

# “I don’t see color, kids are just kids.”

*This classic NSRF Connections article by Tanisha Davis-Doss is reprinted from the Fall 2006 issue.*

*“When you say you do not see color, you are telling me that you do not see me.”*

I have heard this statement over and over in my years of education, and quite frankly, I’m terrified rather than being impressed. Educators tell me this continually, and I believe they want me to be impressed with their color-blind philosophy, but I am not. Let me tell you why.

When you say you do not see color, you are telling me that you do not see me. So, if you say you don’t see color and kids are just kids, you are telling me that you are ignoring specific details that comprise the character and being of individual children.

Each child comes into your classroom with different experiences, needs, thoughts, and perspective. That child’s color has a great deal to do with their experiences, needs, thoughts, and perspective. Take me for instance; I have many identities that make me who I am.

I am black, I’m a woman, and I’m an educator, just to list a few. Black is the most essential identity because it is the one element that I am judged on every single day of my life.

Before society sees a woman, they see a black woman; before society sees an educator, they see a black educator. With both positive and negative implications alike, it is how I am viewed once I step outside of my home each day.

If I am being judged day to day by the color of my skin, how can we ignore the color of our students? When we teach, we must realize that the students coming into our classrooms have not necessarily had the exact same experiences that we may have had. Judging those students on our own experiences and biases leads to institutionalized racism, so I ask you, how can you not see color?

I am not asking you to allow the color differences to prevent you from being a thoughtful educator, I am simply asking you to be aware of those differences and allow yourself to live in “awareness.” Living in awareness simply means that you realize the differences, you don’t feel compelled to apologize for the differences, and that you consider those differences when you are working with all students.

Please do not read my message and confuse the term color with low-income. The two are not the same. Low-income children does not equal children of color. I am stating this for my colleagues teaching in private schools and privileged neighborhoods.

Just because a student of color comes from a middle-class family, does not mean that student is now “raceless.” No disrespect to Ruby Payne, but we educators tend to hide behind the poverty issue when speaking on racism and the two are different entities. Each adds to the disproportionate circumstances in our nation’s school buildings, but they are not the same.

I get discouraged at the end of our trainings when participants make comments like, “*I like the training, but leave the equity stuff out, kids are just kids.*” I’m even more discouraged when I realize these educators are teaching children, and I’m not sure I have succeeded in my goal of energizing them about CFG work.

To me, CFGs give us a tool to live in “awareness,” so if a participant in my training still feels that “kids are just kids” at the end of the week, I feel as though I have failed that educator, but most importantly, I have failed their students.




---

*Although the NSRF is currently in development of new materials related to equity, some of our past articles are still quite important and relevant. This issue includes two, on pages 3-5. If you have comments on these reprinted articles, please [email us](#).*

---



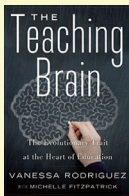
## In this issue

*"I don't see color.  
Kids are just kids."*

3

*When white  
educators discipline  
students of color*

4






*Book Review: The  
Teaching Brain*

6

*Preconferencing tips*

9

And more!

If you're reading on an  
electronic device, watch for  
icons     
and blue type indicating  
hotlinks to more content or  
email addresses.

## #BlackLivesMatter

### The urgency of coaching for equity

By Dave Lehman, NSRF National Facilitator and Connections Executive Editor, and Luci Englert McKean, NSRF Assistant Director for Operations and Connections Managing Editor

By many people's reckoning, the United States is in a state of emergency, and the #BlackLivesMatter movement continues to draw everyone's attention to catastrophic, systemic racism. Right now, it is especially important to remind ourselves, as Critical Friends Group Coaches and Facilitators, of a core element of our NSRF Mission: *"to foster educational and social EQUITY"* (emphasis ours).

With our mission in mind, we offer a brief review of key NSRF protocols and other resources to help you address the current situation with teachers, administrators, parents, students, and the general public.

### Statistics you should know

Our classrooms and schools are central to the development of our young people, and yet nationwide statistics clearly show that the experience of young black and brown students is vastly different than of whites.

Black children, who make up just 18% of preschoolers, account for 48% of all out-of-school suspensions before kindergarten. **Before kindergarten!** Black students were expelled at three times the rate of white students. Black girls were suspended at higher rates than all other girls and most boys. According to the U.S. Department of Education, African American students are more likely to suffer harsh punishments—suspensions and arrests—at school.

