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

Summer 2012

Connections

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.

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A REPORT FROM THE FIELD: How Does CFG Coaches Training Impact Teachers' Practice and Student Success?

By Dave Lehman, Connections Editor, NSRF National Facilitator, and CFG Coach in Wisconsin, davelehman@mac.com

In the past three years I have worked with more than 50 teachers and other professionals of the Madison Metropolitan School District in Wisconsin, training them to be Critical Friends Group (CFG) Coaches. This has involved, in particular, three cohorts of a total of 38 teachers and other professionals of Madison East High School. The other groups have included Literacy Coaches from the other three Madison high schools, Support and Resource Teachers, and District Coordinators of professional development.

Although the typical National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) model for CFGs is to train Coaches to be facilitators of CFGs, in Madison the approach varied from this model as the trained Coaches used their newly acquired coaching skills with their colleagues in Department meetings, and in mixed-discipline PLC groups (Professional Learning Communities). The PLCs focused on topics generated by staff that met weekly during early release time, called "Professional Collaboration Time" (PCT). In addition, those trained as CFG Coaches frequently modified and used a variety of NSRF Protocols with their students in diverse subject areas. The PLCs focused on such topics as:

- Examining Our Instruction in Writing
- Examining Our Instruction in the Freshmen Academy
- Examining Student and Teacher Work
- Sharing Ideas, Best Practices, and Dilemmas in Classroom Management
- Examining Our Instruction with AVID Strategies
- Sharing Ideas, Best Practices, and Dilemmas in Using Multi-Media in the Classroom
- Sharing Specific Strategies for Helping African-American and Hispanic Students

We NSRF National Facilitators frequently ask ourselves, "Can we measure how CFG Coaches Training results in positive changes in teaching and/or professional practice? How can we demonstratively measure the impact, particularly on students?" In response to a questionnaire administered to all those trained in Madison over the past three years, 96% indicated that they have used things learned from the training with their high school students, whether in their classrooms or in their other professional responsibilities, i.e. as Counselors, Special Education Teachers, Dean of Students, Associate Principal, and Literacy Coaches. Such learning involved not only using various Protocols as new classroom teaching strategies, but frequently involved new ideas gleaned from colleagues, and ideas during Consultancy sessions devoted to teaching dilemmas. Some of the specific

Protocols used included the various Text-Based Discussion Protocols, Ice Breakers and Warm-ups, Hopes and Fears (particularly with students the first week of school in thinking about what lies ahead), the Feedback Carousel (with students giving and receiving feedback on their classroom projects), Compass Points, and particularly Chalk Talks, which were used by several teachers in a variety of classes and subject areas.

"What evidence do you have that the changes you made in your practice led to greater student success?"

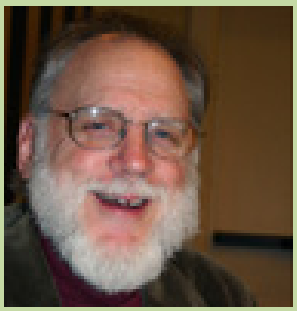
In asking this question, participant replies include the following anecdotes:

- *"greater participation from students"*
- *"students showed greater understanding from the use of quick writes and exit slips"*
- [regarding Chalk Talks] *"students were engaged, everyone participated, and enjoyed it [more than] hearing someone talk…. some were freer to express themselves"*
- *"students were more supportive of each other, less nasty talk"*
- *"[students] opened up, [became] more comfortable with classmates, more willing to take risks, didn't mind so much making mistakes [and learning from each other]"*
- *"students got good feedback"* [Feedback Carousel]
- *"students seemed more involved, more engaged"*
- *"I found that we were able to have conversations that we were never able to have before."*
- *"I think it simply improve[d] communication and deeper understanding of diverse groups of kids who could find common language together."*
- *"made them think and process well"*

And there was this thoughtful example from a math Teacher who made a major change in her classroom practice as a result of ideas gained from her colleagues in her CFG Training:

"Having students as facilitators in small groups, where students discuss and come up with answers to in-class investigations/worksheets and agree on common solutions. Having [these] discussions in small groups and teaching each other, has led the students to be more independent and focused. It has helped them to improve their skills. I have noticed that students who become facilitators enjoy and experience their leadership opportunities. Students who are struggling gain a lot from other students in their small groups. They observe the other students' work and ask them content-based questions. I have observed that students who would not be doing well have passing grades because they are learning from other students and they feel that they can approach students in their group more comfortably than asking questions as a whole class. They have more confidence

"[students] opened up, [became] more comfortable with classmates, more willing to take risks, didn't mind so much making mistakes [and learning from each other]"



Dave Lehman is the former founding principal/teacher of the Lehman Alternative Community School, a public middle- high school recently named after him and his wife by the Ithaca, New York Board of Education upon their retirement after 30 years. He currently is doing "School Improvement Coaching" with the middle schools and high schools in Racine and Madison, Wisconsin.

