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

May 2014

Connections

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: Celebrate the end of your school year

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

When I was teaching, the school years seemed to be punctuated by certain milestones on the calendar: the first day of school, winter break, spring break, the beginning of a new semester, standardized test time, finals, and evaluations. As the end of the school year approached I was often stopped by well-meaning people declaring, "Aren't you excited? It's the last week of classes! Now, you get to relax and enjoy your summer!"

I would give that person a smile and keep myself from launching into all the tasks I still had to cram in those last weeks, and then all the meetings to attend after school was over, not to mention the amount of time I had to spend on professional development during the summer.

It took a few weeks after the last day of school for me to begin the process of relaxing and refueling. Occasionally, whoever was in charge of leading our year-end meetings would strive to create some sort of positive bonding experience for us.

Unfortunately, much of our meetings were taken up with once again worrying over what didn't work that year or stressing out about all the stuff that was going to be expected of us the next year. Mostly we'd hear a token, "Good work, folks!" before we cleared out of the building.

With that in mind, it's not surprising that May is the month that I'm frequently asked if NSRF® has any protocols or activities that would be "a good way" to end the school year. Lately, I have become more conscious of the need for intentional celebration as we review our past. So much of what we do as professionals in the education field is about identifying, analyzing, and correcting what hasn't gone well. Of course, this is an important process when it comes to

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striving for continuous improvement.

However, if a school only concentrates on what went wrong, it can create a depressing culture of mistrust and resentment. When staff is constantly judged to be lacking, it's no surprise that they will feel beleaguered and unappreciated.

I urge you to take some time at the end of the school year to look back and celebrate the many things that were done right. By engaging in this way, we not only give ourselves a well-deserved pat on the back, but more importantly, we gain respect for our fellow faculty. Hearing the successes of others reveals to us the wonderful things that are happening in our school. It reminds us that, most days, more things go right than go wrong. Upon hearing these stories, we feel a renewed sense of hope and purpose. We believe that we can make a difference and become advocates for each other's successes. Regularly scheduling time to celebrate successes can promote a healthy school culture by building trust one positive story at a time. Here are three of my favorite ways to end the school year:

1. Success Analysis with Reflective Questions: The Success Analysis with Reflective Questions allows the group to hear stories of other's successes and, also, to share one of their own. The idea is to listen to the success through the lens of learning from it. We ask ourselves questions such as, "What exactly did this person do to ensure their success?" and "How can we apply these tools to our work so that we will become more successful?" After completing the protocol in triads, the participants in each small group can quickly share a one-sentence description of their success in a large group. Hearing 30 successes from 30 different people is bound to leave everyone ending the school year on a high note.

2. Celebration Share Activity: This activity was specifically designed to give people a structured way to celebrate successes. It involves each individual brainstorming as many successes as they can think of over a period of time (let's say a school year). Then, participants are directed to share some of those successes with each other in pairs and then with a larger group. All successes are charted so they can be admired and celebrated. Go you! Go team!

3. Chalk Talk: The versatile Chalk Talk is another wonderful way to silently share successes. Post several pieces of chart paper on a wall with the general question, "What were all our successes this year?" For large groups, divide up the chalk talks into divisions or grade levels—including administrators and non-teaching staff. After the Chalk Talks are comlete, save time for people to verbally share their favorites. Keep the Chalk Talk chart papers up on the walls, to revisit at the beginning of the next school year. Invite parents to read them during an open house, or take pictures of them and include the photos in a school newsletter next year.

All these activities can be done with students as well. What a rewarding way to end a school year—remembering our learnings, triumphs, and accomplishments. After all, it is important to acknowledge that you really have come a long way!

Happy summer!

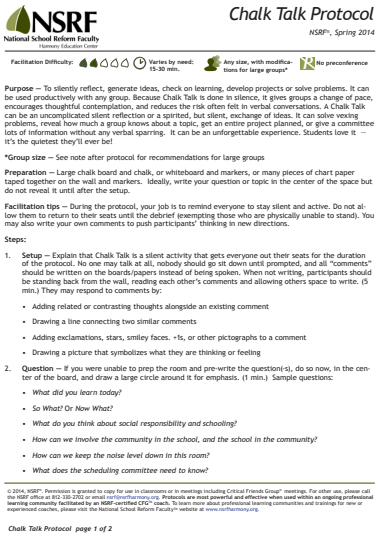
Michele Mattoon, NSRF Director

New website, new protocols/activities redesign, and new protocols for upcoming open trainings!

