

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 or call 812-334-8379.

National School
Reform Faculty®
Harmony Education Center

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FROM THE DIRECTOR: By Michele Mattoon, NSRF® Director, NSRF National Facilitator, and CFG® Coach in Indiana, michele@nsrfharmony.org

Welcome to summer! Here in Indiana we are experiencing hot, dry weather that generally doesn't hit til late July or August. Reflecting on this warming trend brought to mind some trends I'm seeing in the work that NSRF does with schools.

When I first became a National Facilitator at NSRF, many trainings were scheduled during the school year. Schools hired subs for the teachers that they wanted to take the training or paid teachers stipends for every "day off" they spent doing professional development.

Fast forward to the economic crash and cutbacks in education. Now, most NSRF trainings are scheduled during the summer. Teachers are expected to use five of their vacation days to take our Critical Friends Groups® coaches trainings. Schools that do schedule PD days during the school year often expect staff to use at least one or two weekend days to round off the training. (For example, we are often asked to do the first three days of the training on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and then come back a couple of months later on a Friday and Saturday.)

What does this mean? Obviously, there is less money for professional development and, at the same time, educators are expected to devote even more "free time" to their work. When I was teaching, how many times did I hear, "You're so lucky, getting a whole summer off and getting paid a full year's salary!" I won't go into all the ways that statement is wrong—I know I'd just be preaching to the choir.

So, as with many in this country and around the world, our jobs are being cut, our salaries and benefits slashed, and we must take on more responsibilities with less time to do them. Taking this into consideration, you might expect that I face groups of people who are resentful of the time they must spend in CFG training, pushing back on the idea of spending yet more time with their colleagues working toward improving their practice and student achievement during their vacation time without any extra monetary compensation. If so, you'd be wrong.

I consistently work side by side with groups of dedicated professionals, eager to learn new tools to do what they love the most—teach, inspire, support and learn along side their students. I have to admit, when I hear people say that teaching should not be considered a profession because anyone with a well-worded script could do a fine job, regardless of their education, motivations and intentions, I can lose heart. But, this is what renews my spirits—seeing educators working together for no greater reward than their student's academic, social and emotional wellbeing.

Michele Mattoon



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