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What processes best support collegial dialogue and enhance collaborative learning? What characterizes an effective protocol? How can we tell when we have a process that we’re ready to try with other educators? These were some of the questions that members of my CFG and I started wrestling with, even though we didn’t know at the outset that we’d be going in this direction.

I’ve been a member of the same CFG for nearly three years now. Our membership has changed slightly; we’ve lost some of our original members when major career moves made getting together really tough, we’ve gained some new members who’ve added new facets to the group’s work, and we’ve struggled to overcome challenges in scheduling. In other words, we’re a very typical group of critical friends.

When we convened at the beginning of the school year, we began – as usual – by brainstorming goals for our work. As we tossed out several questions that we might want to pursue, one area for study kept coming up over and over, worded in different ways: What do we know about looking at hard data about student performance? Schools we’re working with are generating so much data, and people keep saying the data is supposed to inform instruction, but how can the data inform instruction if we aren’t really analyzing the data? We have lots of protocols for looking at student work – written products and other artifacts – but how do we look at the hard data, the numbers and graphs, in ways that are productive?

We agreed that we wanted to put forth a concerted effort to develop a protocol that would encourage teachers to see data as nonthreatening, non-evaluative, informative, and worthwhile. Since the members of our group were all in some way connected to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), either as teachers or administrators or as consultants from the UCLA School Management Program, we decided to focus our development efforts on the LAUSD Periodic Assessment Program for English/Language Arts.

We wanted to encourage teachers to see data as nonthreatening, non-evaluative, informative, and worthwhile.
Sixteen biology students sit in a circle with their teacher working to gain a better understanding of an article on memory. Today the teacher is using a Rich Text Protocol as a facilitator. She is not sure where the discussion will go, but trusts in the process and the students’ ability to thoughtfully explore complex ideas. Nicole makes a strong case for the group to explore the idea of conflabulation, or how the brain makes up things when there is a void in the memory. Other students listen to Nicole’s case, but they want to discuss the idea of rehearsal when trying to memorize different ideas or facts. Nicole concedes, but the facilitator, sensing her true desire to explore this idea, promises to return later to conflabulation. Students return to the section of the article they started the text, knowing they will present their perspective and how it applies to their own learning. Each student presents the text, although not everyone agrees with what is written. Justin presents a different point of view and Ainsa challenges his interpretation. There is further discussion (including transitions) and the students recommend ways teachers can apply some of the concepts from today’s class to enhance their instructional practice. The teacher asks students to write about rehearsal from their perspective and share the ideas from their writing in pairs. Even though there is not enough time for the last step of the protocol, it is obvious that the students now have a greater understanding of the complexities of memory and how it relates to their own learning.

Protocols can be used to create a different type of classroom that impacts students’ learning. In a classroom, such as the biology class we have just described, the Rich Text Protocol can be modified to suit the needs of the students. To create a different type of classroom that really impacts student learning? Here is what the experts say:

“Using protocols helps your understanding. Instead of just listening passively you have to actively think and be prepared to share your thoughts, and this enhances understanding.” - Justin, 12th grade biology student at Steamboat Springs High School

“A protocol keeps the class on track and focused. It allows the group to hit the important points of the article. It is a different way of doing things.” - Jessie, 12th grade biology student at Steamboat Springs High School

“This kind of classroom involves a different way about what they have learned, and will ponder questions after the class is over. The questions naturally recur throughout the unit of study and the students know there is not just one correct answer. In this classroom there exists a community of learners: they work in pairs, triads, small groups, and as an entire class. Students are respected for their unique insights and strengths. Each member of the class encourages others to take intellectual risks. Students feel safe, respected, listened to and cared for as individuals. They value each others’ diverse backgrounds. They are interested in each other’s lives beyond the classroom and share in each others’ successes and disappointments. They are learners - individually and collectively grappling with the content and its implications. They work to improve not only their understanding of the content, but their skills as scholars. They are learning the art of thinking and reflecting. The teacher is a part of this community and is learning along with the students.

In this classroom, the students are the workers. They have prepared carefully before using protocols. In fact, they are fully aware of their individual responsibility for the success of the class. Their role is that of scholar. Their responsibility is to push their own thinking and that of their classmates to a deeper level. They monitor their own learning and their interactions with others. They reflect on both the content and the process of learning. They challenge their own assumptions and the assumptions of others. All information, regardless of its source - from teacher, textbook, media inside and outside of the classroom - is critically examined for inaccuracies and bias.