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

I hope by this point you haven't equated our mentions of the upcoming website and materials redesign with that famous boy who cried wolf. It turns out that completely overhauling, rewriting, redesigning, and re-architecting a complex website, incorporating a substantial membership and emailing database behind it, while simultaneously rewriting and redesigning a boatload of printed materials, along with all the everyday work that continues to grow and multiply … let's just say that, like natural childbirth, the process can take ***much*** longer than one anticipates. One can easily confuse Braxton-Hicks contractions with actual labor, and once labor starts, there's no turning back, no matter how many hours (months, in our case) it takes to birth this baby! Plus, doing all of this with a shifting team of university student informatics interns, one that shuffles members at each semester break, adds another layer of complexity we didn't imagine. (Is that like giving birth at a teaching hospital? Maybe.)

I'd like to think that within a few days of your reading this newsletter, the website will be launched, but I'm knocking on wood for luck even as I type that line. If you received a strange email in the last week or so, forgive us, and please ignore it: the website testing process has also been a bit bumpy.



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Chalk Talk Protocol
NSRF©, Spring 2014

Facilitation Difficulty: Varies by need: 15-30 min. Any size, with modifications for large groups* No preconference

Purpose — To silently reflect, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group. Because Chalk Talk is done in silence, it gives groups a change of pace, encourages thoughtful contemplation, and reduces the risk often felt in verbal conversations. A Chalk Talk can be an uncomplicated silent reflection or a spirited, but silent, exchange of ideas. It can solve vexing problems, reveal how much a group knows about a topic, get an entire project planned, or give a committee lots of information without any verbal sparring. It can be an unforgettable experience. Students love it — it's the quietest they'll ever be!

***Group size** — See note after protocol for recommendations for large groups

Preparation — Large chalk board and chalk, or whiteboard and markers, or many pieces of chart paper taped together on the wall and markers. Ideally, write your question or topic in the center of the space but do not reveal it until after the setup.

Facilitation tips — During the protocol, your job is to remind everyone to stay silent and active. Do not allow them to return to their seats until the debrief (exempting those who are physically unable to stand). You may also write your own comments to push participants' thinking in new directions.

Steps:

1. **Setup** — Explain that Chalk Talk is a silent activity that gets everyone out their seats for the duration of the protocol. No one may talk at all, nobody should go sit down until prompted, and all "comments" should be written on the boards/papers instead of being spoken. When not writing, participants should be standing back from the wall, reading each other's comments and allowing others space to write. (5 min.) They may respond to comments by:
   - Adding related or contrasting thoughts alongside an existing comment
   - Drawing a line connecting two similar comments
   - Adding exclamations, stars, smiley faces. +1s, or other pictographs to a comment
   - Drawing a picture that symbolizes what they are thinking or feeling
2. **Question** — If you were unable to prep the room and pre-write the question(-s), do so now, in the center of the board, and draw a large circle around it for emphasis. (1 min.) Sample questions:
   - *What did you learn today?*
   - *So What? Or Now What?*
   - *What do you think about social responsibility and schooling?*
   - *How can we involve the community in the school, and the school in the community?*
   - *How can we keep the noise level down in this room?*
   - *What does the scheduling committee need to know?*

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That said, we're also preparing for this autumn's Open Training of New Critical Friends Group® Coaches (see below), and we'll definitely be incorporating fresh new materials in that cohort. By then, we may have published our new CFG™ Starter's Manual. So if you've been looking for a good excuse to sign up for training, consider this the sign you've been waiting for. Click the link below or call us to enroll, and you'll get your hands on protocols and activities that look like this (but life-size!)

Is it time for you to put these ideas into action?

NSRF® Critical Friends Group® Coaches Open Training Oct. 10-13

Bloomington, Indiana, $795 for five* days' training
(On Oct. 13, the group will decide when to return for the last two days.)

