

The National School Reform Faculty® (NSRF®) publishes the Connections newsletter six times per year. To suggest a topic or submit an article, email [nsrf@nsrfharmony.org](mailto:nsrf@nsrfharmony.org) or call 812-334-8379.

## From the Director

By Michele Mattoon, NSRF® Director, NSRF National Facilitator, and CFG® Coach in Indiana, [michele@nsrfharmony.org](mailto:michele@nsrfharmony.org)

Welcome to fall and the beginning of most school years! Summers now are the busiest time of the year for NSRF and we are just beginning to catch our breath after the whirlwind of the last three months. During that time Luci and I answered the question, “Why take the training when you can get the protocols for free?” more often than we could count.

Why indeed, since budgets are tight and time is precious. (“Really?” we hear. “Five whole days?”) The answer most people seem to understand best is an analogy. Imagine you have friends coming to dinner who’ve been having a hard time lately, and so you want to treat them to something special. You go to your computer and look up gourmet recipes. You select one that looks impressive—beautiful and delicious. You eagerly print it out, carry it to the kitchen, and begin to cook. About halfway through the process, you realize that something is going horribly wrong. Is it really supposed to smell like that? And, why are the edges so crispy and black and the middle so soupy? And then it occurs to you—maybe you should have taken a gourmet cooking class before attempting something so ambitious. Needless to say, your end result looks nothing like the picture.

Using our protocols and activities without training can be very much like the above scenario. Many people recognize the potential of having structure to deepen their understanding of issues, to allow all voices to be heard and honored, to improve work, or understand better ways to reach students. Unfortunately, without the understanding of why you are doing what you’re doing, how to make sure that what you are doing will achieve the maximum result, when to employ essential scaffolding activities such as trust-building, and learning to give and receive feedback, your finished product may well fall short of your expectations. In fact, you may actually wind up giving the people participating in the protocol the equivalence of a mild form of “food poisoning”—giving them such a bad experience that they never want to try another protocol again!

We have seen, over and over, that facilitating conversations around improving work, seeking solutions to professional dilemmas, and planning the implementation of new programs take an understanding of how to build safety and trust, the skillful phrasing of feedback and practiced facilitation skills to achieve optimal results. So, “give yourself a treat” as one of the participants from our last training here in Bloomington put it, and book your spot to a NSRF 5 Day New Coaches CFG open or on-site training.

Happy Fall,



Michele Mattoon  
Director, NSRF



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