

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](mailto:nsrf@nsrfharmony.org) or call 812-334-8379.

# National School Reform Faculty

Harmony Education Center

April 2012

## FROM THE DIRECTOR: By Michele Mattoon, NSRF Director, NSRF National Facilitator, and CFG Coach in Indiana, [michele@nsrfharmony.org](mailto:michele@nsrfharmony.org)

Welcome to spring! It's already time to think about professional development for the summer. This year, in addition to our regular **New CFG Coaches' Training**, we are also offering an **Experienced Coaches' Training** that will take place July 9-11, 2012 in Bloomington, Indiana.

Why take an "Experienced Coaches' Training?" Imagine three days, surrounded by dedicated colleagues who have joined you to:

- hone facilitation skills,
- reflect deeply around Critical Friends Groups' best practices,
- learn new protocols,
- learn how to continue to offer quality experiences for their CFGs,
- get help for their professional and/or coaching dilemmas, and
- share experiences, skills, articles and new protocols with you that they have developed over the course of coaching their CFGs.

Exploring important issues with peers (such as equity and democracy) is a deeply gratifying practice. People tend to leave NSRF trainings not only with more tools in their toolbox, but also a feeling of professional renewal.

This summer's Experienced Coaches' Training happens simultaneously as our five-day New Coaches' Training. Both groups will mix at various times during the trainings, as well as lunch. It will be a great opportunity to make connections with educators all over the United States (and possibly beyond).

The agenda for these three days will be tailored to fit the needs of the participants who attend. To join, call 812-330-2702 or complete the form linked [here](#) and pay \$480 for your seat. This price includes a light breakfast, hot lunch and all materials needed for the seminar. Sign up early and let us know what you, as an experienced coach, most want to learn! (See more on page 9.)



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Connections



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Questions/Comments? Contact Jesse at [goodmanj@indiana.edu](mailto:goodmanj@indiana.edu)

## THE FUNCTION OF SCHOOLING: The Missing Question in Current Educational Discourse

By Jesse Goodman, Senior Contributor,  
NSRF CFG Coach in Indiana, [goodmanj@indiana.edu](mailto:goodmanj@indiana.edu)

Why do we have schools? Why should Johnny or Mary or even Susie spend hours upon hours in buildings that look like factories but are called “schools?” On the surface it seems like such an innocent question; such a simple question with an equally simple answer. A question so rudimentary that most individuals currently “concerned” about our schools seem not to have noticed it, or perhaps they feel that the answer is so obvious it would be a waste of time discussing it. Most high school graduates can quickly tell us that the purpose of recent educational reforms have been designed to help young people such as themselves get jobs when they grow up. If this young person watches the evening news occasionally, she might also add that the function of schools and the recent wave of reforms is to help us (that is, the U.S.A.) insure our competitive edge against other countries.

I would like to take just a moment to suggest that we might benefit from re-opening the debate about the purpose of schooling in our society. Instead of advocating for this or that particular reform, I would like to argue that what is really needed during these complex times is for us, as NSRF Coaches and Facilitators, to re-cast the context within which we debate what should happen in our schools. Rather than situate this discourse within a purely marketplace context, as has been the case for the several decades, I propose that we begin to look at the education we want for our children within a democratic framework. Let me begin by taking us back to the turn of the century, a time when the notion of the “public school” took on new dimensions.

Although public schools in the United States gradually increased in numbers throughout the 19th century, they exploded across our country (particularly in our cities) due to the massive surge of immigrants that came to live in this land at that time. Thousands of people came to toil in our sweat shop factories and the coal mines that produced the energy needed to run an electrified society. With these immigrants came their children, and there was the problem. For several years the prevailing thought was to put these “little beggars” to work along side their parents. Eventually, the cruelty of this existence led to legal prohibitions against this practice, and schools became the solution to the problem of what to do with these children, more of whom were coming onto our shores and being born each day.