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

Look what CFG™ work can do for your school:

- Help students succeed
- Model and build 21st Century Skills
- Build trust
- Reduce teacher and administrator isolation
- Transform school culture
- Build diversity of thought
- Extend and share leadership
- Facilitate participation from all members
- Provide healthy challenges
- Foster equity
- Honor and prioritize time for deep reflection
- Support strategic planning
- Reveal solutions to complex dilemmas
- Develop critical problem-solving
- Encourage creative, new thinking (sometimes around old problems)
- Carefully analyze work, and support everyone in receiving and giving focused, actionable feedback

"After a week of this training I feel we now have more tools to improve meetings, communication and the community at [my] school. Thank you so much." -- A new CFG coach from Wisconsin

PROTOCOLS IN THE CLASSROOM: Text-based protocols in middle school classes promote authentic discussions and support CCSS

By Mary Funaoka, Critical Friends Group® Coach in California, mfunaoka@ocde.us

With the onset of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the shift to "text-based evidence," I looked to the NSRF® for protocols aimed to support learning via written text and oral communication. After introducing NSRF® text-based protocols into middle school classrooms in the Los Angeles Unified School District as a literacy coach, I witnessed profound results: deep, authentic classroom discussions. The marriage of CCSS and NSRF text-based protocols has been uncomplicated, deep, and powerful. As I pondered the possibilities of promoting text-based discussions through structured protocols in secondary classrooms across all content areas, it was love at first sight.

NSRF protocols support the CCSS Literacy Capacities flawlessly. Students are able to construct their own ideas, think from multiple perspectives, examine text closely, and engage discerningly about academic content. These critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills come to life with the structure of a protocol. In workshops I presented throughout California over the past two years, participants have engaged in three protocols to experience the magic authentically. Block Party, Text Rendering, and Four A's have been powerful examples for making text come to life.

Block Party is used to deconstruct complex texts and effectively differentiate grouping structures when discussing texts. In the Text Rendering Protocol, I typically add an additional round – develop a 20-word summary. This validates all the sentence, phrase, and word contributions from each group member and forces the group to synthesize their ideas in a succinct statement. Word choice is key. Additionally, I've adapted the Four A's to different content areas to bring a sense of relevance to other content areas (see next page).

With the onset of the Common Core State Standards and the shift to text-based evidence, I looked to the NSRF for protocols aimed to support learning.

In middle school history classes with an average of 36 students, I demonstrated how Text Rendering could succeed with a non-fiction secondary source. The challenge of getting students to engage in academic discourse respectfully and productively was overcome with the simple structure of the protocol. The structure serves as a reminder for how the Gradual Release of Responsibility can work seamlessly to promote independency whereby students internalize the language of authentic academic discussions. While there is still much work to be accomplished in this marriage, it is clear that promoting classroom discussions through the use of text-based protocols is a promising recipe for a honeymoon in the 21st century classroom.

Mary Funaoka began her career in education with Teach for America and taught high school English in Lynwood, California. Currently she is the English Language Arts Coordinator for the Orange County Department of Education and provides professional development related to Common Core, Expository Reading and Writing, and interdisciplinary literacy. She earned her B.A. from UCLA (English), M.A. from LMU (secondary education), and Ed.D. from USC (educational leadership.

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Variations on the Four A's Text Protocol for different subjects, suggested by Mary Funaoka, CFG Coach in California

The 4 Cs of Mathematics

Clarify	Construct	Calculate	Communicate
What terms in the problem need to be clarified?	How would you construct or set up the problem?	Calculate or solve the problem.	Explain or justify your answer

The 6 Cs of Art/Art History

Content
Describe in detail what you see.

Citation
Who is the author/creator? When was this created?

Context
What was going on in the world, the country, the region, or the locality when this was created?

Communication
What does the artwork depict and who is the intended audience for the piece?

Connections
Link the artwork to other works that you already know or have learned about.

Conclusions
How does the artwork contribute to our understanding of _____?

The 4 Cs of Science

Clarify	Content	Connect	Conclude
What words or ideas would you like to have clarified?	Summarize the content you have just read.	How does this content connect (or add to) what you have already learned about _____?	Does this new information change your thinking about _____? If so, how?

The 6 Cs of History/Social Science

Content
Describe in detail what you see.

