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 812-330-2702.

National School Reform Faculty®
Harmony Education Center

November 2013

Connections

Big Changes Afoot: membership drive, a new website, and more!

By Luci Englert McKean, *Connections* Managing Editor and CFG® Coach in Indiana, luci@nsrfharmony.org

Everyone at NSRF® is working at fever-pace not only to keep up with our normal workloads around trainings and materials fulfillment, but preparing for our 20th anniversary in 2014. Soon you'll see an entirely updated and expanded website, new materials to help members, member-coaches, and national facilitators be even more effective, a new logo, and more. Santa's elves couldn't be busier than we are.

And it's all worth it, you'll see.

Shifting to a more balanced paradigm.

At its beginnings in 1994, NSRF began as a totally grant-funded organization. In the last several years, NSRF has transformed into an entirely self-supported organization through our memberships, materials sales, and fees for trainings.

We honor our commitment to serving educators, regardless of their ability to pay, by keeping the original NSRF protocols and activities available on our new website, and by offering scholarships for training. However, for the sustainability of the organization and with respect to those who keep our organization afloat, we felt it was time to offer more benefits to those members, member-coaches, and current national facilitators.

Beyond the usual benefits of membership.

First and most important, paid membership in NSRF has always supported us in maintaining and improving our ability to continue our work, providing educators with protocols and activities, and supporting learners of all ages in achieving greater successes worldwide. Membership funds also support our ability to offer scholarships for those who need it, although we continue to request support specifically for our scholarship fund.

While NSRF previously offered memberships at three different monetary levels, we now have a tiered membership structure with tiered benefits.

Free remains free, mostly.

The original NSRF protocols and activities that have always been free on our website will remain available, and remain free. And the price of each level of membership comes with benefits that more than balance the number on your check.

The revised website is expected to launch in mid-December, and we plan to publish the January issue of ***Connections*** with a face-lift of its own. Starting in January, we'll have more links inside ***Connections*** to help you with your practice, but only members

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who are current with their annual membership fees will have access to that material.

The benefits of a basic NSRF Membership:

Our basic membership fee remains at $25 and now includes the following benefits in addition to the 200+ original protocols and activities freely available on the website:

- Updated and new activities
- Ongoing subscription to ***Connections***
- Access to archived issues and articles from ***Connections***
- A $25 discount on trainings scheduled during the membership year
- A 10% discount on materials purchased during the membership year
- And more benefits to be added to the website as they become available, including training videos on NSRF activities

Added benefits of a member-coach NSRF Membership:

Members who can provide documentation of having completed five-day NSRF coaches training are eligible to become member-coaches. The member-coach annual fee remains at $75 and now includes the following benefits in addition to everything listed above:

- Updated and brand-new protocols
- Access to texts good for use within Critical Friends Groups® and other meetings
- A $75 discount on trainings scheduled during the membership year and 10% discount on materials purchased during the membership year
- Collection of tip sheets, sample surveys and letters, and other support for starting and maintaining CFGs®
- Access to the NSRF staff and National Facilitators to help you with specific protocol and activity questions
- And many more benefits coming soon including a web-based forum for discussion and questions with your peers and with national facilitators in good standing, plus training videos on NSRF protocols, and access to purchase a new ***Protocol Selection Tool*** and a ***New Coaches' Workbook!***

And for national facilitator members:

Your section will include new agendas and texts for trainings, support for setting up your own local open trainings, a private forum, and eventually, a new facilitator's guide. Not only are we streamlining the process to pay you for work we assign you, but also automating your ability to add the coaches you train to our database, so they can receive the benefits above.

Please let us know what you think.

We understand that this shift might be startling to some of you, but we hope for your understanding that these changes will help us stay sustainable into the future and keep our training costs as low as possible. We hope the increase in benefits inspires you to continue supporting us, as we strive to continue supporting you more and more effectively. If you have any suggestions for other member benefits you'd enjoy, please contact us with those ideas.

Watch your email for instructions to join or renew your membership!

Welcome, Dotty Sharp!

Since our last issue of ***Connections***, we have added a new staff member. You may have already "met" her if you've called or emailed us in the last couple of months. Please welcome Dotty Sharp, our new administrative assistant.

Between the three of us, we're becoming even more productive, supporting more and more coaches and administrative trainings around the world, producing the new website, updating the original protocols and activities, and working on a series of new materials to help you all work even more effectively in your CFGs, in the classroom, and beyond!

Dotty Sharp, administrative assistant, Michele Mattoon, NSRF Director, and Luci Englert McKean, NSRF special projects manager and Connections managing editor

CFGs transform teaching and learning. Are you ready to lead this change in your school?

NSRF protocols and activities increase student achievement, build trust among colleagues, help solve dilemmas, improve classroom work and meetings ... and increase job satisfaction!

Join the February Critical Friends Group New Coaches Open Training beginning Feb. 17-19 , in Bloomington, IN

Only $795 for five full days of training (last two days scheduled by participants, probably either in March or April.) By the end of the first day, you'll have new tools in your bag to use in classrooms and in meetings. By the end of the five days, you'll have experience leading several protocols that help create equity, build cohesion, improve assignments and assessments, and increase effective communication. What are you waiting for?

Visit the website or call NSRF at 812-330-2702 to register.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: To Create or Not Create a New Protocol, That is the Question

By Michele Mattoon, NSRF National Facilitator, and Director of the NSRF, michele@nsrfharmony.org

Michele Mattoon taught a 1st-2nd grade classroom for more than 25 years before she became the Director of the National School Reform Faculty in 2010. She's been a CFG coach since 1999 and a national facilitator since 2003. As a skilled NSRF National Facilitator, she leads trainings for new coaches, experienced coaches, and administrators all over the world. She also designs and leads meetings when organizations are facing challenges that can be helped with a neutral party.

Contact her with your questions or comments at michele@nsrfharmony.org

(With apologies to William Shakespeare, we wanted to address a question we hear often at NSRF.)

