into a professional learning community. Allen ends this study with the statement that, “Extraordinary coaches come in all kinds of ‘personality packages’ but will be unified by their tenacious commitment to the individual growth of the individual teachers and administrators with whom they work, as well as the development of the professional community and school community that those people create and re-create every day.”

The Appendix of this text outlines the structure of the ISA, a model that many schools will seek to emulate in their own change processes. I will recommend this text to my school and district administrators. The study of the complexities of the coaching model will both alleviate tensions and offer a new lens through which to view the many strands of human interactions that contribute to building a positive school climate.

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Correction
In the Winter 2009 issue of Connections, we mistakenly credited the article “Center of Activity Report: San Antonio” to Ileana Liberatore. The author, in fact, was Patricia Norman. We apologize for the error.
Brandon Cosby is the new principal of Shortridge High School. For the last four years, Brandon has served as the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning’s (CELL) Senior Fellow for high school transformation and worked directly with Indianapolis Public Schools on high school conversions. Brandon joined CELL after serving nine years in the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, where he worked as a principal, assistant principal and high school teacher. Additionally, Brandon is an anti-racist activist and works in numerous communities and schools around the country. A New Castle, Indiana, native, Brandon is pursuing his Ed.D. in education administration at Oakland University. He holds an M.A. in education administration from Oakland City University and a B.S. in speech communication and theatre teaching from the University of Indianapolis.

Brandon has two children: his son Zion (5) and his nephew Storm (17).

Who is Brandon Cosby?

I am a man who goes to work every day and tries to fix the system that I live in for fear of claiming my kids – when I say my kids, I mean my Indianapolis. I have a real stake in the future of Indianapolis. Any issue, any question, any care I have for this city is written over my own boys.

What do you mean by “claim your kids?”

Kill them, incapacitate them, raise their spirits, spoon-feed them self-hatred, inadequately educate them. The system does what it does very well, and it accomplishes that task in a number of ways.

What is the “system”?

The system is the institutional, racist bureaucracy that exists in every aspect – the political, the social, the educational institution – it is everywhere around us.

Lisa Delpit says the kind of racism we are battling is intergenerational. It is literally passed down into particles – it is in the air we breathe. We have to get to that level of specificity to fight it.

How do you try to fight it...to fix it?

By working myself into positions of power and influence and taking those bureaucratic processes off-line in hopes of putting different methods in place. When battling a machine, it comes down to taking it off-line, that is, interrupting it and putting something new in its place. Sometimes it means forcing the conversations.

How does this thinking – who you are – relate to your work with NSRF and its network of school reformers across the country?

Before my introduction to NSRF as a whole, this was work I was doing by myself. It was me in isolation with some ideas and some very strong feelings I had from my own experiences as a student. My work was as an advocate for students whom I saw having similar experiences. I was a lone wolf.

When I interviewed for Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) in Indianapolis, I was interviewed by Camilla Greene, Lois Butler, Daniel Baron, Virginia Hardy, Tom Gregory, Wendy Branner and Kevin Horton; to hear a whole room of people having dialogue around stuff that was sitting in my head...it was overwhelming. I little by little sat in this room – in the middle of an interview – and wept because it was beyond what I thought was within the realm of possibility in Indiana. That was my initial intro to NSRF, so I assumed NSRF as a national organization looked very much like my experience in Indianapolis. I assumed NSRF was about 70 percent African-American; I thought they were bringing people in the room proportionately. When I went to my first Winter Meeting, I nearly passed out as I realized that the folks they brought in for the interview made up about 70 percent of all the people of color.

So a lot of that initial CELL conversation, which drilled into this thing we call equity, became a real thing for me when we were having our national conversation about whether or not every CEG was equity-based. My question was, “How can they not be?” CEG work that is done in the absence of explicitly named inequities will only continue to get us what we have always gotten, 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, who was 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, heart and hand” 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 would find encouraging; others would cause us some concern – and my guess is we probably wouldn’t all agree on the lexicon we put on this or that entity or program.

But we are different – we are a FACULTY – our name says much about what we do, and 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:”

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 facilitating 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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