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in tackling challenging work."

And from a Dean of Students:

"I have used co-generative dialogue [learned from text-based discussion of an article] as well as a multi-cultural approach to creating meaningful relationships with students, helping to further engage them with school. After monitoring the progress of certain students, our interactions have helped students feel more engaged and safer in school allowing for better engagement in classes and better grades."

"Have you used any of the CFG Coaches Training with your colleagues (e.g. in department emetings, faciitating PCT-PLCs, etc.?"

In response to this question, 92% indicated they had, and are continuing to do so, particularly those who are Chair Persons of their Departments. A major goal of this CFG Coaches Training with the different cohorts was to expand the leadership capacity among more staff and to build a "culture of collaboration," so these responses stood out:

- *"new ideas to use with an assignment or issue"*
- *" cohesion and team spirit within the department"*
- *"teachers ask me [Department Chair] for copies of Protocols to use in class"*
- *[when doing classroom observations/evaluations as Department Chair] "see Protocols being used in classrooms, written on board"*
- *"engaged staff, took pressure off of people with sensitive data, focused meetings"*
- *"peer observations within the Department [World Languages]; after observing a colleague, creating my own similar activity"*
- *"teachers asked for information, expressed interest in doing more with the topic"*
- *"definitely impacted the quality of conversations we had [have] as professionals in a positive way"*
- *"best part [was] sharing best practices [on classroom management] in non-threatening environment"*
- *"allowed for more structured conversations and more points of view"*
- *"makes meetings run more smoothly and keep people on task, makes sure everyone's voice is heard"*
- *"They [members of the Department] are quiet and thoughtful instead of chatty and off-task."*
- *"It helped [helps] all voices to be heard in a manner that also allowed us to accomplish what we needed to accomplish."*
- *"Used strategies for developing tutor training, tutor debriefings, evaluating students work, AVID/TOPS Site Team meetings, PCT – [positive responses on] Tutor satisfaction surveys, AVID/TOPS [students'] course grades and improvement." (TOPS Coordinator in AVID/TOPS Program]*
- *"Protocols, and the philosophy behind CFG training, have led to open, reflective consideration of how to support students, rather than blaming them, their families, or their perceived deficits."*

And this from one of the Associate Principals:

"When evaluating staff – [particularly] how do staff work with minority students? – a helpful tool has been the Tuning Protocol, with warm/cool feedback; I've learned to see classrooms through that lens."

Additionally, we heard responses from a Literacy Coach about major changes in their staff culture, and from a REal Grant Coordinator about how extensive use of Protocols helps create a collaborative, learning staff. The below reference to "AVID-9 kids" refers to a group primarily consisting of students of color, low income students, and English Language Learners, all enrolled in a college-readiness program:

"I work with both adults and with children. Protocols and the sharing of student work have helped model equitable and inclusive teaching and learning. CFG work is essential to [our high school] having feedback on a recent district survey that 86% of our staff are comfortable sharing work; 85% feel safe to push each other professionally. Collaborative sharing is beginning to lead to results for more kids – 50 AVID-9 kids made gains that exceeded national benchmark rates, and are beginning to close the achievement gap….students' learning is showing dramatic promise, as evidenced by multiple measures."

"I use CFG protocols all of the time in my work [professional development]. It has become the vehicle for running meetings for me. I use tuning protocols as we bring both warm and cool feedback and suggestions for improvement to all of the work we do in Leadership Team, other school improvement teams, and school-wide

professional development. We have used text-based protocols to dialogue around texts that are relevant to our work. We use consultancy protocols to bring dilemmas to share about how we might improve our work with students. We have used data-based protocols to guide effective conversations around data. We have also learned a variety of team-building activities and structures to help facilitate effective meetings. If I were still in the classroom, I would use many of these activities."