I have spent a lot of time as a national facilitator training people to become CFG coaches, emphasizing the idea of respecting the structure of protocols. If you have a fair amount of experience facilitating protocols, you know that not following the structure can have disastrous results. Once you stray from the correct steps, timing, language, or other details, groups can quickly dissolve into their default mode of communicating, which leads to inefficient and ineffective "business as usual."

However, there are times when coaches or facilitators may perceive the need to create a new protocol or adapt an existing one. For example, you may have tried a protocol and were not satisfied with the result. Or, perhaps you cannot find a protocol that seems to fit the exact needs of the presenter. Or you may not have enough time to run a protocol as it is written and have to come up with something that will fit your schedule.

My first suggestion is to give a protocol some time before you make any changes. The first time you facilitate a protocol, it's bound to feel a bit awkward, especially if you are not an experienced facilitator or coach. But if the protocol is not working for you after the third time trying it, you will have more information about why it's not working and then can make modifications accordingly.

You might also try talking to an experienced facilitator or coach to make sure that you have the right protocol for the job. Anyone who has done this work for a number of years has many failures, big and small, under their belt. With failure comes a myriad of learnings. So, it's definitely worthwhile to pick the brain of someone who has an understanding of what could work, given the circumstance.

OK, so you tried both of these ideas and have come to the conclusion that yes, you really do need to modify an existing protocol or create a brand new one. A word of caution—little changes can mean very different outcomes. For example, let's say that you do not have enough time to run a Consultancy Protocol as it is written. The protocol is written to take 50 minutes to run:

5-10 minutes to present the dilemma
5 minutes for clarifying questions
10 minutes for probing questions
15 minutes to talk about the dilemma
5 minutes for the presenter to reflect back to the group
5 minutes for the debrief

So, what do you cut? Let's say you decide to give the presenter only five minutes to present. That might work. However, if the dilemma is a particularly complex one,

that might not be the best option. People will not be able to help someone nearly as effectively if they don't understand the context. Even with five minutes for clarifying questions, there might be misconceptions floating around. And, if people really don't understand the dilemma, the whole protocol can end with the presenter feeling as frustrated as before. The best remedy for this situation is to pre-conference with your presenter to determine whether it makes sense to cut time in this step.

Hmmm, what about cutting the probing questions time? Even if you carve out a couple of those ten minutes for the group to first quietly write their probing questions, you'll still have eight minutes to ask the questions and some time for the presenter to tell the group which question or two pushed their thinking the most. This could be a good place to cut time, as long as you are sure that you give the presenter an adequate amount of time to absorb the questions. People who present during a dilemma protocol often state that the probing questions piece is the most valuable part of the protocol. If just one probing question pushes your thinking into new directions that shed new light on the problem, the whole protocol has been worth it. So, shortchanging this time could also have adverse effects, leaving the presenter in the same stuck place.

Of course you could simply cut the time for the discussion, but that's really the part that the presenter might feel is the most important. Hearing others struggle with your dilemma, while adding insights based on their experiences can be incredibly enlightening. Making this time shorter could leave the presenter and the group unsatisfied.

See what we mean? By the way, if you'd like to see some of our more widely used protocols modified for shorter times, you can visit our collection of Thirty-Minute Protocols.

If you decide to create your own protocol, there are essential elements that should be taken into consideration.

• Almost every protocol has a place for the presenter to present (their work, a dilemma, what's needed by a group, etc.).

• There should be a time for questions—many times clarifying, sometimes probing.

• Every protocol needs time built in for silent reflection, analysis and/or taking notes for feedback.

• Often during a protocol, the presenter is asked to move away or pull back from the group while the group members are giving feedback, in order to listen and take notes without worrying about responding to the comments. This is followed by an opportunity for the presenter to reflect on what was helpful to them and what actions they are now thinking about taking.

• No protocol needs every one of these steps, and some include other steps not written here, but every protocol should end with a debrief session.

As I often get asked about this process, we're contemplating offering an Experienced Coaches Training around protocol creation. In the meantime, I decided to write an activity around modifying and creating protocols. (You might want to check and see how many of the above mentioned elements I have incorporated into this protocol!) If you're interested in learning more, download that activity on our website here. [Editor's note: viewing links in future issues of Connections will require a paid NSRF membership.]

And finally, once you do create a new protocol, take it on more than one test drive. Take time to smooth out all the kinks. I can't even tell you how many revisions some protocols have had, as they continue to be refined over the years of use. Once you feel it's ready to share more broadly, give it a name (preferably identifying what the protocol tries to accomplish, like the "Tuning Protocol"), add a subtitle if necessary ("adapted from the Student Staffing Protocol") and send it to us. If we think your protocol is unique and helpful, we'll add it to our library of resources, with your name on it, of course! What a great way to share your knowledge and contribute to educators' toolboxes all around the world.

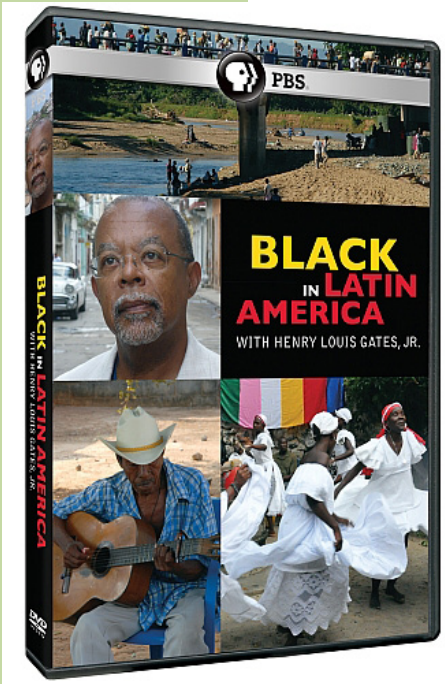
Michele Mattoon
NSRF Director

FROM THE VIDEO SCREEN: Reviews of two videos conveying Latino American history and culture

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

Black in Latin America

2011, Public Broadcasting System



Our schools give witness to a major demographic shift in this country. We see a growing number of Latino and Latina students representing newer generations from long-time U.S. residents, as well as recent immigrants from Mexico and Central and South American countries. Educators in the U.S. need to know more about the history and cultures from these countries, and about the largely unwritten Latino American history.

