

Connections

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Director's Report Steven Strull, Director

NSRF has been making rapid progress on our restructuring. After all the struggle and advancement we have made and continue to make, I decided to turn my attention to our future - not our present. I began to imagine NSRF's future using the Futures Protocol. In doing so, I was able to let go of the present and remember that, together, we can do anything we imagine to be possible. Below are my thoughts from my personal Futures Protocol.

Eighteen months from now

NSRF has maintained a small national center that continues to learn how to best serve our membership. Whether a coach, facilitative leader, National Facilitator and/or Center of Activity, we are all members of NSRF. Our National Center continues to take responsibility for convening and connecting NSRF through our membership, our annual meetings, our communication avenues and our protocols, linking with work in the field in collaboration with our Centers of Activity, research and documentation and the ongoing publication of *Connections*.

NSRF Centers of Activity have expanded our work in ways big and small that a National Center never could do. With and among National Facilitators, our Centers have the capacity to transform learning and teaching within their local contexts. Whether situated inside a school district, a school, an independent organization and/or a collection of NSRF members, local Centers are crucial to the continuing success of our mission.

NSRF has a membership council that is democratic and representative of our membership and serves as an advisory structure for our re-imagined governance council. Our membership council represents our mission statement and helps us answer the perennial questions of attributes and standards for National Facilitators and Centers of Activity that seem to vex our organization. Our membership council is the heart of our organization and the guardian of our mission and vision as referenced below.

We have a strong governance council that



serves as a board of directors to our organization. We have codified some of our understandings of how we operate and re-affirmed that we are accountable to one another. We have an able and healthy structure that provides for checks and balances, as is appropriate for an organization based on democratic principals of equity and participation, and we experience a strong, more formal governance structure that serves us well.

Our membership has discretionary resources to seed work in the field and research and document what we learn together – working in local contexts along-side Centers of Activity. Our membership is well on it's way to amassing those resources through what we have dubbed "Ten in Ten." We have thought deeply and made commitments about what we will accomplish if we are able to achieve the goal of 10,000 dues-paying members in 10 years – we, the membership, have imagined our future.

Back to the present

I am quite optimistic that some version of my musings above, once tuned and re-tuned using the tools and processes at our disposal, will be accomplished. We will get to our future with deliberation and by accessing our stakeholders; by imagining what we want to be and what we want to stand for; and then by practicing locally, regionally and

nationally, in person (continued on page 11)

hesitant and afraid, so I answered with what some might call my catch phrase, "I don't know." That's when I was given a choice, either you do it or you don't, and that was when everything became so clear to me. I could no longer wait for success— I had to work for success. I responded "yes," and from there I was thrown into a jungle full of mysteries that I knew I had to be a part of. That decision changed my life: I found myself learning and working, not because I had to, but because I wanted to. I realized that in order to catch the dream you have to chase it first. Now I challenge and hold myself to higher standards because I have more confidence in what I can do, and that is how Ms. Kelley kept me from falling through the cracks. ■

Any inquiries regarding Vladimir should be directed to his teacher, Michaelann Kelley, at mkelley@aldine.k12.tx.us.

Students at the Center

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tor and professor has impacted a student's life. The students don't always realize the effect an adult educator has had until much later in their lives, by which time making contact to let them know may be impossible. Think of the Vladimirs and De'Vontas in your life. How are you going to make sure that they do not fall through the cracks in your classroom, your school and your community? Reach out and make a difference and a student will thank you someday.

Each of us can think of teachers who have made impressions on our lives. Make contact if you can, and let that person know (if you haven't already) how thankful you are that they crossed your path on your educational journey and maybe prevented you from falling through the cracks. ■

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and electronically, in the passionate pursuit of our mission.

Every day now our membership council task force is learning and imagining. One of the members of the task force, Kevin Fahey from Massachusetts, when asked to respond to an on-line Charette question about the role of a membership council had this to offer:

In general, I would use Sergiovanni's model of "head, hand and heart" to think about this question. I believe that the new Accountability Council would be the head of the organization (tasked with governance), the Executive Director the "hand" (making things work) and the Membership Council the "heart" (guarding the vision and mission of the organization). As such, it would be tasked with clarifying things like the work of a National Facilitator and Centers of Activity, and it would address such questions as what is facilitative leadership, critical friendship, etc.

I believe we are unique as a movement and an organization. There are many worthy school reform and professional development collectives and companies serving schools, teachers and children in multiple ways. Some of their methods we would find encouraging; others would cause us some concern – and my guess is we probably wouldn't all agree on the lens we put on this or that entity or program.

But we are different – we are a FACULTY – our name says as much. And as a faculty, we all believe in a common vision as practiced through our mission. It doesn't matter if we work independently as consultants or in the company of dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of colleagues, students and parents. Many of us are in classrooms every day; a window on the world of schooling and education that reinforces our understanding of the need for our faculty to be successful.

Whether past, present or future – in whatever iteration we imagine ourselves to be in – NSRF was, is and will be a strong voice for collaborative practice, critical friendship and facilitative leadership as adult learners in the service of every single child and teacher we encounter and influence. In turn, our faculty will be influenced by those we touch; those we work with and those we engage with at the deepest critical levels. Our democracy deserves nothing less. ■

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