As schools were rapidly built to keep up with the population explosion taking place in our cities, a debate about the function of these schools began to emerge that, until recently, continued and, at times, thrived in our society. On one side of the issue were those who argued that schools should teach children what they would need to know in order to be “good workers.” After all, the reason “we” let these children into our country was because we needed the labor of their parents. It only seemed reasonable that schools should educate these children enough so that they could be even more productive workers than their



East Side Public Schools, A Class in the Condemned Essex Market School, ca. 1890. Photo used with permission from the Museum of the City of New York, Jacob A. Riis Collection

elders. Many schools were built with the expectation that there would be, thus, a “positive return” (a more productive work force) on the taxpayer’s investment. In particular, it seemed important to teach these children how to speak English; to read, write, add, subtract, multiply, and divide; and to follow directions. In addition, there was a call to inform these “dullards,” as they were sometimes called, what it means to be “an American.” Often called “civics,” this course of study was designed to minimize the value of their traditional ethnic heritages, and teach these children the innate superiority of “our” (masculine, Northern Euro-American) cultural traditions, values, and most importantly governmental and economic institutions. The argument was to drill children until this information and these skills were thoroughly memorized. Sound familiar?

On the other side of this debate stood those such

as John Dewey who warned of the dangers embedded in this narrow educational vision. These individuals argued that public schools should be established in order to help these children of immigrants learn what it means to live in a democracy. Since most immigrants came from societies that were more or less totalitarian and since these people were often used to living relatively “powerless lives” (they were often the victims of economic, social, and ethnic oppression), we needed schools that would teach these children how to participate thoughtfully, responsibly, and actively to participate in our democracy. It is important to note that these educators did not take the democracy that was currently being practiced in our society for granted. To the contrary, they saw room for significant improvements, and suggested that a truly democratic society never assumes that its democracy is complete. For example, Dewey argued that our so-

ciety should create a society based not only upon a “political democracy,” but also a “social democracy.” That is, democracy should be thought of as a way of life rather than just the participation of a minority of citizens in a ritual of voting that occurred every couple of years.

Throughout this century, the ideas of Dewey and his colleagues were often overshadowed by those who saw schools as sites for vocational training. However, within the last three decades this “marketplace” rationale has so completely dominated the public discourse that the notion of schooling for democracy has completely vanished from public consideration. Both Democrats and Republicans seem to only disagree on minor details of educational reform. The fundamental purpose for schools seems to be taken for granted, regardless of one’s political and social values. Americans have been willing to stand by, as if in a trance, while those in power conduct ideological surgery on our schools—cutting them away completely from any consideration of the relationship between democracy and education and graphing them permanently onto corporate and military interests.

Perhaps this surgery has occurred because we have heard much about economic globalism during the last decade; however, if we continue to move in our current direction, it is our democracy, not our economy, that will be in grave peril. One does not have to be a sociologist to recognize that our brand of democracy requires little participation or thoughtfulness on the part of the average individual, and yet the level of even this limited participation is dangerously low.

Our national leaders get elected to office in much the same way that soap finds its way into our homes—through slick advertising. We live in an age of “sound-bite” politics. Instead of engaging in discourses about substantive issues, the focus often degenerates into little more than “name calling.” Finding out if someone has slept with someone other than his or her spouse takes on greater significance than one’s visions and ideas for the country and the world in which we live. The quality of the political discussions among our population is worrisome to anyone who treasures democratic values.

Although many people blame the politicians or the press for this sorry state of affairs, it is us, the people of this country, who must take ultimate responsibility.

Slick advertising, mud slinging, sound-bites all work because as a nation of citizens, we allow ourselves to be swayed by these substitutes for substantive dialogue. Censorship, racial fears and hatred, poverty, and homelessness are increasing at alarming rates, while values of compassion and tolerance for diversity seem to be fading away in many sectors of our society.

The efforts to reform schools in the context of a marketplace rationale have resulted in many proposals such as legislating high stakes/standardized tests, creating corporate-run Charter Schools, requiring more homework, establishing longer school years, emphasizing math and technological sciences, and creating student voucher systems. At the same time, we continue to see children bored and alienated from their educations and teachers who are burned-out by all the paperwork required to “insure” Johnny has memorized his daily lessons.

What might school reform proposals look like if the goal was not tied to merely helping children get jobs or to successfully “out-compete” other cultures, but rather to make our country a more democratic society? What might schools look like if they stopped merely trying to raise children’s test scores on a single (standardized) test that is often given in an atmosphere of anxiety and fear, and instead dedicated themselves to creating educational experiences that would help students become thoughtful, caring, and active participants in the creation of a democratic culture?

Obviously, the answers to these questions would generate different images, ideas, and proposals based upon different ideological commitments. I am not suggesting that schooling for democracy would take on one particular form. There is no blueprint being offered. What I am suggesting is that if we, as Coaches and Facilitators, began to discuss the type of education needed to live in a dynamic and compassionate democracy, then I think we would find more viable solutions to the problems that our schools currently face. Who knows, perhaps we would once again begin to discuss, as the founders of our nation did long ago, what living in a democracy means.