Two recent PBS documentaries may be helpful: ***Black in Latin America*** (2011), and ***Latino Americans: The 500-Year Legacy That Shaped a Nation*** (2013). Both are two-disc sets with multiple 50- to 60-minute episodes on each disc. Both include Spanish and English voice-overs and subtitles. They are available on DVD from Public Broadcasting Service via their website and are available for online viewing at pbs.org.

Black in Latin America includes four episodes: "Haiti and Dominican Republic: An Island Divided," "Cuba: The Next Revolution," "Brazil: A Racial Paradise?," and "Mexico & Peru: A Hidden Race." Narrator Henry Louis Gates Jr. takes the viewer on a guided tour of these six countries, re-tracing historical footprints of the Africans and Europeans who came from abroad to settle in these lush countries. Gates, professor at Harvard University's W.E.B. DuBois Institute for African and African American Studies, researches the central question of this series: *how have the people of Latin America embraced their African history?*

Viewers will learn of Haiti's origin as the birthplace of the black experience in the Americas, the first place in the "new world" to import slaves from Africa. Haitians speak Creole and are proud of their black heritage. Just across the river

Narrator Henry Louis Gates Jr. Screenshot from Black in Latin America

from Haiti in the Dominican Republic, the people speak Spanish, and a rainbow racial mix of people seem proud of that heritage. One island over is Cuba, where Gates asks, did Castro's revolution in 1959 put an end to racism in Cuba? Cuba imported more than twice the number of African slaves as the U.S.

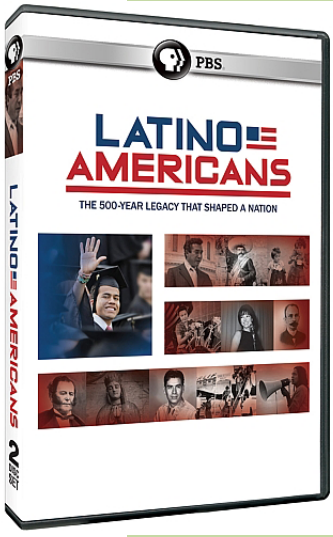
In South America, Brazil describes itself as a "racial democracy" with over 100 descriptive categories for variations in skin color of the population. Ten times the number of African slaves were imported into Brazil compared to the U.S., due largely to its closer proximity to Africa and a shorter sea voyage. In Mexico, referred to in this episode as the country of "the black grandma in the closet," black heritage is not acknowledged openly. And in Peru, one of the countries liberated from Spain by Simon Bolivar, blacks are currently undervalued, despite their major role in Peru's history.

Professor Gates examines the "rainbow nation" of Brazil. Screenshot from Black in Latin America

One fascinating newer development in these Latin American countries is the emerging new role of pop singers urging an end to racism and a truly equitable society. For example, Susana Baca is bringing about a resurgence and rebirth of Afro-Peruvian music. Brazilian rapper MV Bill and Cuban rapper Soandres del Rio each buck societal norms in their countries, musically calling for an end to racial inequality.

Similarly, religions unique to many of these countries preserve much of the ancient African religious practices in new combinations, blended with European religions. For example Candomble in Brazil and Vodou in Haiti both have roots in such African cultures as the Yoruba of Nigeria. It is through these cultural practices, often in hidden, out-of-the-way places, that contemporary blacks struggle to keep alive elements of their own African heritage.

Louis Henry Gates Jr., narrator and guide, provides an amazingly rich and insightful commentary throughout his visits to these Latin American countries. Speaking with the local people of each country, interviewing university professors from each, and digging in the actual physical places, ancient and contemporary, Gates probes for answers to questions about the black heritage and current situation in these countries. Because these countries all have historical ties to the United States, and our history, music, religion, and culture, this documentary provides a complex, multi-faceted look into a significant part of our history that is important for American teachers and students.



Latino Americans:

The 500-Year Legacy That Shaped a Nation

2013, Public Broadcasting System

The ***Latino Americans*** documentary focuses on the Latino American chapters of the American story, starting when various groups arrived in the U.S. As the subtitle says, this series reviews "the 500-Year Legacy That Shaped a Nation." This documentary includes six episodes, each with a chapter in the companion book of

the same title, sold separately. The information in the book is really supplementary to the DVD, and unfortunately, a teacher's guide is not included with the DVD set.

Hourlong episodes include "Foreigners in Their Own Land," (matching chapter 1, "The Convergence Begins"), "Empire of Dreams" (chapter 2, "Shared Destinies…Made Manifest"), "War and Peace" (chapter 3, "At War: Abroad…And At Home"), "The New Latinos" (chapter 4, "I Like To Be In America"), "Prejudice and Pride" (chapter 5, "Who's 'In'? Who's 'Out'? Whose America?"), and "Peril and Promise" (chapter 6, "Where Are We Going?"). I'll begin this review with a quote from the introduction of the companion book:

*"The Latino Americans come from Europe, Africa, Asia, and from the ancient nations of this hemisphere. They are the offspring of Spain's New World Empire. They arrived in the United States by jet aircraft this morning; they crossed a dusty, empty stretch of desert just yesterday or long years after arriving here to work, they raised a right hand in front of a federal judge and swore to renounce all other allegiances to any other country. And most important, alongside those whose American story is a recent one are the generations of Latinos whose families have been in this country far longer than there has been a place called the United States, even longer than the arrivals from the British Isles who would go on to invent the United States…. **You cannot understand more than fifty million of your fellow Americans without knowing this history. More important, you won't be able to understand the America that's just over the horizon if you don't know this history. Latino history is your history. Latino history is our history."*** [emphasis mine]

In contrast with the ***Black in Latin America*** documentary, this series approaches the subject through historical research, personal and historical documents and films, and interviews with Americans whose ancestors came from Mexico, Spain, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and countries in Central and South America.