In this classroom the teacher is a part of this community and is learning along with the students. The teacher is a part of this community and is learning along with the students.

This protocol was developed by Joe and Beth McDonald and comes from the book Power of Protocols by Joe McDonald, Nancy Mohr, Alan Dichter and Elizabeth C. McDonald.
I believe nothing happens by chance.

Discussion about the possibility of Oshkosh becoming Wisconsin’s first NSRF Center of Activity. We dare to dream.

I believe nothing happens by chance. Sometimes along the path of life an event causes an individual to pause and seek the greater meaning of his being. It is during these moments of reflection that we study the path and contemplate the future. There was a reason why I came across Miss Kerberger’s boxes. Maybe that memo­r­ry was the spark that is now allowing me to step forward in a leadership role. Maybe it was to help me remem­ber how important teachers are in the lives of the children. Where I once only saw memories in boxes, I now see the future unfolding. Reaching the destination at the end of a journey is not the important part. What we learn, and who we share those experiences with along the way, are the things that give meaning to our journeys. Creating a smoother path for those who follow in our footsteps is the precious gift which we can offer.

NSRF New York

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Learning to See with a Third Eye: Working to Understand the Full Impact of Inequity
A Book Review by Debbie Bambino, Pennsylvania

This is not a standard book review; rather, it is a glimpse into my transaction with the new Educating Teachers for Diversity: Seeing with a Cultural Eye by Jacqueline Jordan Irvine.

A few years ago we revised NSRF’s mission statement to include language about working to “foster educational and social equity…” and since that time I realize I have often been responsible for trying to just “add on” a focus about issues of equity. The revision of our mission statement was a delicate issue for me as a former Philadelphia Middle School teacher, as a current Urban Education grad student and as a facilitator of CFGs. In each of these roles I have become increasingly convinced that racism and other forms of bias are the greatest barriers we face in our efforts to positively transform the educational experiences of our kids, especially when our kids are poor, inner city, kids of color.

A first step in moving forward around issues of equity for me has been getting in touch with what I don’t know. As a white, female, heterosexual educator, I know I need to consciously incorporate a focus on those differences that I don’t “know” by virtue of my own lived experience. In other words, I have to choose to acknowledge the presence and impact of racism, cultural chauvinism and homophobia in our system and in my own practice continuously. As a facilitator, I have the choice by adding an activity or protocol here and a reading there, without thoroughly reworking the framework of the coaching support I offer as an external coach in a network of districts and schools.

By treating equity as an “add on” to an already full agenda, I have unwittingly set up the context for it to be “left off.” Consequently, when time gets short, the articles and activities that explicitly deal with equity are given less time, or they are postponed. Despite my intellectual recognition that these issues lie at the heart of our failure to successfully breach the persistent achievement gap.

Recently, as a grad student, I have been reading Jacqueline Jordan Irvine’s book, Educating Teachers for Diversity: Seeing with a Cultural Eye, and I have been struck by her analysis that we all can work to see with a “third eye,” an eye that “sees a different picture and examines alternative explanations.” Dr. Irvine goes on to call for collaborative action research wherein outside/inside educator-researchers like myself “assume the humility of good anthropologists.” By calling myself an outsider/insider I am making explicit my role as a white educator who works and observes “inside” settings and am the “outsider” from the dominant culture of power, despite my being in the minority numerically in buildings and systems where children of color predominate. I understand Dr. Irvine’s call for humility as a demand for a complete description of the Endorsement Process and Standards for Facilitators.

NSRF Mission Statement

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

Connections to the Foundation for Educational Renewal for its support of this journal. If you have any feedback or are interested in contributing to Connections contact us at 812.330.2702, kelly@harmonyschool.org, ddbambino@earthlink.net

With colleagues and students changed. Formal leadership looked at how they supported staff, worked with teacher-leaders and helped others develop skills and begin to change habits. The cycle repeated twice.

Throughout the process, participants were encouraged to pursue NSRF NY Endorsement by ultimately presenting a portfolio of their work demonstrating their facilitation skills in action. Five of the twenty-five participants received endorsement. All participants left more skilled.