"What additional comments would you add were you to recommend CFG Coaches Training to a colleague?"

Lastly, in response to the final question on the questionnaire, 100% recommended CFG Coaches Training for more of their colleagues. Their responses included the following:

- *"I usually tell people that I find it very helpful – especially the safe environment in which you can look at students' work and your own teaching practices. I also feel it is helpful in creating bonds with other people in the building." [Culinary Arts Teacher]*
- *"CFG is a great framework for team-building and building trust amongst working professionals. It provides a safe structure for asking and giving advice amongst colleagues and sharing our successes and skills." [Art Teacher]*
- *"CFG training has given me the knowledge, skills and tools to become a better teacher in the classroom as well as a better group facilitator (which is very similar to being a classroom teacher) by being able to engage more people in a systematic, research-based method that increases learning and understanding of all involved." [Technology and Engineering Education Teacher and Department Chair]*
- *"I really appreciate the training I received and it has helped me lead better meetings with my colleagues. I feel that we get more accomplished and our time is better structured and use[d]." [Special Education Teacher]*
- *"The coaching is a great experience to share success and frustrations, but also to share solutions. The Protocols have been very helpful in department meetings." [Spanish Teacher]*
- *"It was quite possibly the best training. You get to work with, and get to know, colleagues across the school." [ESL Teacher]*
- *"CFG [training] can help you become a better person conversationally, professionally, and academically. It will help you become the flexible teacher that we all strive to be." [Math Teacher]*
- *"I think that all staff (administrators, teachers, support staff, etc.) should get trained because we all work with one another and with students. If we are all on the same page, we'll get better outcomes with ourselves and with our students." [ESL and Hmong Teacher]*
- *"Formative assessment, reflection, learning from one another, bringing individual teaching dilemmas. CFG Protocols facilitate professional learning communities where teachers reflect and learn from one another. They delve more deeply into the issues in their classrooms and strive to improve learning for all students. In my mind, this is the most powerful PD a teacher can have if they take advantage of it. CFGs have done wonderful things for teachers and instruction at East High School. It has created the foundation for effective collaboration, work on equity issues, and improving outcomes for all." [REal Grant Coordinator]*

100% of respondants say they would recommend CFG Coaches Training to a colleague

Based on these survey results and more, I believe we have clear evidence that the CFG Coaches trained in Madison, Wisconsin have made—and are making—a substantial difference. They're creating and embedding a culture of collaboration within and among the staff. Teachers making changes in their practice are resulting in improved student learning.

Granted, all Madison high schools have a Federal Small Learning Community grant which has paid for much of the CFG Coaches Training. Other positive factors likely contributing to the effectiveness at

Madison East High School include the support of their Principal and my on-going consulting – co-facilitating weekly meetings with their Leadership Team and with individual Department Chairpersons. Additionally, I met frequently with La Follette High School's Innovation Team, REal Grant Coordinator, and Literacy Coach, and did a series of half-day workshops with them over the past three years.

I invite Connections readers to explore more fully how to sustain our work with schools and/or a school district over an extended period of time in order to have a more lasting impact. We know that an initial five-day CFG Coaches Training, while powerful, is only the beginning for the new coaches. For maximum impact to improve teacher practice and student learning, these coaches need to participate in CFGs and the use of Protocols in a consistent, sustained manner over a number of years.

So, my fellow NSRF members, National Facilitators, and CFG Coaches, how can we help existing Critical Friends Groups maintain and build their effectiveness? How can we better encourage new, spin-off CFGs to be created? How can we support schools and districts in learning new Protocols to "refresh" their experience, reinvigorate excitement in those familiar with CFGs and extend that experience to new faces?

The survey can be found here on the NSRF Website. We encourage you to download it, use it with your group, and share the results with us.

BUILDING A COLLEGIAL COMMUNITY: A Lead Teacher's Experience with Protocols

By Shelley van Benschop, NSRF CFG Coach in Toronto, Ontario, SvanBenschop@bss.on.ca

Let me share a bit about our school context. I work in the Junior School of a JK-Grade 12 independent, all girls day and boarding school in Toronto, Ontario. For over a decade now we have been pursuing a Reggio Emilia-inspired approach with a focus on inquiry, research and project work. Our school has a history of innovation and consistently strives to research and implement practices that support the mission, vision and values of our school.