**For comments or conversation about this article, Jesse and the NSRF may be reached at [goodmanj@indiana.edu](mailto:goodmanj@indiana.edu) and [nsrf@nsrfharmony.org](mailto:nsrf@nsrfharmony.org). We also invite comments on our [Facebook page](#).**

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

By Kaethe Perez, NSRF National Facilitator, NSRF CFG Coach in Florida, [kaethe\\_p@msn.com](mailto:kaethe_p@msn.com)

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.

# HAVE PROTOCOL. WILL TRAVEL. Reflections on my National Facilitator Internship Year

By Eugenia Woods Tanner, NSRF National Facilitator,  
NSRF CFG Coach in Tennessee, [gtanner@email.usn.org](mailto:gtanner@email.usn.org)

My first encounter with Critical Friends' Groups was as a member of a School Renewal Committee for the University School of Nashville SACS accreditation process. Based on my interest in issues surrounding diversity at our school, I was assigned to a committee charged with conducting a beta test of using CFG Protocols to encourage more open conversation about race. The need for a vehicle to support these types of conversations emerged during interviews conducted by our Diversity Task Force. Our Director of Multi-Cultural Affairs learned of the CFG Protocols through her work in diversity and was subsequently certified as a Coach in order to lead our committee for this beta test.

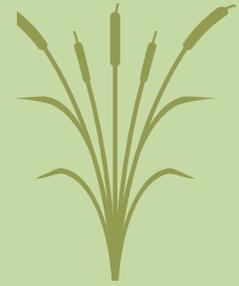
We began meeting in the fall, and a few months into the academic year, our Director of Multi-Cultural Affairs accepted another job offer, leaving us without a trained Coach to lead our experience. Given the "risky" nature of our conversations, no one in the group was willing to take over leadership of our committee without training. I checked the NSRF website and discovered that the first 3 days of an open training were being offered prior to our next committee meeting. Venus aligned with Mars, the expense was approved, I registered for training, and a year ago this month began my odyssey of Coach's training and leading a CFG. Following Coach's training, the facilitator and I discussed the possibility of continuing my work with the NSRF by training to become a National Facilitator. She agreed to be my Mentor, and I started the journey as an intern for a five-day open training last summer. It

has been a game-changing year of reflection and personal growth.

Through my experiences with CFG training and my work at University School of Nashville, I have come to understand that educating educators is not for "weenies." The expectations for quality are always high, and an inability to clearly articulate the training results in a loss of credibility for the Trainer. This knowledge raised the stakes and the pressure as I prepared in advance of the internship and particularly on the night before each session.

My first days as an intern were spent observing my Mentor as she began preparing a diverse group of remarkable and experienced educators to become Certified CFG Coaches. Initially, my primary goals were to pay careful attention to how she transitioned from one Protocol/Activity to the next, as well as the information that she frontloaded prior to each protocol. From the comments of the participants, it was clear that her explanations helped them connect to what they were there to learn, and I realized that her ability to clearly articulate these transitions was the key to the successful delivery of the Coach's Training.

As I observed my Mentor's seamless and well-honed delivery through the lens of a trainer (as opposed to a trainee), I was struck by the importance of reflection to the learning process. It became clear to me that the learning was cemented through group and individual reflection, not by the protocols and activities alone. Giving the participants adequate time for reflection following each protocol served not only to



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Contact Genie at [gtanner@email.usn.org](mailto:gtanner@email.usn.org)

deepen the learning, but also to strengthen the bond within the group. Without time to reflect and debrief, we would miss the opportunity for synthesis, not only of the material but also the group's process.

Another important aspect of the debrief is the art of "question-asking." As Coach trainees we were taught to value the importance of a well-crafted probing question, which serves to push the thinking of the "presenter" forward. So it is for the Facilitator during the debrief following a protocol. It is the Facilitator's responsibility to craft questions that push the thinking of the group as a whole, as well as the individual group participants. It is not only the participants in a Coach Training who need to work on their question asking skills, but the interns working to become National Facilitators that need to master the skill of crafting open-ended questions.

Between the transition and debrief resides the protocol, the cornerstone of CFG meetings. The use of protocols, or structured conversations, distinguishes CFGs from other professional learning communities. The first protocol I was assigned to facilitate was the Success Analysis. Though I didn't make the connection until later, in our planning discussion for this internship I verbalized my concern that as an intern it was particularly important that the first protocol I facilitated be done so successfully in order to set a positive tone and gain the trust of the group. It proved a successful place to start. As my confidence increased, my Mentor turned over more of the facilitation responsibility. We progressed through the training using protocols and activities to lay the foundation the participants needed to facilitate their own CFGs.