We see examples of formal and informal leaders at all levels within the district applying NSRF principles and practices.

• We model and encourage the use of feedback as teaching/learning and community-building tools. Not only does this allow us to take the pulse of the group, it engages everyone in a reflective process in which we experience how feedback can shape future events. This happens when a good leader is able to synthesize input from each of those they lead and is an essential dimension of building a reflective community of learning.

• Our practice of “transparent facilitation” (characterized by public reflection and sharing your thinking as facilitator regarding choices and intention) allows the group to see us not as leaders who with all the answers but as colleagues striving to help members learn to ask better questions and taking increasing responsibility for their own learning and the learning of peers.

• In Vivian’s school (Landmark HS) the teachers have undertaken an extensive re-examination of their twelve-year-old portfolio process. This inquiry makes extensive use of feedback and NSRF structured protocols to guide them in this work.

• Two of Alan’s largest high schools are engaged in the process of forming smaller learning communities. They believe that facilitation skills acquired through applying NSRF principles and practices are absolutely necessary to sustain any change from within.

• Local Endorsed Facilitators have gone on to form Critical Friends Groups and still others have taken on teacher-leadership roles in their schools or stepped up to help plan and facilitate a variety of professional development opportunities.

• A recent series of professional development sessions for Assistant Principals (co-facilitated by Vivian, who was the only participating principal on the team of district facilitators) looked very much like a CFG coaches training, and participants went on to take responsibility for working with their colleagues in ways which closely resemble Critical Friends Groups.

• These are a few examples of the way NSRF NY works. NSRF NY is almost entirely from within. You can’t “go to NSRF NY,” but you can find it in more places than you think.

NSRF NY Endorsement requires participants to attend approximately 30 hours of training and then to present a portfolio of their work demonstrating their ability to apply what they have learned in their work. An alternative route to endorsement is through an apprentice experience, where the “training” takes place by working along with a National Facilitator. See www.nsrfny.org for a complete description of the Endorsement Process and Standards for Facilitators.

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NSRF New York

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Serenity

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Dr. Maloy invited these impassioned teachers to attend the Administrators’ Advance (retreat) on August 15th. That respectful invitation led to the questions “What makes this work so powerful and what will it take to sustain the work back in your schools?” How do we know we have a process that we’re ready to try with other educators? • We may never know that we’re ready. • We can only know at this point when we decided, “It’s good enough. Let’s do it.” In our case, I sought out a school site leader (in this case, CFG coach at her site. I knew she’d be willing to take risks, and would set a tone within the group that would support reflective dialogue in an atmosphere where it would be safe for the educators to take risks and learn together.

As our CFG worked our way through this creation process, we gained new insights and we reinforced something that we already knew about the protocols, that the spirit that sustained us through the months of our inquiry and characterizes how we’ve learned to view data: “All scientific knowledge is provisional; there is no one answer. The questions that we’re suggesting, is an important point to remember. With that said, the “Querying Data” process can be overwhelming. We came up with some very good questions (and, yes, for someone who is getting started in analyzing the data, the sheer volume of questions (not to mention all the materials that are required for the protocol) might seem daunting.

What characterizes an effective protocol? • It is important for us to remember that the context in which these protocols are used to be: in grade-level or department-level groups, with educators who have not previously signed on to work together colleague- cially in a CFG and who, therefore, have probably not developed the cultural trust needed to look at these issues straightforwardly in the early stages of this work. (In our desire to push the envelope regarding issues of equity, it was tempting to want to design the process so that the issues that can be revealed by disaggregat- ing the data are confronted head-on.

Creating a protocol because there is a need we felt driven to fill, a set of questions that we need to explore was key for us. I don’t think this would have been meaningful if we had simply said, “Why don’t we see if we can create some kind of a pro- tocol?” • Allowing room for the individual and the group’s own inquiry questions, and not feeling tied to the questions that we’ve suggested, is an important point to remember. With that said, the “Querying Data” process can be overwhelming. We came up with some very good questions (and, yes, for someone who is getting started in analyzing the data, the sheer volume of questions (not to mention all the materials that are required for the protocol) might seem daunting.