Citation
Who is the author/creator? When was this created?

Context
What was going on in the world, the country, the region, or the locality when this was created?

Comm-unication
What does the document say and who is the intended audience for the piece?

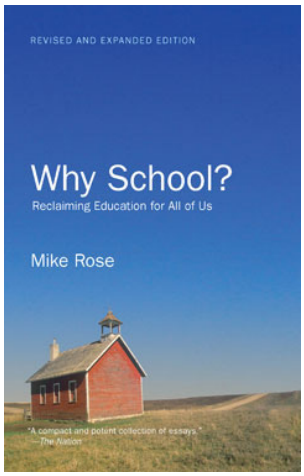
Connections
Link the primary source to other things that you already know or have learned about.

Conclusions
How does the primary source contribute to our understanding of _____?

Book Reviews

TWO BOOK REVIEWS

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



Why School? Reclaiming Education for All of Us

By Mike Rose

Published 2009, The New Press

I first learned of the wonderful education writer, Mike Rose, through his previous book, ***Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America***. Rose, professor in the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, spent four years visiting schools that were successfully educating young people at a time when America's schools were being maligned and denigrated by the media and politicians. (Sound familiar?) Rose's effort was a journey of hope. His journey began near his home in Santa Monica, California in the blue-collar, Watts neighborhood of South-Central Los Angeles. Then he traveled to Mexican-American border towns, the south side of Chicago, rural Montana, to Mississippi, Kentucky, Baltimore, and New York City. His goal? Rediscovering the crucial role of public education in building a democratic citizenry.

Now, in ***Why School?***, Rose offers "a series of appeals for big-hearted social policy and an embrace of the ideals of democratic education," a central theme of NSRF work. Rose believes we almost desperately need these appeals "because we have lost our way." He summarizes the situation in 2009 as follows:

"We live in an anxious age and seek our grounding, our assurances in ways that don't satisfy our longing – that, in fact, make things worse. We've lost hope in the public sphere and grab at market-based and private solutions, which undercut the sharing of obligation and risk and keep us scrambling for individual advantage. Though we pride ourselves as a nation of opportunity and a second chance, our social policies can be terribly ungenerous. As we try to improve our schools, we rush to one-dimensional solutions, to technological and structural 'game changers' that all too often lead to new problems. We've narrowed the purpose of schooling to economic competitiveness, our kids becoming economic indicators. And we've reduced our definition of human development and achievement – that miraculous growth of intelligence, sensibility, and the discovery of the world – ***to a test score."*** (emphasis mine)

Then, in a series of fourteen essays on current issues in education, he takes us on a new journey to rediscover our lost selves. In chapter one, we follow Rose "In Search of a Fresh Language of Schooling." It is his view that we are "trapped in a language of schooling that stresses economics, accountability, and compliance" in which "[e]ducation is reduced to a cognitive horse race!" Rose invites us to think about "what we don't read and hear about education" and in 2014, this quote is as true as it was in 1994:

"There's not much public discussion of achievement that includes curiosity, reflectiveness, uncertainty, or a willingness to take a chance, to blunder. And how about accounts of reform that present change as alternately difficult, exhilarating ambiguous, and promising –

and that find reform not in a device, technique, or structure, but in the way we think about teaching and learning? Consider how little we hear about intellect, aesthetics, joy, courage, creativity, civility, understanding. For that matter, think of how rarely we hear of commitment to public education as the center of a free society."

Then, in one of the longest essays, Rose offers a critique of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT) and "the spirit of democratic education," calling for tightly connecting schools, particularly poor schools, to social and health services and other community groups and agencies where schools become neighborhood meeting places and centers of civic activity. Here, too, is his call for extensive professional development programs emerging specifically from faculty themselves with a focus on first-class, wide-ranging curricula and appropriate assessments, especially for English language learners and children with special needs.

In an essay on "Business Goes to School," Rose analyzes Arnie Duncan's recent call to apply a management science mindset to teaching and learning, noting it's all too reminiscent of the "century-old, industrial-age factory model of education." He points out that "teaching and learning are not simply technical and management problems," but are missing the rich wisdom of classroom teachers' experience and local knowledge, all too easily disregarded. Then, too, there is the destructiveness of national and local economic policies and their devastating impact on depressed rural and deteriorating urban areas which provide the socioeconomic context to understand school failure in these areas.