Effectively facilitating the variety of protocols and activities available to us is more difficult than it initially appears. As I struggled through my initial attempts at facilitating, I perceived a bit of attitude about my inexperience among a few participants. This attitude quickly reversed once practice time arrived and participants took turns facilitating. Suddenly they were turning to me for guidance, and I must admit it was a reassuring to know that even the most seasoned educators had doubts about their ability to carry it off well. It seems that we all hold ourselves to pretty high standards. Bottom line, the only way to increase your comfort level with group facilitation is through experience. Like any discipline, it takes patience and practice to learn, but it is so worth it. The reward is

in knowing that everyone participated, no one voice dominated, and all perspectives at the table were honored. It can be very therapeutic!

I love the low tech and interactive nature of the CFG Coaches Trainings. We could fancy it up with technology bells and whistles, but my concern is that while we tried to focus on the bullet points we would be distracted from experiencing the content. In order to create truly collaborative teams, we must have respectful and productive conversations with one another. It would be challenging to create that experience if we were looking at a screen instead of into each other's eyes.

A successful Coach Training depends on the Facilitator's commitment to mastering transitions, honing question-asking skills, and being able to effectively facilitate protocols and activities. To that end, this internship was an invaluable part of my process. I learned as much, if not more, from observing facilitation that did not go well and reflecting on why. Observing what should not be, crystallized what should be.

Speaking in public is a challenge that I have faced head on through this internship. I am appreciative of the patience of the participants who allowed me to hone my skills during their training. I am grateful to have had such a supportive Mentor during the past year and look forward to further collaboration down the road. I head out with a suitcase filled with the right assortment of tools to successfully deliver training.

Have protocol. Will travel.



**"Bottom line,  
the only way to increase  
your comfort level  
with group facilitation is  
through experience."**

— Genie Tanner

# THIS I BELIEVE TO BE TRUE: A New Protocol

By Ellen O. Nelson, Connections contributor, NSRF coach in Pennsylvania

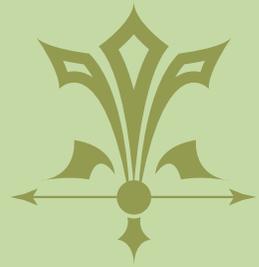
Probably the most rewarding aspect of receiving the coaches training for Critical Friends Group, is realizing that the techniques, skills and protocols that I learned were all-encompassing, not just restricted to professional development or work with my students in the classroom. With increasing confidence, I made forays with my newly-found skills. I applied CFG strategies in many areas of my life, from orienting my new Honor Council members, developing dorm activities with residential students, to even communicating with my husband. It's exciting to come to the realization that CFG protocols and activities can meet the needs of almost any group or individual with which I come in contact. I also exercise creativity when I read an article or hear a snippet of a conversation and realize that I have the groundwork for a full-blown CFG activity, ready to be shaped in the CFG way.

The activity below is an excerpt from a protocol I developed as a dorm activity to help students further refine their definition of the word "honor." This activity could easily be modified to suit individual group needs by replacing the word "honor" with words like "racism," "sexism," "integrity" or "justice."

## THIS I BELIEVE TO BE TRUE

There are certain things that we hold to be true, things that we know for sure. Maybe you think it is true that when you are open to receiving positive energy, the positive energy just keeps coming in. Or maybe you believe that the library is a good place to be. Or maybe you know that your favorite color is orange. Or maybe you believe that tomorrow the sun will rise. During this exercise, we will focus on what we believe to be true about HONOR.

- 1- Discussion leader reads the introduction out loud to the group.
- 2- Read the question: "What do you know to be true about honor?" Have all students reflect by writing their responses to this question down on paper. Leader repeats the question. Silence is maintained while thinking & writing. (4 minutes)
- 3- To start the "round," ask if anyone has a birthday in January. The student who has the next closest birthdate will "go" first. The first student reads his/her response to the question, by stating, "I believe this to be true about honor..." (1 minute)
- 4- The next student to his/her left will do two things:
  - A. Build on what the previous person has said. They may agree or disagree. Give reason why he/she agree or disagree.
  - B. Then give his/her response to the question by beginning the statement: "I believe this to be true about honor..." (1 minute)
- 5- The "round" proceeds until everyone has had a chance to respond to the previous speaker and then give his/her answer to the question. During the round, there should be silence except for the one student whose turn it is.
- 6- Debrief: Now is the opportunity for students to talk about the activity itself. They no longer talk about the question based on honor, but talk about the way in which the activity fostered discussion and thought. Did they like the way it was structured? Did they have enough time to speak? Was it too long, too short? Did they feel frustrated by the fact that they only had one chance to speak and no opportunity for rebuttal? How could this activity be improved?