Julia Alvarez, Dominican-American Poet, novelist and essayist. Screenshot from Latino Americans

Interviews with professional historians and with elders who share family stories convey tales of ancestors who came to this country arriving from afar, seeking a better life in the new land. The first episode studies the period from 1565 to 1880, when the first Spanish explorers, Catholic missionaries, arrived from Mexico and Spain, coming up the Pacific coast. At the same time, colonial Americans expanded into territories in the Southwest that had long been home to Native Americans and English and Spanish colonies, and by 1848, the Mexican-American War left Mexico with half of its original territories in North America.

It includes the story of Juan Seguin, a Tejano, Mexican-born Texan who fought with the Anglos at the Alamo and led the eventual combined army that conquered Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. Another story is of Apolinaria Lorenzanna, who became "La Beata," the "Blessed One," at a San Diego mission, one of a string of twenty-one missions that were created along the coast of what became California. Her long life (she died at age 94) covered California's decades of transition from Spanish colony, to part of Mexico's independent nationhood, to the defeat of the Comanches and Apaches,

to the arrival of the Stars and Stripes.

Episode two builds upon that early history and documents how the American population as a whole began to be reshaped by an influx of Latinos from the 1880s into the 1940s, as Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans began arriving and building strong Latino American communities in South Florida, Los Angeles, and New York. One famous Latina American interviewed in this segment is Rita Moreno, the Oscar-winning actress from Puerto Rico. This episode relates details of "Operation Bootstrap" during the Great Depression, which saw 300,000 Puerto Ricans emigrate from Puerto Rico to the East Barrio of New York City.

Dolores Huerta co-founded the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez. Screenshot from Latino Americans

Episodes three and four tell more stories of Latino Americans fighting within the U.S. Army during World War II but still experiencing discrimination and a fight for civil rights that continued through the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and beyond. Viewers learn the heartbreaking and exciting story of the Capo brothers, Luis and Carlos, who left Castro's Cuba as teenagers and set up a furniture shop in south Florida that eventually became the highly successful El Dorado furniture company.

Latino Americans not only tells stories of individuals and their outstanding accomplishments, but of collective efforts of such leaders as Cesar Chavez and Delores Huerta who originated and led the United Farm Workers successful strikes and march to the California capitol of Sacramento, eventually winning a better wage and working conditions. Episode five also reviews the story of Sal Castro, a high school teacher who led the student walk-out/strikes at Belmont and Lincoln High School in Los Angeles, and of Herman Badillo, the first U.S. Congressman born in Cuba and elected in 1971. Latino Americans describes a people with a new identity—the "Chicanos" or "Mexicans." Both words originally came from "Meshica," the indigenous peoples' term for Mexicans, pronounced "meh-shee-co." By dropping the first syllable "meh," became "shee-co" or "Chico."

Using video clips from numerous news broadcasts, home movie clips from Latino families, interviews with historians and scholars, and interviews with elders who were actual participants in the various historical events involving Latinos and Latinas, this documentary relays a vibrant history of amazingly resilient people. Finally, episode six brings viewers to the current era and the ongoing, multi-layered issues of immigration on the southern borders of the U.S.–migrant laborers, undocumented others, and families split by deportations. The past thirty years has seen a second wave of Cubans arriving in Florida, and hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans, Nicaraguans and Guatemalans fleeing civil wars, death squads, and unrest, coming north into the U.S., transforming our culture along the way.

Latino Americans, along with ***Black in Latin America***, should give teachers and students the necessary background to understand what Latinos and Latinas bring to the present, and hope for the future. — *Dave Lehman*

NSRF Future Protocol supports math teachers in overhauling their curriculum

By Linda Hanson, CFG Coach in Alabama, lhanson@randolphschool.net

Linda Hanson is currently a mathematics teacher and robotics coach at the Randolph School in Huntsville, AL. She came to the classroom after earning degrees in chemistry and economics from Smith College and her MBA from the University of Michigan. She also worked as a senior financial analyst and senior manager in revenue accounting.

Contact her with your questions or comments at lhanson@randolphschool.net

In the 2012-13 school year at Randolph School, an independent K-12 school in Huntsville, Alabama, we introduced our version of Critical Friends Groups, dubbed Professional Learning Collaboratives. As one of the NSRF-certified coaches, I was asked to facilitate a group of middle school math teachers in our inaugural year.

In the spring of 2013, we were facing a significant schedule change: moving from a traditional five-day schedule with forty-minute periods to an eight-day rotating schedule with one hour periods. During that eight-day rotation, each class would meet six times. It was with a healthy dose of fear and trepidation that we contemplated the fall semester. Would we be able to fill one-hour class times? Would we still be able to teach the essential content in fewer meetings? Should we reduce the breadth of curriculum in favor of depth? These and many other questions loomed large as we looked ahead to the coming year and the new schedule.

Earlier in the year, we had completed a detailed overview of our current middle school math curriculum, listing in detail each of the topics that we taught, and to what depth and level we taught them. We selected the NSRF Future protocol (AKA "Back to the Future") as a means to envision our department under the new schedule.

The Future protocol consists of seven parts. In the first, a person or group presents what they are trying to accomplish. For our group, this was to determine what our curriculum would look like subject to the new schedule.

The second part involves asking clarifying questions. Since we were working as a group, rather than with a presenter, we bypassed this portion of the protocol.

The third part is probing questions. For our group, these questions were those already mentioned, along with another major issue. Our school teaches a very traditional mathematics curriculum in grades six through twelve, and many of our current textbooks are no longer in print and are becoming more difficult to find in the reseller marketplace.

In part four, we projected ourselves two years into the future and described what our curriculum looked like. For us, this included the possibility of new textbooks, new technology, and an entirely new curriculum. As we contemplated these topics, we recorded our ideas on wall charts. For our group, the projected future included technology access for every student, solid mastery rather than superficial understanding, interdepartmental work in every grade, common language across all math courses, alternative forms of assessment, and a sense of not being rushed to "cram it all in," among others. We selected a two year projection, because we felt that it gave us a year to get acclimated to the new schedule, along with a second year to work out some of the challenges we inevitably would encounter during the first year.