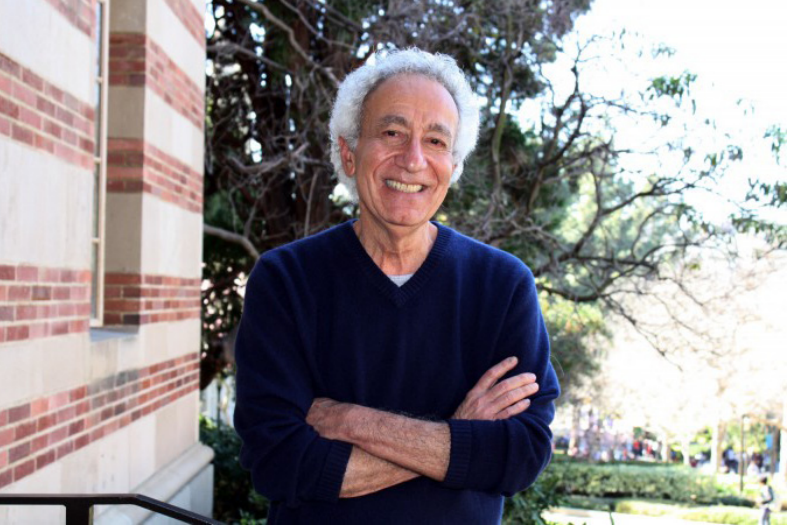
The above essay is appropriately followed by one on "Intelligence in the Workplace and the Schoolhouse," in which Rose makes a crucial analysis of the current devaluing of what used to be called "vocational education" (now referred to as "career and technical education"). Having done a long study of the thought it takes to do blue-collar and service work, welding to waitressing, he comes away with a heightened respect for the intelligence required in such work. All too often education policy makers make the following inaccurate dichotomies – "brain vs. hand, mental vs. manual, intellectual vs. practical, pure vs. applied, neck-up vs. neck-down." They miss the point entirely that our current economy is "… built on information and high technology and requires a new kind of worker: creative, problem solving, skilled in collaboration and communication. A smart worker for a smart machine." Here I'm reminded of my grandfather who, without completing high school in the early 20th century, taught tool and die making at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and how I was strongly advised by my high school guidance counselor in the early 1950s, not to take "shop courses" because I was in/on the "college track!" Rose ends this insightful chapter with these reminders:

"As an ideal, democracy assumes the capacity of the common person to learn, to think independently, to decide thoughtfully…. If we believe common work to be mindless, that belief will affect the work we create in the future. If we don't appreciate, if we in some way constrict, the full range of everyday cognition, then we will develop limited educational programs and fail to make fresh and meaningful instructional connections among disparate kinds of skill and knowledge. If we think that whole categories of people – identified by class, by occupation – are not that bright, then we reinforce social separations and cripple our ability to talk across our current cultural divides."

In his essay on "MOOCs [Massive Open Online Courses] and Other

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



Mike Rose

Wonders: Education and High-Tech Utopia," Mike Rose recognizes the potential of these new tools, but raises, and discusses thoughtfully, a number of crucial questions:

* What are the assumptions about teaching and learning and what philosophy of learning are involved in these emerging new technologies? [The first MOOC originated in Canada in 2008.]

* Coming from at least middle-class or professional families, will the current "technologists," who have been sheltered from intimate knowledge of many of others from different cultural and economic backgrounds, be appropriately sensitive to and responsive to the real, on the ground, needs of the people they apparently seek to help?

* What of the soaring costs of higher education and the growing divestment of state funding of higher education, possibly exacerbated by these new developments?

* What will be the impact on the increasing inequality in the kinds of education less privileged students receive?