As a Junior School faculty with a focus on inquiry, emergent curriculum and collaboration, we have been looking for scaffolding that supports collaboration, supporting the teacher as a researcher and looking for multiple perspectives to enrich both student and teacher work.

This endeavor has led our school to create new positions intentionally to support this goal, including my role: Lead Teacher-Research & Inquiry. My task is to support teachers in reflecting upon and refining their pedagogical practices focused on grades 2-4. The Lead Teachers focus on pedagogical documentation and provide an objective perspective when analyzing data and we contribute to decisions about ongoing investigations and project work occurring in the classrooms.

With this shift in thinking and classroom practice, we have found it necessary to also shift our meeting culture. Traditionally our meeting structure was often a place to share information with the entire faculty. We have since moved to a balanced approach with some whole school faculty, some Junior School faculty and most often, grade floor meetings (ex. Our Floor meeting invites Grade 2-4 classroom teachers and all specialists who can make it). Our meetings have changed to be more reflective of our pedagogical practices of research, reflection, refinement and collaboration. In order to support this change we brought in experts to support us as we shift from congenial relationships to more collaborative collegial relationships[1] (Evans, 2012).

The Middle and Senior School has built a relation-

ship with High Tech High in San Diego and their experience with protocols inspired us to structure collegial conversations to support looking at student and teacher work. That being said, with little professional understanding or training and no real depth of understanding, I was nervous about taking on the role of facilitator and how it might clash with my other roles as coach, collaborator, co-teacher and outsider. The value of structured conversations was instantly recognizable, the potential unending, but the buy-in was missing. Some teachers saw the use of protocols as a trend that would pass and had legitimate misgivings.

At a Grade 2-4 Floor meeting at the end of the year, we planned on sharing some project work with a group of visitors to our school. A group of Grade 4 teachers volunteered, with the caveat, 'Only if we can use a protocol!'

Since our training in the Spring of 2012, we have been crafting opportunities to use NSRF protocols to support the sharing of our work. It is always a risk to put your planning, student work, and outcomes on the table for others to view and comment on. The experiences are invaluable in learning from the perspective of others, but it also supports the risk-taking that is a model for our students and our greater community. At our floor meetings we began by using Feedback Nightmares, which uses a protocol to support dialogue, but also intrinsically builds collaboration and congeniality by sharing ones experiences with others. At the same time, Feedback Nightmares is a structured conversation, which hints at the value of protocols. It was a safe place to start, or restart as it may be.

At a Grade 2-4 Floor meeting at the end of the year, we planned on sharing some project work with a group of visitors to our school. A group of Grade 4 teachers volunteered, with the caveat, "Only if we can use a protocol." This shift in perspective was a personal highlight. I believe it demonstrates a deeper understanding of the process, the support and the protection a protocol provides teachers while sharing their work. That protocols help the work become shared; that we can think deeply together and contribute to the growth of knowledge and craft rich projects with support; that our individual perspective meaningfully adds to the group understanding; that respectfully asking questions of our colleagues helps us all to learn more about the work happening in our own school and about how to work together more effectively.

Through the process of developing and identifying our role as Lead Teacher and through the scaffolds provided by our NSRF training, I see that my role to support the development of collegiality is often helped by the timely and purposeful use of protocols which enable all voices to be heard and our work together enriched.

[1]Rob Evans (2012): Getting to No: Building True Collegiality in Schools, *School Matters*, Winter, 2012, 99-107

Shelley van Benschop is a Lead Teacher of Research and Inquiry at the Bishop Strachan School in Toronto, Ontario. She has been teaching for over 10 years both internationally and in Canada. Shelley recently completed her NSRF training and is excited to facilitate new protocols whenever she can.

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COACHING LESSONS FROM CO-REC SOFTBALL (Reprinted from Winter 2004 Connections)

By David Christman, Connections Contributor, CFG Coach in California and NSRF National Facilitator dpchristman@gmail.com

At the time of this writing, David Christman was teaching high school science at Harmony High School in Bloomington, Indiana, where he taught for 15 years. Currently he's a high school chemistry teacher in Los Angeles, California, a CFG Coach and NSRF National Facilitator. He loves softball, Shakespeare, and the ukulele (among other things).