In part five, our group looked back from the projected future to the present, describing the current state. Our group

noted that class periods were too short to allow much hands-on practice with new material, that we did not have enough time in our day to collaborate effectively, and that students were more focused on grades than on learning and acquisition of new knowledge and skills. We also observed that word problems were intimidating to students, some portions of our curriculum were outdated due to available technologies, and that our exam week was quite stressful.

In part six, our group continued to look back from the projected future and discussed how we addressed the starting point and what steps we had taken to arrive at the projected future. For our group, this section was the most enjoyable because we were able to envision the ideal path to our projected future. For us, this path included more time to work together as a team, an iPad or laptop initiative in grades five and six, the introduction of e-texts and videos of ourselves teaching for students to watch from home. One of our major concerns was that with fewer and longer class sessions, student absences would be far more significant in terms of missed material.

In part seven, our group returned to the projected future and discussed if it could be made any better or was at an ideal state. We knew we had not come up with the ideal state but felt that if we could feasibly arrive at our projected future in two years, we would have made significant strides.

So where does this lead us? Where do we go from here? How do we make this happen? These are the logical questions which which we grappled. Our school offers the opportunity for paid summer faculty collaboration efforts. We wrote our grant proposal for a week of collaboration concerning our curriculum, and it was approved and funded. During our week together, we developed e-texts, using Haiku Learning Systems software, to replace or supplement our existing textbooks. Those that are using them as a supplement will likely expand these e-texts to eventually replace textbooks that are no longer available.

In addition to creating e-texts, we began to record a series of screencasts and videos of ourselves teaching lessons. We are only a few months into this process, so for now we are using them in our own classrooms. Students who are absent can keep up with class by watching their teacher's videos. Some of us have even chosen to flip our classrooms; students are watching lesson videos in lieu of written homework, and class time is used to explore and practice the material in various ways.

As we approach the two year mark and arrive at our projected future, we hope to create an online general library of screencasts and videos available to all math teachers and students. If students need to go back and review something from a previous course, videos will be available in the library for them to view. If others need enrichment, videos will be available for them as well.

Another aspect of our projected path was greater access to technology, particularly for our fifth and sixth graders. Our eighth graders have individual netbooks for use at school, and this program was expanded to the seventh grade this year, as well. That expansion has freed up an additional computer lab that is now available to fifth and sixth grade teachers along with two netbook carts that teachers can sign out as needed. In addition to these netbooks, the fifth grade is piloting an iPad initiative this year. We have a dedicated iPad cart in the math classroom, with extras available to other teachers for center work. Our fifth grade has fully embraced the flipped classroom approach, using the iPads for game-based activity, math apps, and viewing of videos during class and study hall. Students have commented that they appreciate being able to do their written work during class and that the daily homework load has been greatly reduced in comparison to prior years. Parents appreciate that they have a reliable source of information that directly matches the teacher's approach and teaching for times when home reinforcement is required. When a student is out sick or forgets to take something home, the lesson video, handouts, and other resources are linked to the e-text; no trip to school is necessary.

We aren't where we projected ourselves to be – yet. We have, after all, two years to fulfill our vision of the future. But we have made the initial steps necessary during the past three months to get us there. News of our progress is spreading at school. We recently held a workshop with other teachers to share our experience and to help them take the initial steps toward the development of digital materials for their classrooms. The Future protocol allowed us to envision the future, determine what we would need to do, and to make a firm plan for how to get there.

Book Reviews

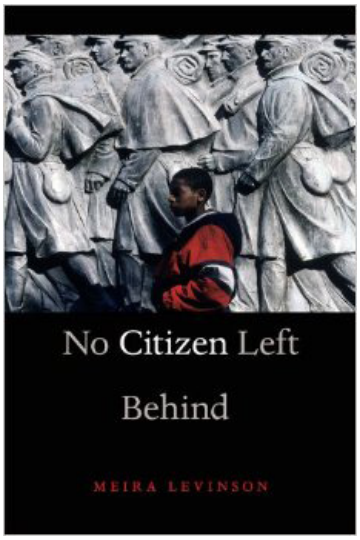
TWO BOOK REVIEWS: Dealing with issues of equity and diversity

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

No Citizen Left Behind

By Meira Levinson, 2012, Harvard University Press

No Citizen Left Behind is written by Meira Levinson, a Professor of Education at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. Professor Levinson begins all seven chapters and the prologue drawing on her recent experiences of eight years as an urban middle school teacher. Initially she worked at Walden Middle School in Atlanta (99% black, 94% free and reduced lunch), where she was hired to oversee the implementation of the "International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme." She then moved to McCormack Middle School in Boston as an eighth grade social studies teacher.



The prologue begins with a story from her experience coaching the Walden National Academic League quiz bowl team. Returning home on the bus after being soundly beaten by the wealthiest and whitest suburban Boston team, Levinson discussed the event with her students. Clearly, questions requiring knowledge of Richard Nixon, Burt Bacharach, Bjorn Borg, John Wayne, and Kurt Cobain weren't geared toward her black students. Levinson uses this conversation to describe what the book is all about and why she wrote it:

"I am convinced schools need to teach young people knowledge and skills to upend and reshape power relationships directly, through public, political, and civic action, not just private self-improvement. "What does this look like in practice, especially in urban public schools like Walden that are struggling to provide even the academic basics to young people growing up in historically marginalized communities? What principles can and should guide this work? How can one justify to a skeptical public this ideal of empowerment—an ideal that literally puts power in the hands of youth?

"These are the questions that I address [in the book]. In so doing, I also ask and strive to answer a number of other questions: Why should we care about empowerment, particularly within de facto segregated schools and communities? Does and should empowerment look different in these contexts than in others? When students are living in historically marginalized and disempowered communities, should schools focus on helping them gain the knowledge and skills to contribute to and build up their own communities, or to escape into more efficacious communities? How much can be achieved in settings such as Walden if we don't transform education …. in wealthier and whiter suburbs…? In this respect, what are the implications of the choices we make in de facto segregated schools and communities for the nation as a whole?"

