Protocols in Practice: The Triple Chalk Talk- An Alternative Way to “Set It Off”
Roleia Holman, North Carolina

Explicitly recalling having a conversation with Nancy Mohr when she, Katy Kelly and I participated in the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools’ (BayCES) Leading for Equity seminar in the summer of 2004, I remember thinking, it seems like a perfect marriage… if we could integrate BayCES’s equity pedagogy with the processes and protocols of NSRF, Lo and behold, it wasn’t long afterward that the work began with a few of our National Facilitators and BayCES colleagues, work that launched the Coaching for Educational Equity (CFEE) Seminar in the summer of 2005. This particular article is intended to put to paper some thoughts on different evaluation results and adult/student relationships. Having the experiences of serving as a director of creating new small schools, advocating for them and coaching in them, I took the liberty of putting my own spin on what we conventionally know as the Chalk talk.

Chalk Talk: its purpose was clear and familiar to many. A great conversation of some of the National Facilitators from our CFEE cohort, we continued to grapple with processes and content that would deepen our practice and intensify the experiences of those who passionately wanted to explore what it might look like to interrupt, interrupt, transition and transform our cognitive and emotional selves as part of our quest to create small, personalized, equitable learning communities for students. As we know, there are so many different aspects to the process, including different conversations and topics that emerged as a result of our facilitation. Not much process was the ongoing conversation, even if the one that led to the “Triple Chalk Talk.” The thought was to ask not just one question, but three that would cause people to enter a space of dissonance: dissonance that was intended to direct us inward and call to the fore that which was both personal and professional, cognitive and emotional.

Reflection quotes:
Warm
• Our facilitators did an excellent job of meeting all needs of our group.
• Incredible! This was an unbelievably relevant and productive conference.
• Thank you for bringing in Gloria Merriex. She was quite an inspiration. What an amazing “giver” she is!
• We worked together more deeply than any other group I have ever been a part of!
• I plan to do this work at my school. I think this is a great way to look at and learn from student work.

Cool
• I would like more “nuts and bolts” information/resources about how to implement SLGs within different school settings.
• I was disappointed in the facilitation of my Home Group. It felt like the main facilitator was teaching us. The focus seemed to be on acting as a CG rather than on deepening any aspect of our facilitation. Not much processing – and even sometimes, no debrief.
• As far as I could tell issues of equity were not part of the ongoing conversation.
• Time was rushed but meaningful.
• I brought student work and was disappointed I did not get to present.

Instead, those of us who remained met to debrief the meeting and discuss plans for the next Winter Meeting.

The 2009 Winter Meeting, which will be our lucky 13, will be held in Texas, where we will be hosted by no fewer than three NSRF Centers of Activity: Houston Independent School District, The Urban Forum for Leadership and Learning/Houston Independent School District, and San Antonio NSRF Center at Trinity University. We look forward to seeing you all again next January!

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For more Winter Meeting follow-up, including evaluation results and please visit our website, www.nsharmony.org.

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year fatigue to be with their groups. Similarly, this fall the school superintendent proposed a program based on CFG protocols for small school leaders. This developed into our ITT (Teacher Facilitator Training) program. The TFI was designed to provide two to three day training for all teacher leaders to become facilitators of CFG protocols for all school meetings and collaboration on every team across the school. The intent of this program was to initiate a kind of systemic CFG presence across the school to provide equity, voice, and effectiveness in meetings at every level.

I cannot help but be disappointed that the essential work of teachers sharing their teaching practices and strategies in the context of comfortable community circles is not moving forward as quickly as I would like. I am encouraged, however, by the positive reactions of many of my colleagues. As they are exposed to the protocols in classes such as this faculty meetings, key accreditation committees involving parents, admin, and teachers, as well as developing programs like teacher assistant training, parent education groups, and high school student associations. That’s not to say that we have found no resistance to the use of protocols, but what began as an October cohort of 15 participants is moving into a scope of accomplishment on any aspect of our facilitation.

The major argument for the protocols is that we have found no resistance to the use of protocols, but what began as an October cohort of 15 participants is moving into a scope of acceptance and use across an organization of hundreds. Indeed, as we get ready to go back to school after the Chinese New Year break, I feel that, by and large, the majority of teachers in this faculty of about 300 are feeling the community building power of the conversations that CFG protocols bring to their professional lives.

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13th Annual NSRF Winter Meeting
Houston, Texas
January 15th-17th, 2009

for more information, visit: www.nsharmony.org/ wintermeeting.html

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Winter Meeting Wrap-Up
Sarah Childers, Indiana

In December, nearly 300 teachers, educational leaders, school administrators and researchers gathered in Tampa, Florida, for the 12th Annual NSRF Winter Meeting. Participants hailed from all over, coming from as far away as Washington State, Maine and even China to take part in NSRF’s largest annual event. Thanks to our partnership with the Lastinger Center for Learning, University of Florida and our Florida Center of Activity, we also welcomed more than a third of our total participants from Florida, a state where NSRF work is becoming a staple of the professional development work of many schools and districts.

The Triple Chalk Talk afforded us the opportunity to assess where they were doing for their students and school communities, in order to transform others? Posing these three questions: What is schooling? What is education? What is equity? just might get us to a point of challenging not just every school and society. How can we get to transformation and not merely appearance that it caused within each of us and among the questions ourselves, we were amazed at the dis

Another point that may seem minor to some was incredibly important and telling to me. As I watched the Triple Chalk Talks play out, I began to notice that while they happened in differing contexts and the likes of people of color and other victims of bias and discrimination, it can be a way to “bring it up” without “taking it up.” While there’s safety and anonymity in the Chalk Talk, it does a disservice to simply create silent spaces to name inequities without the proper curricular connections and skilled facilitation to allow participants to verbalize their thoughts and feelings that surface as a result of “doing the protocol”; without then creating and holding the space to un-silence the dialogue.

Dr. Rudy Crew closed out our meeting with a welcome from our Director, Steven Stull, and an energizing presentation that personified some of NSRF’s core belief about teaching and learning. Ms. Gloria Merriex and her class of fifth graders came all the way from Duval Elementary School, a five-hour drive, to be with us Thursday morning at 9 a.m and share their incredible practice of revolutionary math instruction. Through song, rhythm, and call-and-response, Ms. Merriex teaches her students complex mathematical theories and skills, with which most of our NSRF audience was not familiar. And they did not keep pace. They left us all excited and motivated to continue our work toward improved student achievement in our home groups.

Participants spent the rest of day one, all of day two and most of day three in their home groups, working with experienced facilitators on the issues of most importance to them, building their skills and reflecting on their practice. Some representative comments from participants about their home group experiences are:

• This is the best home group I’ve had in three Winter Meetings.
• My group quickly functioned well, thanks to the facilitators and the openness of the members.
• We really became a “home group” and are going to try to maintain our group online – that says a lot!

Friday night we took some time to relax and enjoy our time together with Fiesta Cubana, our Cuban-themed party. We enjoyed the music of Sol Caribe and the beautiful Tampa weather, until it rained and we moved the party inside. The rain didn’t dampen the spirit of the party, and what was probably the most popular NSRF party to date kept going well past the appointed end time.

Over the weekend, we were glad to be able to have Dr. Rudy Crew, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, as our keynote speaker. He closed out our meeting with an inspirational speech (transcript and video online) that set the charge for participants on their way home to continue their work and learning, for the sake of students. Due to a big winter storm moving in, most participants who had planned to stay for the scheduled Centers Council Meeting Saturday afternoon had to leave, so the meeting was cancelled.

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