* *"When will we stop this distracting, in fact, expensive worship of the new technological system or device and settle into the less enthralling but more substantial recognition that MOOCs – or any other wonder, from digital games to the most recent statistical procedure – will only be as useful as the thinking about their use, the depth of learning we want to achieve, the kind of education we want to foster?"*

Drawing on his extensive teaching of "Remedial Writing" courses in community college and university settings, Mike Rose offers a particularly insightful analysis of this increasingly common practice – remedial course for high school graduates who lack the skills to be successfully in beginning college course work. He calls for a "re-mediating of remediation." [This is a chapter I actually intend to use in my CFG® work with a community college later this summer.] Rose notes – "[t]he traditional remedial writing course typically begins with simple writing assignments and includes a fair amount of workbook exercises, mostly focused on grammar and usage. The readings used in such a course are also fairly basic, both in style and content." Then he adds: "No wonder remediation gets such a bad rap!" Using specific examples from his own teaching, Rose goes on to describe what works: "Successful remedial programs set high standards, are focused on inquiry and problem solving in a substantial curriculum, utilize a pedagogy that is supportive and interactive, draw on a variety of techniques and approaches, and are in line with student goals and provide credit for coursework."

Although very short, the "Soldiers in the Classroom" chapter is about an increasingly important sub-population looking to continue their education in college: veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Having worked previously with Vietnam vets, Rose notes the importance of providing a range of support services, including financial aid assistance, counseling, orientation programs, and social clubs. He continues, "... my sense is that returning soldiers would be better served through programs that includes significant coursework as well as services." A good example, Rose says, is the SERV program (Special Education Program for Veterans) at Cleveland State University – a twelve week crash course in college prep which the vets call "academic boot camp." Rose explains that SERV provides the kind of mix that forms a crucial bridge to community college or university study:

"The key idea is to treat a complex educational issue in a comprehensive and integrated way. To respond adequately to academic needs, the program has to address psychological, social, and economic needs as well. And, hand in glove, some social and psychological problems – inability to concentrate, feelings of intellectual inadequacy – don't fully manifest themselves unless one is in a classroom, immersed in English or math or poli sci."

Rose also provides us a reminder of Thomas Jefferson's original rationale for wanting to create a public, common school elementary education. Jefferson pushed for freely available schools as essential to creating educated "citizens-in-the-making," who are able to read and write and do math as necessities for democratic citizenship

[although initially only for males and not to include indentured slaves as was the case at the time]:

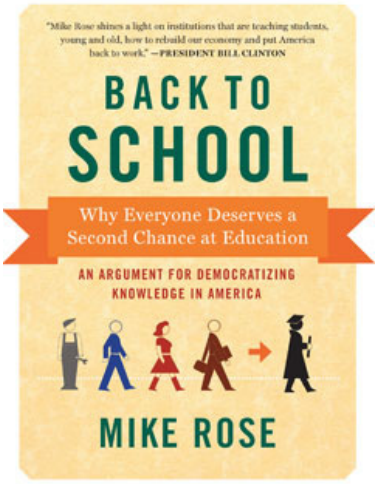
"Our policy documents contain little mention of the obligations of government to its citizens, of protections against inequality, of a comprehensive notion of educational opportunity. No surprise, then that we do not find a robust discussion of the notion of the public or of the democratic citizen – that portrayal of the citizen not just as a economic being, but as a deliberative, civic, moral being as well. We are a society with a system of mass education, but to what degree can we define ourselves as an educated society?

"How we think about and voice the purpose of school matters. It affects what we put in or take out of the curriculum and how we teach that curriculum. It affects the way we think about students – all students – about intelligence, achievement, human development, teaching and learning, opportunity and obligation. And all of this affects the way we think about each other and who we are as a nation."

Being the teacher he is, and a college professor of writing, Mike Rose ends ***Why School?*** with an "Afterword – Writing About School," in which he offers twelve "observations" as to how one can improve their writing. These observations include such things as – "pay attention to the obvious," "a story needs to do something," "numbers tell a story, too," and "be skeptical of the big idea, the hot theory." With expanded discussions and examples of each of these, and eight others, if you'd like to improve your writing, make sure to read this closing essay to Mike Rose's ***Why School?*** This "Afterword" provides an interesting segue into a review of Mike Rose's most recent book, ***Back to School: Why Everyone Deserves a Second Chance at Education***.