Levinson uses another of her middle school teaching experiences to begin chapter three, "You Have the Right to Struggle: Constructing Historical Counter-narrative." In this illustration,

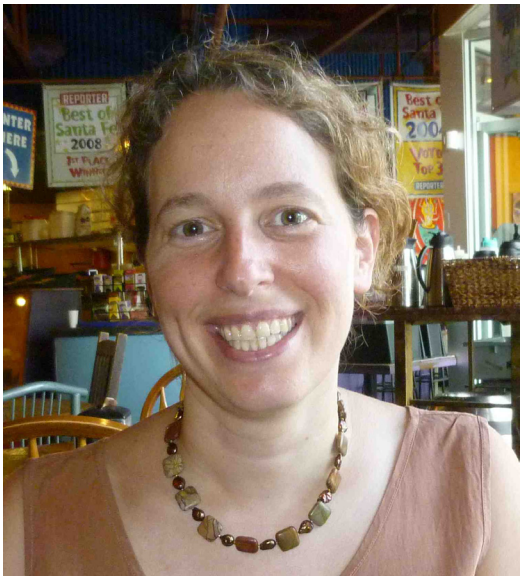
she draws on her work with a group of her eighth graders who represent the student body's strong objection to the new mandate that they wear school uniforms. She agreed to assist these students who wanted to make this their "social science fair project." They researched the various reasons why school districts have instituted the wearing of school uniforms, scoured School Board minutes for any discussion and reasoning about requiring uniforms (and found none), then prepared to present their findings and concerns to the Atlanta School Board. Midway through their research, one of the students, James, looked up and commented:

"You know why the school board imposed uniforms, don't you? They don't want us to be in the 'hood, but they stuck with the school where it's at, so they gave us uniforms to make us look different."

"He right," Krystal concur[red]. "They want us to look clean, get the ghetto out of us. We look dumb walking down the street in them yellow shirts and blue pants."

In the results section of their report the students then stated their belief that the board had done everything in their power to separate Walden and its students from the surrounding neighborhood, families, friends, and culture. They believed the board had brought in the IB Programme and bused in 6th grade white, rich kids from outside their neighborhood, to make them look "clean," and "international," no longer a local, ghetto school. And the lack of any board discussion or opportunity for public discussion of the new policy was a blatant example of their disrespect for the students, families, and community. Levinson describes the take-away lessons from the experience—lessons for all of us—as follows:

"I assumed that as their teacher, I knew what they knew (and more, of course): in other words, that I knew the contours of their knowledge and their ignorance, and that anything they were knowledgeable about, so was I. Furthermore, I unthinkingly assumed that once my students had thought about what they knew and had learned, they would reach the same conclusions I did [uniforms could be a good thing]. Common data would lead to common conclusions. But I was wrong, both because I didn't know what they knew, and because we understood what we knew differently. I didn't know enough to understand their stories about how the uniforms visibly and symbolically separated them from their neighborhood.... Students learn civic and historical narratives from their families, neighbors, pastors, peers, and media. These sources vary widely in what they teach, especially as different ethno-racial, cultural, religious, and other communities hold and teach quite contrasting views about their place in history...."



Meira Levinson

Levinson is clearly concerned about students becoming not just knowledgeable of democracy and how it works, but learning how to, and actually becoming empowered to, fully engage in civic action. And this is of great concern as there is what she calls a clear "civic empowerment gap" in this country, beginning in our schools, and par-

Dave Lehman is the former founding principal/teacher of the Lehman Alternative Community School in Ithaca, NY. This public middle-high school was recently named after him and his wife by the Ithaca, New York Board of Education upon their retirement after 30 years. Dave was a member of the very first "Principals Seminar" leadership group at the beginning of the NSRF, under the umbrella of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Soon thereafter he was trained as a coach and then a national facilitator.

Contact him with your questions or comments at davelehman@mac.com

ticularly true for students of color, students of poverty, students with English as a second language, and students with disabilities. Thus, in chapter five, "How to Soar in a World You've Never Seen: Making Citizenship Visible in Schools," she states:

"Schools need to exemplify the civic world that students have 'never seen.' They need to create model civic spaces for young people, and give students opportunities to develop and practice empowering civic skills, habits, attitudes. By doing so, schools promote and encourage students' identities as efficacious, engaged youth. This is crucial especially for the many low-income youth of color who, outside of school, rarely have the opportunity to practice such skills and are often treated not as future productive citizens but as likely criminals…. Schools need to help change young people's lived experiences. Youth at the bottom of the civic empowerment gap have no reason to embrace civic engagement in the absence of proof that it makes a difference, or that they are respected as citizens, as valued contributors to and rights-bearing members of society. School can and must help students experience empowered citizenship in order to enable young people to build the knowledge, skills, pro-civic attitudes, and habits of civic participation for the future. These experiences can and should be built into the everyday practices of school."

Levinson describes her "democratic theory of change" and what she sees as four essential pedagogical characteristics of schools: "intentionality, transparency, reflection, and authenticity." She believes that if schools actively embody these characteristics, then the civic relationships, norms, and habits they model will have a real chance of sticking. She then makes a strong case for an "open classroom climate" that actively encourages and supports "student voice," where students can freely engage in lively, authentic discussions of controversial points of views while listening to others' different perspectives. She cites supportive research for this pedagogical essential:

"Research over the past forty years across dozens of countries has conclusively demonstrated that students' belief that they are 'encouraged to speak openly in class' is 'a powerful predictor of their knowledge of and support for democratic values, and their participation in political discussion inside and outside school.' Students' experiences of an open classroom climate are positively associated with overall civic and political knowledge, intent to vote, likelihood of being an informed voter, expectation of engaging in other political and civic actions, expression of political efficacy and civic duty, comfort with civic and political conflict, interest in politics and attentiveness to current events, and critical thinking and communications skills. These findings are consistent and strong across a wide variety of schools both within the United States and around the world."

