coaches, whereas a flat fee to several national organizations is an acceptable line item in our budget.

Souhegan High School accepts its responsibility to serve as active members of NSRF. To that end we are in support of paying an institutional membership fee for our school.

Steven Struhl, Souhegan High School and many of its teachers and administrators have been active members in NSRF since its inception. There is great value in having Souhegan continue its tradition of using CFGs as the foundation of its professional development program, both for the school and the national organization, and the unintended consequence of limiting that participation based on NSRF’s conversion to a dues-paying membership organization has to be considered.

In both written and verbal communication, Peggy and Principal Scott Prescott have made compelling arguments for the consideration of a dues-paying membership organization to have been considered.

In my second year as director, we are considering standards and guidelines for National Facilitators. This work will be catalyzing at our 2008 National Facilitator meeting, coinciding with the publication of this issue of Connections. Our work moving forward will be to create standards and guidelines for Centers of Activity, and at the conclusion of that work our current organizational restructuring will be complete.

While our membership structure is focused on individual members, the compelling case made by Peggy and her colleagues at Souhegan demanded that we pay attention and not allow the unintended consequence of limiting the involvement of Souhegan faculty and staff. There is, of course, nothing in this understanding that limits the ability of individual staff members at Souhegan to additionally support our national organization and mission by making a voluntary contribution to NSRF.

As director, I am quite hopeful we are learning from this accommodation to the national organization and the exists of a vital member of our collective community. Souhegan High School’s unwavering commitment to NSRF requires that we pay attention to how changes in our organization affect their ability to continue contributing, both financially and pedagogically, to our shared mission. I am comfortable with the decision that we made and I look forward to learning from this decision. I am also very proud to be the director of an organization that allows this kind of conversation in a forum as public as Connections. I welcome your input and comments on this decision and I look forward to continuing our restructuring toward an economically viable national organization that furthers the mission of educational and social equity in the service of children.

Steven Struhl can be contacted at stevenstruhl@myonline.net. Peggy Silva can be contacted at psilva@sprise.com.

Book Review by Camilla Greene, Pennsylvania

Dr. Winbush differentiates among three prevalent styles of black parenting. He identifies these styles as black parents who opt to use “white parenting,” “gray parenting,” and “black parenting.”