Contact David with your questions or comments at dpchristman@gmail.com.

Editor's note: Since we have many subscribers who may never have looked at our archives, we thought we'd take the opportunity to revisit an intriguing article from an older issue of Connections. This one seemed particularly well-suited to summertime! —D.L.

Bouncing Balls

I have always loved games that involve lots of people and bouncing balls. They seem so social, friendly and filled with quirky and unexpected events. In my neighborhood, as a child, to get a game started involved going door to door to find enough people to play at any given time, and usually involved kids of many ages, some adults, and even a dog or two (great fielders!). We had to "close fields" if there weren't enough players, expand and contract teams around mealtimes, and often the youngest kids were pinch runners for the adults. I loved the inclusiveness and ornate strategies that evolved from so many variables. I also learned a lot about how different personalities respond to different situations.

Though I played in more formal leagues, it was never as much fun. As an adult, I couldn't really find the right situation to enjoy the many adult softball leagues here in the Midwest. It seemed way too competitive and not very much fun.

That changed five years ago when I was asked to be on a Co-Recreational softball team, right around the time I became part of my first Critical Friends Group. As time has progressed, I've become a coach for both groups and it is hard not to notice some overlap in skills required to be effective in both roles.

Field Notes for CFG coaching:

Ideas are a lot like bouncing balls and tossing them around in a group of colleagues can yield unexpected insights. People come to the table from different backgrounds, some have scars from previous group interactions and need to make sure their ideas will be listened to.

The Rules of Engagement

The "extra" rules of Co-Recreational softball involve trying to balance issues of perceived power: having the same number of men and women on a team (two each in the outfield, infield and pitcher/catcher combination); men must bat opposite handed (than their "natural hand") and use a bigger ball (that will not carry as far) when batting. Walking a man is two bases, to discourage pitching around women in the order. Batting orders must alternate genders. The rules, especially at first, feel artificial (not to mention sexist) and awkward, to say the least.

Still, in the two years we've played as a teacher/parent/spouse/alumni team, we've had a huge amount of enjoyment playing this hybrid game, and enough success (even a few come-from-behind victories). It has also definitely contributed to a feeling of closeness and shared insights within the group, as well as improving our skill level dramatically.

Field Notes for CFG coaching:

Protocols can be awkward at times

and may take explaining and practice. Attempting to "level the playing field" can yield some false assumptions, but sharing the power is an important goal. Having a diverse group increases the knowledge base and pool of insights available.

The Player-Coach

I love the side-by-side quality to being a player-coach, encouraging people as a fellow teammate. I enjoy teaching a specific skill, with permission, and explaining rules and strategies – but mostly players learn from their teammates. I really enjoy it when I can forget who the coach is and the team runs smoothly during the game.

Field Notes for CFG coaching:

The team has most of the skills it needs already in the group. Coaching involves helping to set and honor ground rules. It's challenging to coach a group and be an active member at the same time. If you're going to participate completely, make sure the group is skilled enough to not let you dominate the time! A sign of a strong group dynamic is when the group can share the facilitation.

Diverse Skills and Comfort Zones

I like to ask what positions players want to play, what goals and fears they might have and then work from that space. Some members really only feel comfortable playing one position for a while; others like to switch around. Some of our best games have been when people are needed to fill in for absent team members – there is something about feeling needed that heightens the effort and enjoyment of the game.

Field Notes for CFG coaching:

People have to feel comfortable before sharing and taking risks. The urgency of being asked to help the group work on difficult and important work can bring out the best in members. Switching roles, finding new perspectives to view the discussion increases the possibilities of learning.

Second Chances

There are so many ways to contribute to a successful softball game – a nice catch, hit, throw, backing up a fellow fielder, or hustling down to first. Mistakes have a way of becoming the "before picture" of the next inning or game when you make the perfect play.

So many skills are critical that there is always a way to help while we develop new skills.

Field Notes for CFG coaching:

There are so many skills that support clear communication. We all make mistakes along the way. Over a whole year (or more) as we practice protocols together we have many opportunities to improve and support our own toolbox of skills.

Who's Coach?

Our last game was a make-up for a rained-out game early in the season. The other team didn't show up. We were all there and ready to play. With little prompting, we split up into small teams and had our own game – filled with closed fields, pinch hitters and guest runners from the bleachers. We were relaxed and enjoying ourselves – not only comfortable with the rules and tools of the game, but also creating new rules (our scoring system was especially unique that game). We were all coaches.