Ellen O. Nelson has been a visual arts instructor at The Hill School, Pottstown, PA, for over twenty-five years. Her lectures on art and art history have taken her to area art leagues, colleges, and museums. In addition to being the Arts Department chair and Faculty Adviser to the Honor Council, Ellen exhibits her art throughout the country.

Comments or questions? Email her at [enelson@thehill.org](mailto:enelson@thehill.org)

## THE TED CONFERENCE AND TED.COM I've drunk the Kool-aid and why you should, too

Review by Luci McKean, NSRF Special  
Projects Manager, CFG Coach in Indiana

If you haven't heard of the TED Conference, then find 20 minutes, visit [TED.com](http://TED.com), pick a video tagged education (or anything else), and prepare to be optimistic ... for good reason. (Also prepare to get hooked and spend hours there, 20 minutes at a time. It's like potato chips, but good for you.)

TED is a nonprofit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading and its videos are viewed in classrooms and offices around the world. Started 25 years ago, the annual TED Conference invites the world's leading thinkers and doers to speak for no more than 18 minutes each. Their talks are then made available, free, at TED.com. TED speakers have included Bill Gates, Al Gore, Jane Goodall, Sir Ken Robinson, Elizabeth Gilbert, Sir Richard Branson, and Isabel Allende.

In addition to hundreds of videos appropriate for education at TED.com, Connections readers should also check out the recently launched [TED-ED initiative at YouTube](#). These original videos harness the talent of great teachers and visualizers, extending great lessons beyond a single classroom to anyone with internet access. Typically, these videos are just five minutes long, designed for use in any learning environment, bringing big concepts to life and catalyzing curiosity.

I encourage NSRF educators to contribute lesson plans on any topic through [TED-ED's open submission process](#). TED-ED will select lesson submissions and match them with chosen visualizers to create video lessons worth learning, watching, and sharing.

Full Disclosure: As curator for [TEDxBloomington](#), I recently attended the TEDActive conference. While TED fans joke that we've "drunk the Kool-aid" or "joined the cult," once you've watched a few of these short talks, it's difficult to talk about TED without effusiveness (or mixed metaphors, apparently).

*If you'd like to "talk TED," please email Luci.*

## New opportunity! Experienced Coaches' Seminar July 9-11, 2012, \$480

Facilitated by NSRF Facilitator Katy Kelly

The Experienced Coaches' Seminar is intended for people who have already experienced a full five-day NSRF New Coaches' Critical Friends Group Seminar and would like to continue to develop their skills as a CFG coach or facilitative leader.

Are you a CFG coach who is:

- Wondering how to help colleagues delve deeper into CFG work?
- Interested in learning new protocols?
- Wondering how to begin or support ongoing CFG work in your school or district?
- Committed to strengthening your facilitation skills?
- Looking for help working through coaching dilemmas?

In this Experienced Coaches' Seminar, you will have an opportunity to explore these questions and more with other CFG coaches and NSRF facilitative leaders. The three day institute will be crafted from the needs of the participants who attend. In addition to providing experiences to answer the questions above, we will engage in conversations around coaching successes and challenges.

To join this seminar, call 812-330-2702 or [complete the form linked here](#) to pay \$480 for your participation. Sign up early and let us know what you, as an experienced coach, most want to learn!

*Katy Kelly's association with NSRF began in 1995 when, as a classroom teacher, she became part of her first CFG. By 1998, she became a CFG coach, and went on to become a facilitator and national coordinator of NSRF in 2000. Currently she works with children and families as a home-based psychotherapist. CFG principles and facilitative leadership skills permeate all that she does.*

