solid observable evidence — laid a solid foundation for more challenging feedback later in the week. The fact that the feedback was always tied to the questions the facilitators themselves had posed was key to the success of the debrief sessions. There were never any ‘gotchas.’ This trust-building process was not given short shrift, and its value should not be underestimated. After the observation, the facilitators had never met John or me prior to this seminar week together.

I was surprised to learn how absolutely crucial the use of concrete observations was to the overall process. As I look back on the experience, I liken the whole observation process to a four-day ATLAS protocol. I used my laptop constantly each day, and found that the most efficient way for me to collect the data was to simply script the behaviors of the facilitators. I tried to be as objective and descriptive as possible, keeping my interpretations out of the script. I included direct quotes whenever possible, and kept some track of start and end times of the various activities. My note taking evolved into a four-column table format:

- **Description**
- **My Questions**
- **Connection to Focus Questions**

During the course of the day, I only typed in the description column. (This was the equivalent of round one of an ATLAS protocol — “What do you see, literally?”) Later each day, I would add warm feedback, my questions, and finally the connections to the facilitators’ focus questions. (This information was similar to “Interpreting One’s Work” and “Implications for Practice” as described in an ATLAS protocol.) It was this note-taking process that provided the concrete and specific feedback that the facilitators seemed to appreciate. It enabled me to provide feedback that was nonjudgmental, because all interpretations were tied directly to the scripted activities — the raw data — and were not simply my opinions, based on my own experiences and preferences.

I have to mention the importance of having some facility with the laptop in this role as process observer. John and I each had about 7 pages of computer-generated notes daily. These we e-mailed to the facilitators at the end of the week. I am sure I could not have kept the pace with scripting and warm organizing information later if I had tried doing it using handwritten notes.

- **One thing that I began to reflect upon myself as a facilitator:** I began to wonder if I am as inclusive of other facilitators as I like to think I am. As I watched the facilitators working together and becoming smoother in their interactions over the course of the day, I came to wonder about the role I play when working with co-facilitators, I watched the lead facilitator, who has given so much of herself in helping to provide a strong foundation for the learning community work at CES NW, as she sought to share the leadership with others. I wondered how comfortable I really am in sharing the leadership, and I wondered how much my personal investment in the outcomes of C2E2 work in our area may be restricting the creative input of the very talented facilitators with whom I work regularly.

- **My Questions**
- **Connection to Focus Questions**

The mission of the National School Reform Faculty is to foster educational and social equity by empowering all professional involved with schools to work collaboratively in reflective democratic communities that create and support powerful learning experiences for everyone.

Winter 2003

Connections: A Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

Winter 2003
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La Raza
Pedro Bermúdez, Florida

I
n an article that appeared in the September 1968 edition of Phi Delta Kappan, Spiral Singh, Associate Director of the University Center for Innovations in Teaching and Case Western Reserve University, reminded us of an early warning system used by coal miners to detect the presence of deadly fumes in their work environment. The system was quite simple: miners went into the mine with a canary in a cage. If the air in the mine killed the canary, it would soon kill the miners.

Singh uses this metaphor to suggest that the persistent poverty of many Black and Hispanic children continue to be disproportionately poor—a rate that is three times higher than that of White children. In addition to the persistence of poverty, the main determinant to raising achievement is about to stay isolated from one another, and we can’t work for those students who are not learning if they remain invisible to us. Most importantly, we can’t benefit from our collective knowing of the people who are closest to the students. We believe that powerful learning is reciprocal in nature, and we try to live by this tenet when we were still at Annenberg, asked us during a strategic planning meeting, “Will you work in the mainstream, or will you be the people who say otherwise?” It seems that, as an organization, we have evolved to the point where we are both—part of the mainstream, as my educational jour-

We believe that no one in a school community should be anonymous—that all should be known well. Furthermore, we believe that everyone’s work should be public—even transparent. We value multiple perspectives, and we know the power of feedback as we strive to improve our practice. Our ability to learn from each other, and to be accountable to and for each other, depends on us de-

In NSRF, we trust educators to shape their own professional development in collaboration with each other, and we trust that we will know when we need to call in outside resources. We believe that if we are going to effectively adapt our practice to meet the needs of all our students without lowering standards, we can’t do it alone. Instead, the “answers” lie in the collective knowing of the people who are closest to the students. We believe that powerful learning is reciprocal in nature, and we try to live by this tenet in all facets of NSRF’s organizational and program work as well.

Finally, we believe that the values and beliefs we hold should extend to all aspects of our work. It is not a coincidence that all of the beliefs we have discussed above are described not only in terms of our work in schools, but also in terms of our own organi-

For more information about our work, and you have not already done so, please contact us at:
srf@harmonyschool.org

Research • Data • Evidence

A
s the National School Reform Faculty develops a research agenda we are actively soliciting research that you have done around your work. In an effort not to recreate the wheel we would like to study what research has already been done, make better use of that, and then determine what future studies might be useful to inform our practice. We suspect that there is a wealth of data about the effects of CFGs and CFG-related activities in our schools within the cover of dissertations, filed away as class papers on hard drives, or stacked in milk crates next to desks. Some of you have contacted us. We hope more of you will. If you have done research, collected data, and you have not already done so, please contact us at:
srf@harmonyschool.org

Gene Thompson-Grove, Daniel Baron and Steve Bonchek, the three co-

Director’s Report
(continued from page 1)

some years ago, Carl Glickman, who was on our Advisory Committee, reporting out to us in Connections. Director’ s Report

The NTDF was a “24/7” event immersed in the multi-layered issues of classroom practice and curriculum. Sessions began at 8:00 a.m. and usually lasted until 5:00 p.m. with facilita-

debriefings that usually concluded at 11:00 p.m.

Curriculum and Instruction: Teaching with the Heart

Teaching with the Head

This component of the NTDF emphasized that good teachers know themselves and their students well enough to create interdependent, respectful classroom learning com-

ers of data about the effects of CFGs and CFG-related activities in our schools within the cover of dissertations, filed away as class papers on hard drives, or stacked in milk crates next to desks. Some of you have contacted us. We hope more of you will. If you have done research, collected data, and you have not already done so, please contact us at:
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