Levinson gives several examples of ways to do this in the classroom based on her own experience. She also suggests ways for teachers to scaffold their teaching to help students develop the requisite skills and attitudes.

In the closing chapter, "Democracy, Accountability, and Education," Levinson offers the following summary:

"In this book, I have argued in favor of a particular ideal of civic empowerment and education: one that is egalitarian, collective, engaged, inclusive, eclectic, change-oriented rather than status quo-preserving, responsive to lived experience as opposed to embodying solely theoretical ideals, informed by knowledge, enabled by skills, made consistent by habit, and motivated by efficacious, responsible, and critical attitudes. In the course of this argument, I have told teachers what they should do in their classes, administrators how they should revise school practices, publishers how they should rewrite their textbooks, and parents and students themselves what they should demand from their schools."

Thus, I urge all readers of ***Connections*** to take up the cause, to get involved in closing the "civic empowerment gap," and to begin, perhaps, by reading this book! Our democracy will only become what it is capable of being if each successive generation becomes civically active, learning-by-doing what it means to live in a democracy. I'll close this review with the same quote I used from Levinson in the July issue of ***Connections***, Part-2, "Thinking About Teaching Thinking":

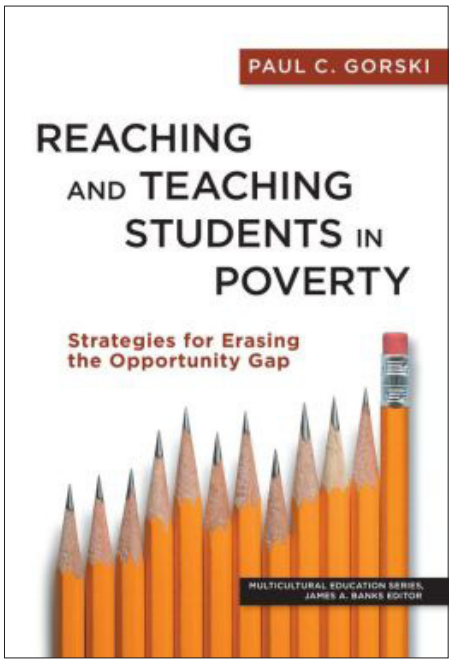
"Ultimately, this is for our own benefit as much as theirs. If we want to live in a better world, in a stronger democracy, in a United States that truly stands one day for 'justice for all,' we need the insights, energy, and knowledge that young people – including low-income youth of color – bring to the struggle. We also need the wisdom they will bring when they are older. Tackling the civic empowerment gap today expands the ranks of active citizens both now and in the future. This long-term, communal, and equitable engagement is essential for achieving the 'more perfect Union' to which we all aspire. It is time for us to move forward together."

Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty:

Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap

By Paul Gorski, 2013, Teachers College Press

A second book I recommend is **Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap** (Teachers College Press, 2013) by Paul Gorski, part of the "Multicultural Education Series" edited by James Banks, who writes the foreword to this volume. Paul Gorski is a professor of integrative studies at George Mason University (and incidentally founder of EdChange.org, an incredibly rich website with tons of multicultural materials, including several free downloads). He begins on page 1 of the introductory chapter by listing the "savage inequalities" (of which Jonathan Kozol spoke so eloquently in his book of the same title, back in 1992):



"Poor students are assigned disproportionately to the most inadequately funded schools with the largest class sizes and lowest paid teachers. They are more likely than their wealthier peers to be bullied and to attend school in poorly maintained buildings. They are denied access to the sorts of school resources and opportunities other children take for granted, such as dedicated school nurses, and engaging pedagogies. In fact, by these and almost every other possible measure, students from poor families, the ones most desperate to find truth in the 'great equalizer' [education] promise, appear to pay a great price for their poverty, even at school."

Gorski continues in that introductory chapter to describe why he wrote the book and what he intends to address:

"I wrote this book, in part, to nudge educators, including myself, past those assumptions [poor families are not interested in education] and toward a deeper, more empathetic, and more holistic understanding of the effects of poverty and class bias on the school experiences of poor and working class students. I wrote it to nudge us past the simplification and stereotypes [i.e. "culture of poverty"] that I believe hamper our abilities to be the teachers and leaders we want to be for all of our students.

Paul C. Gorski

"I wrote it, too, because I believe in the transformative power of teachers, perhaps not in the fight to end global poverty (at least not on their own), but in the commitment to walk into classrooms and schools full of students, dedicated, despite all the challenges, to do right by each of them. I believe that we want a more complex conversation about poverty and that we're capable of digging deeper into questions about what we can do to better facilitate educational opportunity for every family."

The book is primarily about Gorski's "Equity Literacy" approach to educational equity. Drawing on four other models and approaches for thinking about equity and diversity in our schools—"resiliency theory," "diversity pedagogy theory," the "funds of knowledge" concept, and some of the elements of "cultural proficiency"—Gorski "requires us to understand our own biases and how they are tied to privilege and even to societal inequalities." In setting up and explaining equity literacy in the second chapter, "Imagining Equitable Classrooms," Gorski initially points out that "the equity-literate educator cultivates in her- or himself four interlocking abilities." He urges all of us teachers, administrators, and others involved in education to develop these abilities if they are not already qualities we believe and truly act on:

"1) the ability to recognize both subtle and not-so-subtle biases and inequities in classroom dynamics, school cultures and policies, and the broader society, and how these biases and inequities affect students and their families;

2) the ability to respond to biases and inequities in the immediate term, as they crop up in classrooms and schools;

3) the ability to redress biases and inequities in the longer term, so that they do not continue to crop up in classrooms and schools; and

4) the ability to create and sustain a bias-free and equitable learning environment for all students."

Gorski then gives examples of what these abilities look like in practice and some of the associated skills and dispositions of each of the four, and continues to illustrate them throughout the remainder of the book. Continuing in that first chapter, Gorski then introduces and briefly explains "Ten Principles of Equity Literacy" which form the framework, the guiding principles of the book:

"Principle 1: The right to equitable education opportunity is universal.