Field Notes for CFG coaching:

Ultimately a team becomes a selfpropelling, synergistic group of potential coaches. The final meeting is the one you remember most during the summer vacation.

The Off Season

Working well together carries over into enjoying and valuing each other's skills. Shared moments of success help clear the way for all kinds of day-to-day interactions. The pattern of positive feedback and gentle kidding helps to keep communication channels open for the important and sometimes difficult work of teaching.

Field Notes for CFG coaching:

It's clear to me that my CFG group has helped me look more insightfully than I could by myself at my own teaching practice -- in that sense it is much more than a game. Still, I find that most of my effort as a CFG coach is in helping to create and keep an environment where people are relaxed and ready for the unexpected – requirements for thinking out of their comfort zone.

BOOK REVIEW By Dave Lehman, Connections Editor, NSRF National Facilitator, NSRF CFG Coach in Wisconsin, davelehman@mac.com

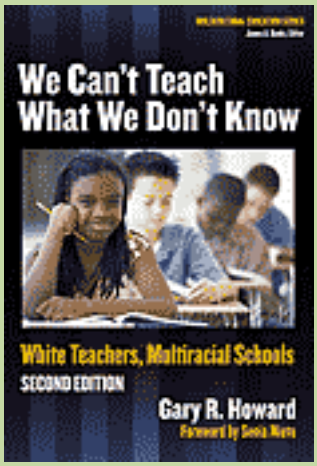
We Can't Teach What We Don't Know

White Teachers, Multiracial Schools

Second Edition, By Gary Howard
Teachers College Press, 2006

This excellent little paperback is another in the outstanding Teachers College Press's "Multicultural Education Series," edited by James Banks. It is an absolutely must read for those of us who are white educators on the personal and professional journey of transformation. As a white, heterosexual, male with a PhD, I am one of the most privileged, and as Gary Howard (another white male) puts it – "…we now have a choice to turn the full force of our privilege and power toward dismantling the very system that has granted us our historical advantage." In reviewing this seminal book – whose title alone speaks volumes - I am choosing to take one more step on that journey, and I invite others to read this book and join me.

Gary Howard is the president and founder of the REACH Center for Multicultural Education in Seattle, Washington. He travels widely delivering keynote addresses and facilitating workshops addressing issues of race, social justice, educational reform, and personal transformation. In her "Foreword," Sonia Nieto (Professor of Education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and author of another book in the Multicultural Education Series – The Light in Their Eyes" Creating Multicultural Learning Communities) states - "I had been waiting for years for an acknowledgment that whites, too, need to engage in the difficult dialogue and action of multicultural education without, as Gary Howard writes in this book, having 'to rip off their white skin'." Nieto goes on to provide this excellent overview:



"As White, privileged teachers, we now have a choice to turn the full force of our privilege and power toward dismantling the very system that has granted us our historical advantage."

"I see you. I acknowledge your presence in this classroom. I know your name and I can pronounce it correctly. I respect you. I respect your life experiences and your intelligence. I believe in you and I will hold both you and myself accountable to honor your capacity to learn. I enjoy being in this work with you."

"Involving whites in multicultural education therefore needs to resolve two seemingly contradictory aims: to confront in a brutally honest way white oppression, and to promote the development of a healthy identity that is at the same time anti-racist and multicultural.

In this book, Gary Howard has managed to accomplish both of these aims, and he has done so admirably and with a blend of humanity and critique that is unusual in many academic discussions about controversial issues. The theoretical work he has developed on white identity orientations is groundbreaking…. What was missing until now in many discussions concerning the role of white teachers in multicultural education was a recognition that, in the words of Gary Howard, 'there is not one way of being white, but many.' For white teachers who undergo the difficult course of facing the implications of their privilege, it means that there can be more than just pain and suffering in the end. For teachers of other backgrounds it means that they are not alone, that they can look forward to having colleagues and allies who are committed to anti-racist multicultural education for all students."