Back to School: Why Everyone Deserves a Second Chance at Education

By Mike Rose
Published 2012, The New Press



In many ways, Rose's most recent book, ***Back to School: Why Everyone Deserves a Second Chance at Education, An Argument for Democratizing Knowledge in America,*** picks up where ***Why School?*** left off. ***Back to School*** begins with concern for our nation's students in community colleges, adult education, and occupational programs, whom Rose calls, "second chancers."

We begin our review of this second book with some striking statistics:

* Community colleges were begun in the U.S. in 1901.

* There are over 4,000 adult education programs in the U.S.

* There are more than 10 million students in community colleges, adult school academic and occupational programs in the U.S., serving low- to modest-income persons, many in poverty.

* There is a 47% gap in the attainment of a bachelor's degree between young people at the top half versus the bottom half of our country's income distribution.

* 160,000 people were on waiting lists for adult education programs in the U.S. in 2009-2010.

* The number of single parents among undergraduates has nearly doubled in the last 20 years.

* Since 1970 the percentage of undergraduates over forty has more than doubled. ("The 'nontraditional' student is becoming the norm.")

* There are 40 million in the U.S. with no high school diploma or GED (General Educational Development test).

* 60% of community college students attend more than one community college ("…. so we can't get a compete picture of their postsecondary experience by focusing on their exit from the initial college").

* Only 30% of students entering community college complete a degree or credential or transfer to a full university.

Given all that, Rose is quick to point out, while acknowledging the economic motive for schooling, and the need for community colleges to achieve greater results:

"…. our guiding rationale for creating

schools has to include the intellectual, social, civic, moral, and aesthetic motives as well. If these further motives are not articulated, they fade from public policy, from institutional mission, from curriculum development. Without this richer philosophy, those seeking a second chance will likely receive a bare-bones, strictly functional education, one that does not honor the many reasons they return to school and, for that matter, one not suitable for a democratic society."

Of coure, there are a number of ways that people can get a second chance for education in the U.S., including through the help of churches and other faith-based institutions, various governmental programs, the military, civic and community-based organizations, labor unions, and a wide range of private businesses and philanthropic initiatives. But the focus of this book is on the community college, the "people's college," and to a lesser degree, the adult school. Here, based on Rose's two years of interviews and sitting in on classes at a number of community colleges, you will meet a wide variety of students:

"In some cases they have been through the criminal justice system. Much more often, they are non-offenders who, for a mix of personal and institutional reasons, didn't do so well in school. You'll meet people who had terrible, chaotic childhoods that made success in anything difficult. You'll meet people for whom things went fairly smoothly – in school and out – but who moved straight into the workforce after high school to help support their parents and siblings or to start families of their own. And there are people whose lives were suddenly turned upside down by divorce, illness, or death. There are veterans who can't find work and workers who lost jobs they held for years. Some are young; some are much older. They are white and non-white, urban and rural. Some come from families that have been in the United States – even in the same community – for generations, and some are new to this country, repeating a pattern of immigration that goes back to the early days of the Republic. In other words, you'll meet a wide cross-section of America."

In the third chapter of ***Back to School***, entitled "Full Cognitive Throttle: When Education for Work Ignites the Mind," Rose addresses a major concern and responds to critics of community college education. Even in the 21st century, there still is extensive differentiation between what some still refer to as the "academic" and the "vocational" elements of a community college education, making the assumption that vocational or occupational education does not significantly involve the mind. Here's where Rose's title of this chapter enters –

"Our society makes sharp and weighty distinctions – distinctions embodied in curricular tracking – between brain work and hand work. But what I demonstrate is the degree to which physical work involves the development of a knowledge base, the application of concept and abstraction, problem solving and troubleshooting, aesthetic consideration and reflection. Hand and brain are cognitively connected."

"…. connected to social class and deeply rooted in American educational history is the sharp distinction made between academic and vocational study, a distinction institutionalized in the early-twentieth-century high school. The vocational curriculum prepared students for the world of work, usually blue-collar, service, or basic-technology work, while the academic curriculum emphasized the arts and sciences and the cultivation of mental life."