Principle 2: Poverty and class are intersectional in nature.

Principle 3: Poor people are diverse.

Principle 4: What we believe, including our biases and prejudices, about people in poverty informs how we teach and relate to people in poverty.

Principle 5: We cannot understand the relationship between poverty and education without understanding the biases and inequities experienced by people in poverty.

Principle 6: Test scores are inadequate measures of equity.

Principle 7: Class disparities in education are the result of inequities, not the result of cultures.

Principle 8: Equitable educators adopt a resiliency rather than a deficit view of low-income students and families.

Principle 9: Strategies for bolstering school engagement and learning must be based on evidence for what works.

Principle 10: The inalienable right to equitable educational opportunity includes the right to high expectations, higher-order pedagogies, and engaging curriculum."

Then, in the remaining chapters three through ten, Gorski begins each with a re-statement of the three or four principles that form a backdrop to the specific topic of that chapter. For example, at the outset of chapter three, "The Inequality Mess We're In: A Class and Poverty Primer" – he notes that this chapter relates specifically to principles two, three, and four. He actually begins that chapter with a ten-question, multiple-choice "Poverty and Class Awareness Quiz," with such questions as:

"1. According to the Children's Defense Fund (2010), how often is a child born into poverty in the United states? a) every 32 seconds, b) every 3 minutes & 2 seconds, c) every 32 minutes

2. According to the Center for American Progress (2007), what proportion of U.S. citizens will live at least 1 year of their lives in poverty? a) one-fifth, b) one-third, c) one-half"

(See the bottom of page 14 for the answers.)

Using this Quiz as a starting point, Gorski goes on to give extensively researched specifics about how poverty is intertwined with other identities including gender and sexism, race and racism, and disability and ableism. He then ends each chapter with a brief, summarizing Conclusion, such as this for the above chapter three:

"The kind of information filling the pages of this chapter might seem, to some readers, far removed from the day-to-day joys and challenges of classroom and school life. We, as educators, have plenty to do without somebody coming along and adding increasing rates of child poverty to our agenda of problems to solve. ***It bears repeating that my intention,*** *including a sort of class and poverty primer in this book,* ***is not to argue that every teacher must commit her life to ending global poverty,*** *although it's amazing to imagine what we could do if we chose to put our collective energies toward that goal.* ***Rather, the purpose*** *of equipping ourselves with deeper understandings of poverty rates and wealth distribution and various other big patterns and phenomena* ***is to better understand poor and working class students and families and the challenges they are up against."*** *[emphasis mine]*

The following is a list of the remaining seven chapters, which should provide enough of an overview to see where Gorski is headed: 4) The Trouble with the "Culture of Poverty and Other Stereotypes about People in Poverty, 5) Class Inequities Beyond Schools walls and Why They Matter at School, 6) The Achievement–err, Opportunity–Gap in School, 7) Been There, Done That, Didn't Work: The Most Popular Ineffective Strategies for Teaching Students in Poverty, 8) What Works (When Adapted to Your Specific Context of Course): Instruc-

tional Strategies That Are Effective, Equitable, and Even Data-Driven, 9) The Mother of All Strategies: Committing to Working With Rather than On Families In Poverty, and 10) Expanding Our Spheres of Influence: Advocating for School, District, Regional, and National Change for the Educational Good. And it is perhaps chapters seven, eight, and nine that will be of most interest to readers of ***Connections***, as they address specific things that can/should be done in the classroom, and some that shouldn't. Specifically, here is the small sampling of popular (and no doubt controversial) strategies that research has shown not to be effective in addressing poverty in the classroom: a) direct instruction and other lower-order pedagogies including teaching to the test, b) tracking and ability grouping, and c) charter schools. I encourage you to read the chapter to understand Gorski's arguments.

Turning then to "Instructional Strategies That Work" in chapter eight, Gorski posits the following, first as an easily accessible list, and then he clarifies/expands on each item:

1) "incorporating music, art, and theater across the curriculum;

2) having and communicating high expectations for all students;

3) adopting higher-order, student-centered, rigorous pedagogies;

4) incorporating movement and exercise into teaching and learning;

5) making curricula relevant to the lives of low-income students;

6) teaching about poverty and class bias;

7) analyzing learning materials for class (and other) bias; and

8) promoting literacy enjoyment."

It seems important here to note that these "strategies" clearly connect to, and are similar to, much of what Meira Levinson talks about in her book, such as her closing summary copied in the first book review. And there is the connection between Levinson's call for attention to "student voice" and "relationships" as key to working with the students of color, and Gorski's "Mother of All Strategies"—building relationships—noting the research-based finding that "[t]he most successful teachers of low-income students:

1. "choose a resilience view, rather than a deficit view, of poor and working class families, focusing on student and family assets;

2. engage in persistent family outreach efforts;

*3. **build trusting relationships with students**; and [emphasis mine]*

4. ensure that opportunities for family involvement are accessible to poor and working class families."

In closing, I recommend this essential and particularly timely new book by Paul Gorski, ending with these lines from his concluding chapter:

"Respect and the extent to which we demonstrate it in our teaching is tied up in those things, those sometimes little bitty things we do or don't do, say or don't say, or even think or don't think. And it's about our willingness to take a stand when one of our students is being shortchanged—not standing in front of or standing in place of, but standing next to, standing with low-income students and families."

Please email us with your comments. — *Dave Lehman*

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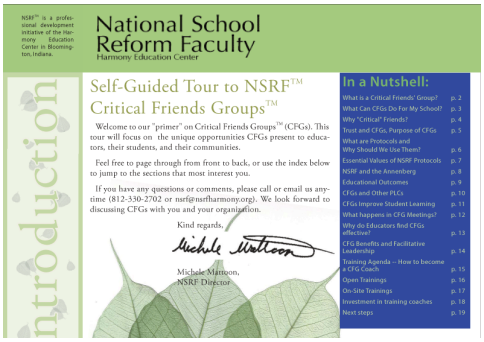

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