

TRAVELING BOOKMARKS: An End-of-Meeting Block Party!

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After years of planning agendas for groups of educators, selecting protocols aligned to meeting outcomes and objectives, I realize how important the process of reflection is. Allowing participants the opportunity to reflect both intra-personally and inter-personally promotes understanding from multiple perspectives.

Frequently, at the end of a workshop or planning session I notice a dissipation of energy—people begin to shift into "leaving" mode. Other times, for various reasons (scheduling, intensive content, etc.) meeting agendas are not structured to allow for enough sharing among participants.

To address the need to incorporate sharing and reflection into the end of a meeting or workshop, I adapted the Block Party protocol into Traveling Bookmarks. Participants write one significant word, phrase, sentence or symbol from the time together on an index card (bookmark). I play music and the participants move around the room in rhythm with the music, which revives their energy. I tell them, "When the music starts, move. When the music stops, stop and find a nearby partner." The partners share what they wrote and why they wrote it; then they exchange cards and find another partner. Exchanging index cards promotes active listening and requires that participants restate the previous partner's ideas. I ask participants to repeat the process at least three times.

At the end of the activity, each participant has a bookmark that reminds them of significant learning from the workshop/meeting. Although the majority of participants leave with someone else's bookmark, usually at least one person gets her own card back. Also, in the debriefing conversation, a couple of people usually report that the card they now possess mirrors what their original card stated.

This protocol adaptation has been well received in a variety of settings. I've used it at a contemplative retreat with 80 participants at the end of a long, mostly silent retreat and with educator inquiry facilitators at the end of a two-hour meeting about data analysis.

This about using this protocol. You probably will find an opportunity to give it a try! 

Please take a moment to think:

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

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

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

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

Help others attain similar or even better benefits of CFGs.

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