A partial list of the chapter titles provides a sense of Gary Howard's approach to organizing the book as the weaving together the warp of practice and the woof of theory, "…designed as a weaving fashioned from two textures of yarn: the texture of personal experiences and stories drawn from my many years in the field, and the texture of research drawn from the rich literature related to multicultural education and social justice:"

1. White Man Dancing: A Story of Personal Transformation

2. White Dominance and the Weight of the West

4. White Educators and the River of Change

6. Ways of Being White: A Practitioner's Approach to Multicultural Growth

7. White Teachers and School Reform: Toward a Transformationist Pedagogy

And in the back of the book are "Guidelines for Discussion and Reflection" to accompany group discussions of each of the chapters. For example, for "Chapter 1. White Man Dancing" are the following questions:

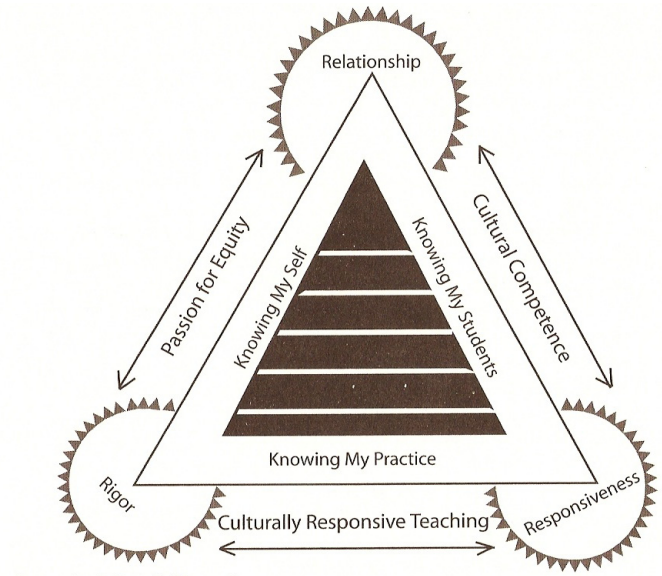
1. In what ways is the author's personal story similar to or different from the experiences of other white people you know?

2. What were the significant events/lessons/experiences that led Gary Howard to the work of multicultural education and social justice? How might other white people have responded differently to these same events or experiences?

3. What questions/challenges would you like to express to the author about his account of his personal journey?

4. What have been your own formative experiences related to race?

It is also noteworthy that Howard acknowledges similar processes of social dominance and oppression that function across other major dimensions of human difference in our schools, including gender, religion, language, age, sexual orientation, social class, and ability. But it is primarily from the reality of race as a central marker in his own life, that he has selected race as his focus, noting that many of the conclusions presented could be equally applicable to other dimensions of diversity and social justice. Here Howard has developed the "Achievement Triangle: Transformationist Pedagogy" (see inset).



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This model representing Transformationist Pedagogy represents the inter-connectedness of personal transformation with professional transformation as viewed through three "doorways" at the intersecting corners. At the top of the triangle is the "doorway of relationship" which represents the key intersection of "Knowing Myself" with "Knowing My Students" and is grounded at the base with a deep understanding and skill – "Knowing My Practice." And relationships does not mean being buddies or best friends with our students, nor being soft-hearted missionaries, rather it means developing authentic relationships, with what Howard describes as the following attitude:

"I see you. I acknowledge your presence in this classroom. I know your name and I can pronounce it correctly. I respect your life experiences and your intelligence. I believe in you and I will hold both you and myself accountable to honor your capacity to learn. I enjoy being in this work with you."

Here, too, at the bottom left corner, is the "doorway of rigor" connecting knowledge of self with authentic professional knowledge and skills as a teacher - including curriculum and instructional design, developmental psychology, history and philosophy of education, legal issues, human relations, cross-cultural communication, conflict management, and pedagogy. And on the right corner of the triangle is the "doorway of responsiveness," making the connection between self and students. Lastly, this model of transformational pedagogy shows the connections between our "passion for equity" with our "cultural competence" leading to a solid foundation at the base of the triangle—"culturally responsive teaching."

In the closing Chapter 8, "Our Unfinished Work: White Educators and La Tierra Transformativa," Gary

Howard uses the phrase "La Tierra Transformativa" to describe a new country, a new place within our minds, hearts, and spirits, a place of vision, healing and positive change. He sees the journey, the "diversity dance" down the "river of change," on the way to this new country, in the following positive light:

"There is, however, a sense of excitement and an invigorating challenge to be found on the road to an emergent transformationist white identity. There is a feeling of adventure and discovery in growing toward greater awareness. There is a personal renewal and hope to be found in the possibility of change and the opportunity to believe and act in new ways. There is a positive and healing privilege gained through our connection and collaboration with colleagues and students from other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. And there is joy in knowing that we have chosen to be in this struggle, that we are part of a movement to dismantle the foundation of our own past and present dominance. The reward for transformative white educators is that we have a vision worthy of a lifetime of work."