## White Teachers/

### Diverse Classrooms:

#### Creating Inclusive Schools, Building on Students' Diversity, and Providing True Educational Equity

Newly enlarged, Second Edition

Edited by Julie G. Landsman and Chance W. Lewis

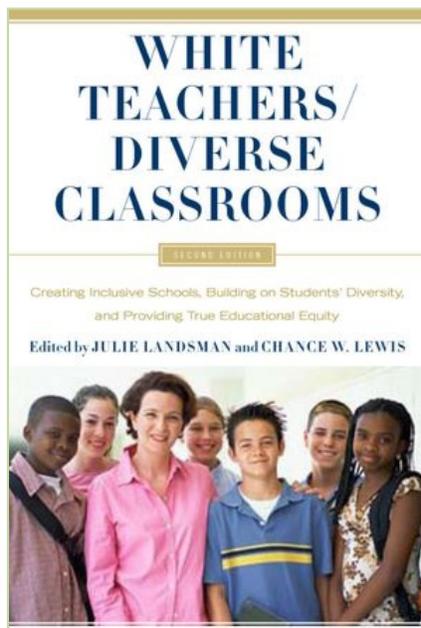
Published in Sterling, Virginia:

Stylus Publishing, 2011

Reviewed by Dave Lehman

Julie Landsman taught in the Minneapolis Public schools for 25 years, is a visiting professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and an adjunct professor at Hamline University and Metro State University in St. Paul. Chance Lewis is the Houston Endowment Inc., Endowed Chair and associate professor of urban education and co-director of the urban education graduate program in the College of Education at Texas A&M University. They begin their book with the moving poem by Paul Gorski, entitled "Becoming Joey."

I have used this poem recently (as well as the one with which they end the book) as an opening, inclusion activity with my CFG Coaches in training. I've also used it as a text-based discussion with these prompts: "Who is José/Joey? What is his struggle? Who does he remind you of in your school? How do you affirm and validate him?"



### *Becoming Joey*

José's ten.  
Looks six by size,  
twenty in the eyes.

Down  
the school-morning street  
he ambles along  
dotted lines of busses and cars  
that spit exhaust like expletives,  
disturbing his meditation  
on a few final moments of peace.

He is frail but upright.  
Hand-me-downs hang  
from his slenderness,  
patched and stained.  
Soles flop beneath battered shoes,  
worn through but hanging on,  
if only by a lace.

He pauses in the schoolyard  
where white kids laugh and scurry  
unaware of this, his battle;  
of this, his burden;  
of these, his borderlands.  
Behind him: cracked sidewalks  
and frosty nights  
sweetened by the warmth of belonging.  
Before him: manicured playgrounds,  
heated classrooms,  
and enthusiastic lessons about a world  
that doesn't see him.

Still, he moves forward,  
what feels in his stomach  
a regressive sort of forward.  
And he straightens his shirt,  
tries dusting off the stains of ancestry.  
And he clears his throat,  
tries spitting out his Mexican voice.  
And, becoming Joey, he crosses into school.

— Paul C. Gorski

Landsman and Lewis begin this tremendously useful collection of essays with an introductory chapter entitled, “A Call to Action and Self-Reflection for White Teachers in Diverse Classrooms.” It begins with this truthful, provocative, and challenging paragraph:

*“W.E.B. DuBois noted in his groundbreaking book *The Souls of Black Folk* that the problem of America is because of the color line. If this is the case, then we are deplorably behind in addressing issues of education for students of color, since DuBois identified this problem over a century ago. What makes us so reluctant to grapple with this issue? Some believe it is White people’s unwillingness to talk about racism, much less work on changing methods and curriculum. Others say the issue is already being addressed; we just have to give it more time. Some refuse to admit there is a problem at all, unless it resides solely in the Black, Latino, Asian, or Native American communities. We, the editors of this book, believe that much of the work must be done within the community and the racial group that does most of the educating: the White teachers, administrators, counselors, and social workers of our students. We also believe that real change requires deep reflecting, re-evaluating, and continually revisiting our actions and responses to students and their families.”*

The book is organized into four parts:

- Part One: “Foundations of Our Work: Recognizing Power, Privilege, and Perspectives,” with two introductory chapters about being white, reflecting on education.
- Part Two: “Culturally Relevant Teachers: Foundations and Personal Engagement,” includes a particularly insightful and useful chapter, among eight others, by Gloria Ladson-Billings of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, entitled “Yes, But How Do We Do It: Practicing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.”
- Part Three: “Knowing Who Is in the Classroom: How White Teachers Can Ensure All Children Achieve,” includes not only several chapters about the education of African-Americans, but Latina/os, Native Americans, and Koreans as well.
- Part Four: “Creating Classrooms for Equity, Activism, and Social Justice” ends the book with three thoughtful chapters on next steps, including collaboration between schools and their communities.