Drawing on examples from his visits to the "simulation room" where nurses in training are practicing the numerous aspects of care for a patient, the "sewing room" where students in fashion design are making and re-making garments to meet specific design criteria, and

student mechanics in the diesel technology program troubleshooting an engine that won't start, Rose points out the complexity in each of these kinds of work. Referring to one of his earlier books, ***The Mind at Work*** (a 10th anniversary edition is to be released this summer), and the results of his study of the cognitive demands of physical work, from waitressing and styling hair to carpentry and welding, he reports:

"Our society makes sharp and weighty distinctions – distinctions embodied in curricular tracking – between brain work and hand work. But what I demonstrate is the degree to which physical work involves the development of a knowledge base, the application of concept and abstraction, problem solving and troubleshooting, aesthetic consideration and reflection. Hand and brain are cognitively connected."

Perhaps the most potentially useful chapter in ***Back to School*** is chapter six, "Improving the People's College" in which he draws on highly successful community college programs to enumerate six major areas in which others could improve. With extensive examples and discussion of each, these include: 1) the physical environment, 2) first encounters, including the front desk and orientation, 3) counseling and information, 4) teaching, 5) beyond the individual course, and 6) institutional vision. A community college faculty could use these as a self-assessment, asking such questions of their own program and facilities as related to #1 above, the physical environment – "Are there inviting common spaces? Places to read and study? Are classrooms set up in ways that encourage interactions? Are there signs and maps to help people get around? Are offices with similar or interrelated functions close to each other?"

Under the extensive section #4, Rose reveals common problems a teacher might find in any given community college classroom: students with limited skills, unable to do more than basic arithmetic and with underdeveloped writing, and note-taking skills; confusion about class requirements and norms; everything from plagiarism, absence, and late policy to assignment due dates and understanding instructions; reluctanct to ask questions in class or to seek help; and "…. the complex web of issues involving students' emotional history with school."

Rose follows all of this by making a strong plea for more rigorous, useful professional development for community college teachers, something that is woefully lacking. Then, by way of a summary, Rose states:

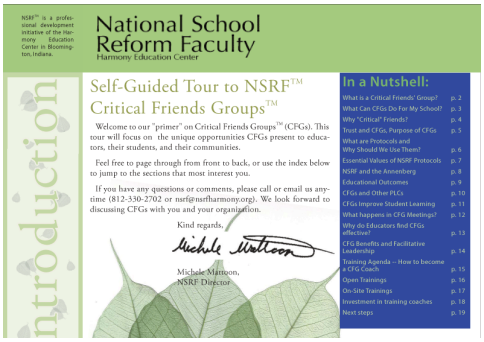
"By seeing the role of teacher as an initiator not only to subject matter but to college life, by making the hidden visible, by being systematic in getting students to office hours and tutoring centers, by striking up a casual conversation, by just talking straight about the tricks of the trade, teachers can end up making a big difference in someone's life."

In a recent interview with Hector Tobar of the ***Los Angeles Times***, Rose was asked, "You're the author of several books about working people and education. Especially about people whose talents are ignored, or who are seen as 'problems' by many educators. How did this life-long interest of yours come about?" Rose responded:

"Well, their story is, in many ways, my story. My parents were Italian immigrants who were drawn west by the classic 1950s California dream, traveling to Los Angeles to create a better life. They, and all of my family, worked blue-collar and service jobs, and like many working-class kids, I didn't do so well in school. I drifted along and was tracked into a general-vocation curriculum in high school. Then my senior English teacher turned my life around and steered me toward college – where I struggled before finding my way. So the lives of children migrating here from Mexico or Central America or Asia, or men and women doing physical work, or people in adult school, or the freshman who struggles in college – they all reach something deep in me. But I have to say – because it rarely gets said – that these people's stories are also intellectually rich; the unacknowledged linguistic gifts of the immigrant kid, the brains it takes to do physical work, the cognitive intricacies of an adult figuring out algebra. All this is as worthy of research as landing a robotic explorer on Mars."

As Rose says in his blog, "If I had to sum up the philosophical thread that runs through my work, it would be this: a deep belief in the ability of the common person, a commitment to educational, occupational, and cultural opportunity to develop that ability, and an affirmation of public institutions and the public sphere as vehicles for nurturing and expressing that ability."

I strongly recommend you visit his blog – mikerosebooks.blogspot.com – for dozens of excellent essays on other timely topics in education. And please write to us at ***Connections*** to tell us what you think of Mike Rose's writings on education.



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