Thus, it is paramount to address issues of equity among all children of all



Photo Credit: [www.blacklivesmatter.com](http://www.blacklivesmatter.com), Taylor Johnson

racers, as they become the next generation of adults. We must assist students in developing the personal qualities of character to bring about a more just, unbiased, equitable and compassionate society.

For the sake of clarity, let's begin with the following definition from the Aspen Institute from its excellent article, *"10 Lessons for Taking Leadership on Racial Equity"*

***"RACIAL EQUITY: When people in a society have equal chances to reach their full potential and are no more likely to encounter life's burdens or benefits just because of the color of their skin."***

At the NSRF, we work with the tools that we have developed over 20+ years to improve communication, collaboration, and problem-solving—our protocols and activities. Additionally, we are always on the lookout for more and better ways of applying our protocols and creating new ones toward our mission. Dave Lehman, one of our long-time Na-

**IN THE BLACK TRADITION OF THE CALL AND RESPONSE, #BLACKLIVESMATTER IS BOTH A CALL TO ACTION AND A RESPONSE TO THE WAYS IN WHICH OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN DE-VALUED.**

**WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MAKE SURE THAT #BLACKLIVESMATTER?**

**WHAT DOES #BLACKLIVESMATTER MEAN TO YOU?**

**SUBMIT A POST**



Photo Credit: [www.blacklivesmatter.com](http://www.blacklivesmatter.com), Clicking this image will allow you to submit a post to the BlackLivesMatter Tumblr blog.











## Invite to a private FB group for CFG Coaches and National Facilitators

We have a not-very-active private Facebook group for people who we've been trained as CFG Coaches. If you'd like to join the conversation, please "friend" [Michele Mattoon's inactive Facebook page](#) and message us for an invitation.











tional Facilitators, has long been leading a protocol called "Addressing Inequities." That new protocol is not quite ready to be posted on our website, but an older iteration of it called "Interrupting Inequities" was shared in the Spring 2007 issue of *Connections*.

## Current NSRF protocols & activities can help

In the meantime, many other NSRF protocols and activities are useful in addressing issues of equity, including:

- › Tuning Protocol  
- › Dilemma Analysis Protocol  
- › Dilemma Consultancy Protocol  
- › All data protocols
- › All text protocols
- › All observation protocols
- › Discussion-based protocols like [Chalk Talk](#)   and [Affinity Mapping](#)  

Many of our older, original protocols and activities were specifically edited for equity purposes:

- › Tuning for Equity 
- › Equity Stances Activity 
- › Equity Protocol 
- › Suggestions for Bringing Student Work for Equity Conversations 
- › Equity Perspectives: Creating Space for Making Meaning on Equity Issues 
- › Looking at Student Work: Building in the Habit of Looking at Equity 
- › Provocative Prompts for Equity 
- › Classroom Equity Writing Prompt 
- › Diversity Rounds 
- › Equity Bibliography:  this document is dated, but the references are still, unfortunately, quite timely and useful

## The Connections Archive is another great resource.

Previous issues of *Connections* contain important articles, reviews, and links for all educators. We encourage you to review these articles if you haven't read them, or haven't read them recently:

November 2014 - "Ten Multicultural and Equity Websites for Teachers" and a book review of *More Courageous Conversations about Race*, by Glenn Singleton

Summer 2012 - Book Review of *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* by Gary Howard

And we have not (yet) offered book reviews of some other excellent recent books on the topic, but we would like to recommend two that we have found particularly helpful:

*White Teachers/ Diverse Classrooms: Creating Inclusive Schools, Building on Students' Diversity, and Providing True Educational Equity* edited by Julie Landsman and Chance Lewis

*'Multiplication Is For White People': Raising Expectations for Other People's Children* by Lisa Delpit

Last, we often link to exceptional resources on our [NSRF Facebook page](#). We encourage you to "like" our page, and then make a point to "follow" us, and also to "like" and "share" several resources on that page. (Unfortunately, it takes a combination of those actions in order for Facebook's underlying algorithms to continue to show you updates to that page.)

Recent links have included these:

"I, Racist," by John Metta on the [ThosePeople](#) website

"From White Guilt to White Responsibility" by Hannah Bonner on the [Ministry Matters](#) website

A TED talk entitled "How to Fix a Broken School: Lead Fearlessly, Love Hard," by Linda Cliatt-Wayman

**What are YOUR favorite social media links about race, equity, and education? Please share them on our [Facebook page](#) and spread the word!**