Each chapter ends with a series of questions that would be great discussion-starters for text-based conversations using any of our CFG text-based protocols. For example, here are two at the end of the first chapter about “Being White:” 1) *What impact does White privilege have on educators who work with students of color in your school or school district? Please discuss;* and 2) *How can educators use their privilege to learn and work together with those who want to bring racial and economic justice into the world to benefit all students?*

Lastly, the book closes with another poem, this one by one of the Editors, Julie Landsman. I include it here as it is another great example of a poem that can be used as a “text,” leading to a stimulating, enlightening conversation. I’ve used it in a text-based seminar with the following initial prompt. “What do you think the author means in the title of her poem, ‘Walking Down the Corridor Is Being in Another Country,’ and what students in your school do you recognize in her poem?” (See poem on next page.)

This book is a must read for any educator; particularly White urban educators who are striving to know their students, to develop a relationship with them, and to find ways to make their curriculum, their teaching somehow relevant to those from such different cultural backgrounds.

## **Urban Science Education for The Hip-Hop Generation:**

### **Essential Tools for the Urban Science Educator and Researcher**

**By Christopher Emdin**

**Published Boston: Sense Publishers, 2010**

**Reviewed by Dave Lehman**

Christopher Emdin is an assistant professor of science education and director of secondary school initiatives at the Urban Science Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. The following summary, taken from the description of the book on the back cover, provides an excellent overview:

*“This book is rooted in his experiences as student, teacher, administrator and researcher in urban schools*

*Walking Down the Corridor Is Being in Another Country, by Julie G. Landsman*

Released from first hour,  
students pour into the hallway.

Hands on hips, some shout:

*You tol' her you thought I was with her man last night you know that's not true.*

Others walk by in orange, blue or purple scarves and veils.

In stairwells young men pray and bow —

cramp into a space to bend toward Mecca.

White girls put on makeup, spike up their hair with black polished fingernails,  
pull at rings in their noses and lips.

A hush of Hmong slips through, gaining volume as girls giggle  
after huddling quiet in the corner all during science lab.

Five minutes of hip-hop, earphones curved over heads: the latest Outkast.

One young man takes dreaming steps, tuning into Monk's piano:

a CD his father gave him in the hope it might calm his son during long afternoons.

Someone prays and someone sings and someone cries

one quiet, hungry girl never knows where she is going  
slouches against a corner of the third-floor hallway.

Noise thins,

teachers pull doors closed in unison, calling to their students as they might  
call to their own children on an early evening in November when  
the light has changed and they want to begin dinner.

A boy speaks quickly, Liberian accent,

a girl from Eritrea slaps palms with her friend from the North Side,

Mexican music syncopates from the lunchroom

where study hall is just beginning.

Silence,

a flat surface of doors.

The young girl who is crying darts into the bathroom.

Women in uniforms patrol with walkie-talkies: crackle from the office

"Fight in the parking lot"

voice back,

*"I'm comin', honey, are the cops on their way?"*

Hallways stilled; two lovers press up against the lockers on the second floor,

laugh deep into the skin of each other's neck,

keep a lookout. Between glances they touch and touch and touch.

Second bell, they arrange hair and clothes, buttons and lips, drift to class.

After they have gone, silence,

except for a whispered prayer in Somali

as a single delicate boy bends his body toward the eastern sun.

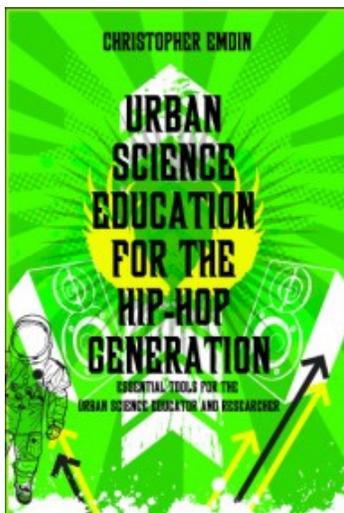


and the deep relationship between hip-hop culture and science that he discovered at every stage of his academic and professional journey. The book utilizes autobiography, outcomes of research studies, theoretical explorations, and accounts of students' experiences in schools to shed light on the causes for the lack of educational achievement of urban youth from the hip-hop generation."

