

# What's Happening in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, Assistant Principal's CFG

Center of Activity Report - Vicki Anderson, Tennessee

Being at an assistant principal CFG meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee is like being a thirsty camel at a big oasis! Each month, around 17 busy assistant principals get together and spend some time focusing on the 'real' work that we as administrators should do each day.

This year, the Assistant Principal CFG in Chattanooga centered on ways to raise student achievement through supporting teachers in our buildings. We decided to focus on how to help raise teacher expectation of student achievement. We started the process with a text-based discussion using an article about highly effective teach-

ers titled "Teacher Effectiveness: Improving Instruction One Classroom at a Time" by James H. Stronge from the College of William and Mary.

We then went back to our buildings and looked for folks in whom we could identify some of the characteristics that we discussed from the article. We met the next month and did a success analysis protocol and developed a list of qualities that our own highly effective teachers possessed. We looked at the list and teased out the qualities to which we, as assistant principals, could lend support. The qualities on our current working list are: organization, planning, modeling,

teaching strategies, time for reflection, effective procedures and routines, and expecting high expectations. We intend to look at this list and focus on these issues in our buildings to encourage all teachers to expect the most that they can from our students.

As colleagues, we enjoy the increased trust and communication that we have developed this year as a result of doing the hard work of a CFG. It is a wonderful thing to be able to speak honestly and know that you are supported and encouraged to be successful. ■

*Vicki Anderson can be reached at  
vicki\_anderson@hcde.org*

## *Creating Community, The Spring Symposium...* (continued from page 11)

character of the students who attended, and their genuine desire to share, collaborate, and take risks. BRAVO!"

Obviously students gain a tremendous amount from being involved in the Symposium as well. Conversing with teachers in a context that looks so familiar (the conference is held at a school, sessions take place in classrooms) but at the same time is so removed from the usual teacher-student classroom dynamics is a powerful experience for the young people who participate. They appreciate conversing with teachers on a more equal footing. As one student reflected, "It's good to have students and teachers interact outside our normal environment ... we can have real conversations, not as friends really but as peers or colleagues in some way." Another student, who perhaps had had few opportunities to connect personally with her teachers in the past, writes "Sitting down for lunch with students and teachers together was probably the best part of the day." Students also get a behind-the-scenes

look at teaching and gain a new appreciation for the challenges of the job. One student noted that he got to "see what teachers do, and how they feel." Another writes, the day "gave me a new perspective on education." In



addition to the new insights they offer one another, adults and students talking together about teaching and learning can inspire one another – and perhaps this result is the most exciting. A student writes about the most recent Symposium, "Today was about creating and caring. It motivated me to

want to learn and that makes me happy. Thank you!"

The Spring Symposium on School Improvement was started originally to help strengthen, in Palmer's words, "the community of fellow teachers from whom we can learn more about ourselves and our craft." We have found that when we extend this community to include our students we learn even more. If we heed Atwell's advice and involve students in the dialogue of school reform, we create a learning community with all perspectives included – adult and child alike. The experience transcends the traditional notion of professional development and has the power to transform not only teacher practice but schooling in general. ■

*Carrie Brennan taught at Catalina Foothills High School from '92-'03. She now directs a new Tucson charter high school opening next fall. For more information about the Spring Symposium contact Carrie Brennan at carrie@cityhighschool.org or JoAnn Groh at jo@cfsd.k12.az.us.*