In general, the principals recounted how the TILE CFG continually re-focused them on larger issues of school culture and professional community, encouraging them to look beyond the immediate problems that they faced as school leaders. Second, the principals described specific structures, tools or practices that were used in the TILE CFG, tools that they also used, in some way, in their schools. Finally, three members of the group from the same district recounted the effect that having TILE CFG colleagues in their district had on the work of the district administrative team.

One principal, for example, described how the TILE CFG supported her persistent focus on teaching and learning by saying, “Are kids learning or are we just teaching?” You have to create that culture where you can have conversations around instruction.” Another noted, “It is about always bringing the conversation back to learning and teaching. It is about building a CFG language and culture. There are many protocols as part of their leadership education program, they used many more protocols than the district group, facilitated the conversation around instruction.” Another noted, “It is about being disciplined about using this process with students and adults, so I used it with both. This was at the heart of what we were doing. When I was working with Secondary School Reform and creating academies within larger schools, I worked with the adults in those Small Learning Communities as CFG Coaches.”

The administrators were also able to provide many examples of tools, protocols and ideas that were used in the TILE CFG that they also used in their practice. Some examples were using the Collaborative Assessment Conference to look at student work, collaborative data analysis sessions, using a Tuning Protocol to look at a crisis plan, and reflective journaling. One principal described the progress she had made in her school by saying, “But you learn. You have to do it. But I am to the point that we have made some progress. In my school, we have introduced norms for...”

leading the Work by doing the Work

lonely place with regards to this type of conversation. I cannot do that with my staff. I cannot do it with any other place where I can do that. It is the safest place. I can test your hypotheses. It is the safest place. I don't always feel I have these in my own district. One principal summed up the experience of practice, student work or relevant texts to the district group, facilitated the conversation around instruction.” Another noted, “It is about building a CFG language and culture. There are many protocols as part of their leadership education program, they used many more protocols than the district group, facilitated the conversation around instruction.” Another noted, “It is about being disciplined about using this process with students and adults, so I used it with both. This was at the heart of what we were doing. When I was working with Secondary School Reform and creating academies within larger schools, I worked with the adults in those Small Learning Communities as CFG Coaches.”

The administrators were also able to provide many examples of tools, protocols and ideas that were used in the TILE CFG that they also used in their practice. Some examples were using the Collaborative Assessment Conference to look at student work, collaborative data analysis sessions, using a Tuning Protocol to look at a crisis plan, and reflective journaling. One principal described the progress she had made in her school by saying, “But you learn. You have to do it. But I am to the point that we have made some progress. In my school, we have introduced norms for (continued on page 17).

...
Camilla Greene, continued

ers’ who benefit from the emotional energy of others, without having to make themselves vulnerable or do the hard work. Involvements do not expend emotional energy. Perhaps I have some personal work to do around this. My truth at this time is I still do not like or appreciate “voyeurs.”

I continue to speak out and I continue to grow and develop new and meaningful alliances across difference. I am particularly proud of the alliances I have forged with the hip-hop generation. Strong, young African-American men and women in their twenties, thirties and forties and I are working collaboratively on several education projects. I continue to speak out and grow as I develop alliances with my white colleagues. I used to feel isolated in my work. Now I feel supported, understood, challenged and respected. Having many strong allies across difference has had a significant impact in my work as a CFG facilitator and school coach.

Camilla Greene may be reached at camillagreene@att.net

NSRF’s Living History . . .

(continued from page 5)

we added “social justice” to our mission we took it, as we say in the theater, “from the page to the stage.” We decided to really walk our talk in schools. It’s like moving from Discourse I and talk about drop-outs, to Discourse II and the recognition that our kids are being pushed out of our schools.

Our CFGs are the space, and social justice is the work.

What are your hopes and fears for NSRF in the next period?

In our quest to sustain ourselves organizationally and financially, I am a bit scared. I support, I hope we don’t lose sight of our core practice of working together to sustain communities of practice that focus on social justice. I guess my hope and my fear are bound up in this question: How do we raise our profile about who we are and what we do? I think if we stay true to our essence, when people think about learning communities, they’ll think of us, of CFGs, as the real thing!

You can contact Linda Emm at lemm@dadeschools.net or lemm3@msn.com

Kim Carter, continued

to move toward the world I want to live in, where my being is not taking away from or diminishing another’s but rather contributing to healing and transformation.

Since I entered the book chat, I’ve become more aware and able to interrupt, to raise questions, to hold space, with adults in various contexts. I wrestle mightily with questions of how to do this with an open hand and open heart in situations such as disciplining a child of color; coaching, evaluating or disciplining a staff member of color; or engaging with a parent of color whose journey has just begun. My gratitude for my colleagues of color and their willingness to enter into, stay in, and be patient with me as I develop skill through these courageous conversations is immense.

Camilla Greene, Pennsylvania

D eveloping the will, skill and courage to engage in difficult conversations is a luxury. As an African-American female, developing the will, skill and courage were part of my birthright. The America I inhabit is a racialized society. The stories of my childhood are stories of indignities and inequities suffered by people who look like me, in my family, in my community, in America. Those stories, both historical and current, those visual pictures both historical and current that I read in the mainstream and black press media, coupled with my life experiences, prepared me to be courageous. One thing I figured out early on was that I was a proud and unapologetically black child. I did not want to assimilate and become an unconscious white person. There were examples of family and friends who used their courageous voices to speak out about injustice. In order to survive with my self intact, I had to speak out. I developed my voice in high school and I have continued on my journey strengthening my will, skill, and courage to interrupt and challenge inequities whenever and wherever they occur. Each time I speak out I get stronger and more courageous.

I have also had a geographical advantage. Growing up in Brooklyn and attending a progressive school, I was surrounded by dominant culture, Latino and African-American people who did not shy away from confrontation. We had many a strong, courageous conversation on race.

Outside of Brooklyn and my progressive school I learned that when I bring my authentic self to dominant culture folks unaccustomed to having their long-held beliefs challenged by someone who does not look like them, the push-back and fallout have been very interesting, hurtful and sometimes problematic. Most recently, on the NSRF (continued on page 12)

Kim Carter, New Hampshire

W hen I began the Courageous Conversations book, I was eager to participate and fearful of being misunderstood. With only words to communicate I was cautious about how I constructed my e-mails, worried about inadvertently conveying prejudice and/or naivete, but also intent on communicating my curiosity and wonderings. I felt inept and unable to contribute much of substance, and I found it hard to stay in the conversation. But I had committed to the agreements: to stay engaged, to speak my truth, to experience discomfort, and to expect and accept a lack of closure. And Camilla’s posts pulled me in, drew me on. I sought being one more white person, and wanted to believe my questions were authentic, meaningful, of value. My experience caused me to question the impact of class, while Singleton, the author of the text, insisted that race was the more powerful oppressor. I didn’t want to be using class as an excuse to not look at race, as Singleton suggested was too often the case, but I found it hard to believe, and so questioned what I was reading.

One of the first profound ahas that began to chip away at the shell of whiteness I live in was an early perception check in the book about the relationship of race to one’s life. Confident that I was somewhat enlightened, I answered the questions, only to be startled by the authors’ point that WHITE IS a race as well. The line about the utter obviousness and profoundly common-sensical. And yet, I had so missed it. How was that possible!! So much for enlightenment!!

I began to question and test my perceptions, and to seek ways to invite others in my life into conversation. I brought the discussion to our school community, building on talk show host Don Imus’s racist and demeaning remarks about the Rutgers Women’s Basketball team. In the course (continued on page 12)