Emdin's book brings to mind an article by Camilla Greene in the Connections of the Fall of 2006, entitled "Hip-Hop: A Crucial Addition to the Curriculum," in which she noted, "For years I have been put off, disgusted by the rhetoric, demeaning lyrics, gestures and misogynistic gangsta' posturing that accompanies the hip-hop culture and those who create, sustain and market it." She then went on to describe how she has become a student of her students, coming to understand the importance of this medium often mis-used and mis-represented by corporate marketers of an originally provocative socio-politically savvy means of youth communication, of deep feelings, angers, hopes, and disappointments, not just among young African-Americans, but young people of various races and ethnicities, not only in the U.S., but abroad as well.

In his Introduction, Professor Emdin notes that, "In urban classrooms, the culture of the school is generally different from the culture of its students .... A majority of [urban] students are either African-American or Latino/a while their teachers are mostly White." He goes on to describe this book as follows:

*"This work purposefully avoids providing scripts or step-by-step processes like those that science education programs and many quick fix professional development programs found in urban schools provide. Its purpose is to introduce urban education, and science in particular, to the larger issues related to the culture of urban youth and science instruction. Its chief function is to inform teachers on how to reach hip-hop youth by immersing the reader in the larger ways of thinking and challenging their existent practice, and providing them with insight into personal experiences related to hip-hop and science pedagogy that they would not have otherwise."*



Beginning with a Foreword by Maxine Greene, Professor Emeritus, Teachers College, Columbia University and Philosopher in Residence at the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education in New York City, this slim, but jam-packed paperback contains nine chapters with such titles as: "On Rap and Hip-Hop," "We Are Hip-Hop and School is Not," "From the Global to the Local: Hip-Hop, Science Education, and the Ritual," and "Moving Beyond the Silence... We're Droppin' Science."

Much of this is highlighted in a recent article in the February issue of the education journal, Phi Delta Kappan (devoted to the topic of "Educating Black Males, Closing the Gap: What Works, What Doesn't"). Christopher Emdin has a particularly insightful and useful article entitled "Yes, Black Males Are Different, But Different is Not Deficient" in which he describes what he calls the "5 Cs of reality pedagogy." Two of these he discusses at length in his book: "Cogenerative dialogues" and "Cosmopolitanism" (along with the other three: "Co-teaching," "Context," and "Content"). These are really applicable, and as a former science teacher myself, I can see their value.

"Cogenerative dialogue" is the simple process of having conversations with four to six students, during lunch or after school, about what is happening in their science classroom. Here the urban science teacher, without the trappings of the formal classroom (which all too often encourages Black males to act disinterested in learning science) can find out about how to better meet the specific academic needs of these students, and allow them to reveal their true selves to their teacher.

"Cosmopolitanism" builds on the inherent need of human beings to be responsible for each other in some way. Black male students must feel they have roles in the science classroom that allow them to be responsible for each other and that allow others to recognize that they have value in the classroom. Here Emdin recommends the following for the science teacher striving to create a "cosmopolitan classroom:"

- identify roles and responsibilities for tasks that make the class run smoothly;

- invite Black male students to select roles they want to take on (e.g. collecting homework, handing out laptops, distributing lab materials, etc.);
- dedicate the first weeks of school to explicitly discussing the roles with students;
- change roles at significant points in the school year – school breaks, semesters, etc. – and transition youths from roles related to organizing the classroom to roles that support academic success.

These two concepts of “reality pedagogy” alone can make a significant difference in reaching today’s hip-hop generation in the teaching of science.

In his closing chapter, “Reframing Urban Science Education,” Christopher Emdin states:

*“I suggest that teachers change the ways that they view participants in hip-hop and shift from the deficit views of hip-hop that shape common discourse. Rather than spend their effort attempting to extract students’ hip-hopness from who they are, I argue that students be taught from an understanding of, and consideration of hip-hop culture. This must be done while upholding ethical standards that consider hip-hop youth to be just as intelligent as their peers from other backgrounds. Finally, I argue that it is the teacher’s responsibility to learn and understand hip-hop’s ancestry and how it has led to the current state of the hip-hop generation. This understanding allows the teacher to understand that students have tremendous insight into how to best teach their peers because teaching and learning is an integral part of their history.”*

This book about science education and the hip-hop generation may be invaluable to any teacher working in an urban high school today.

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

Contact him with your questions or comments at [davelehman@mac.com](mailto:davelehman@mac.com).

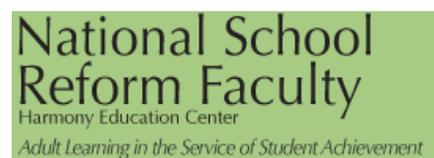
## What do you think?

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

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