Participants came from nine states throughout the United States for the July Open Training for new CFG Coaches in Bloomington, Indiana.

Please take a moment to think:

How has your CFG improved your practice and/or your life?

At NSRF, we hear great stories all the time about how Critical Friends Groups and NSRF protocols have transformed educators' practices and sometimes their personal lives. From the teacher's lounge to the classroom, the office to the bookclub, sometimes to the living room at home ... what's your story?

How many NSRF protocols have you downloaded from our website or CD-ROM?

At last count, there are over 250 NSRF protocols and activities available on our website, plus many more within the pages of Connections over the years (including two new protocols in this issue alone!). We're collecting new protocols for upcoming projects, and collecting data about usage, too. Everyone has favorites for different purposes—what are yours, or tweaks you've made?

Help others attain similar or even better benefits of CFGs.

Our office often receives requests from students, new teachers, and teachers from underserved populations asking about scholarships to our' Trainings. As you join NSRF or renew your membership, please think about the benefits you personally have gained from your CFG training and participation. Your paid membership allows us to keep these protocols free on the website. **If you can, please send a donation to the NSRF Scholarship Fund.** (If you've renewed recently, you can always send a scholarship fund check or call us with a credit card number to donate.) Remember that every scholarship recipient will eventually touch the lives of thousands.

JOB OPENINGS IN A CFG-FRIENDLY DISTRICT

Pentucket Regional School District in West Newbury, MA has a number of district-wide and specific-school openings which they are seeking to fill.

HIGH SCHOOL

Moderate Sp. Ed. Teacher:
1st Qtr. Moderate Sp. Ed. Teacher
1.0 2nd Semester Moderate Sp. Ed.
.6 German Teacher
.6 Spanish Teacher
.4 Latin Teacher
.4 F. L. Dept. Head*
(1 year – may be combined with above F.L. positions*)

MIDDLE SCHOOL

German Teacher
1.0 Math Teacher
Physical Education Teacher
History Teacher
Science Teacher

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

.6 Instrumental Music Teacher
Building Aides
Crossing Guards

DISTRICT WIDE

Sp. Ed. Paraprofessionals
Sp. Lang. Path.
Physical. Therapist
Sch. Psychologist (MS)
Sp. Ed. (Autism-Pre-K-2)
1.0 Sp. Ed. (Substantially Separate Math-MS)

Please send letter of intent, resume, 3 professional references, MA licensure and transcripts.
Paul A. Livingston, Supt. of Schools
Pentucket Regional School District
22 Main Street
West Newbury, MA 01985
Open until filled
EOE/AA

Help us give you what you want!

Are you looking for advanced protocol training, beyond the basics taught in a five-day training? Would you feel more confident with an intermediary step toward becoming an NSRF National Facilitator? Want advice on 'tough crowds' or difficult dilemmas?

We want to hear from you!

Please email nsrf@nsrfharmony.org or call us at 812-330-2702 to discuss what "next steps" appeal to you in your use of NSRF® Protocols and Critical Friends Groups®!

How'd we do?

How did you like this issue? Do you have ideas for future articles, book reviews, or topics you'd like to explore (or you'd like us to explore)? We'd love to hear your experiences being part of or leading CFGs. Email us, or call 812-330-2702.

The National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) is a professional development initiative that focuses on increasing student achievement through professional learning communities. We train individuals to coach Critical Friends Groups, or CFGs, a specific type of Professional Learning Community (PLC). Critical Friends Groups use protocols and activities to facilitate meaningful and efficient communication, problem solving and learning.

As the NSRF does not receive grant support, your paid membership helps us continue to freely provide the original NSRF protocols and supporting materials via our website, as well as support our mission to continue offering training across the nation and world. We encourage you to support our scholarship fund so that any teacher could participate in a training regardless of ability to pay our fee.

Join or renew online at http://www.nsrfharmony.org/membership.html

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