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has undertaken to ensure that the California State Standards for English/Language Arts are accessible to middle and high school students throughout the district by reorganizing the structure into a more manageable, coherent format. Rather than continuing to work from the state’s list of anywhere from 46 to 63 standards for each grade level, LAUSD has organized the standards into separate components, such as narrative, exposition, literary response and analysis, and persuasion. The standards most relevant to each component are addressed during a given period of instruction, and those standards are assessed periodically (roughly quarterly), hence the name Periodic Assessments.

Each of these Periodic Assessments can provide educators with, literally, tons of data about student progress. Our CFG spent one of our early meetings simply getting acquainted with all the different types of data from these assessments. We were overwhelmed, as may be a bit overwhelmed, by all the data in front of us.

The data are available as broadly or as specifically as the person examining might like: individual student, individual teacher, period by period, grade level at a single school, grade level per local district, aggregated or disaggregated, with individual item responses, with information by specific content standard, and on and on. The district has remained true to its commitment that these assessments are not high-stakes; the purpose of the assessments are to inform instructional practice and enhance student learning.

The dilemma that our CFG saw with this: the data were, at least in schools where we worked, rarely being used effectively, if at all. Most teachers were as overwhelmed as we were by the sheer magnitude of the data. Even more daunting, because most teachers had had previous experiences that had taught them that “data are not our friends,” there was widespread distrust of how the data would be used.

As we continued to plow through mountains of data reports, we became clear about a few principles that guided our protocol development. We wanted to be sure to:

- think about ways to help teachers, individually and collaboratively, reflect on these data reports so that they are not viewed as threatening or as a basis for evaluation
- keep the focus on evidence of what students are learning, not on how teachers are teaching
- set up conditions so that teachers approach the data analysis in a spirit of inquiry, bringing to the process their own questions.

We connected to our own experiences in using protocols to learn from students. We knew that there were road maps to guide us in both the ATLAS Protocol and the Collaborative Assessment Conference. Our first attempt to use a protocol-like approach to analyzing the data went something like this:

1. We were clear that the data analysis should not be a “fishing expedition.” There were just too many reports for us to go in without questions to guide our inquiry. So, before we looked at the data, we did a two-minute quick write in response to the question, “What information do I hope to find out by looking at these data?” Or, what do I hope to learn by looking at these data?” We shared our thoughts and generated some guiding questions for our group.

2. We agreed on one type of report, and made sure we all had copies of the same report type for one grade level. Then we asked the following questions:

- What do you see/notice/observe?
- What surprises you? What makes it surprising?
- What questions do the data raise for you? Or What else do you want to know?
- Where might you go to get that information?

This got us started, and helped us to see where we were stuck in the process. Some of the new questions that came up were:

- What industries standards that will recur from one component to the next?
- Should we provide this information to group members up front, or is it important for participants to seek out this information and make sense of it for themselves?
- Once we’ve identified an area where students aren’t doing well on the assessment, what is the bridge between what they know and how they perform in the classroom? How do you make the connection between evidence of understanding in the classroom and performance on the assessment?

- How do we make the connection between evidence of understanding in the classroom and performance on the assessment?
- How can we tell if students’ struggles are more related to the construction of the test item than to the students’ mastery of the content?
- What is it important to look at disaggregated data? When is it important to examine individual students’ scores?

We managed to sustain our focus on this development over five of our monthly meetings. We ended up with two protocol drafts. One protocol is for teachers, the other is for student data protocols. We have found that responsive facilitation and the use of protocols’ principles of reflective practice, collaboration, and shared leadership can be effective means of working with people in districts to create respectful, thoughtful, and safe conditions that will encourage them to look critically at their practices.

So, while the NSRF community is very much alive and well in New York City, it is a community of ideas and practice far more than an organization. It is a community of colleagues and students which values inclusion and multiple perspectives and sees leadership as being responsible for creating an environment where learning is enhanced by collaboration. It is a community of leaders and skills that are learned and understood, and those who have traditionally been marginalized and thought of as terminally at risk.

One recent example: Alan works with twelve high schools in New York City. After he had worked with new leaders in a process of inquiry and reflection over the course of months, he became familiar with three of these school leaders that while they were working in various teacher team configurations, they weren’t realizing sufficient pay-off. Meetings were going off on unproductive tangents. Alan managed to divert these conversations onto project-based learning experiences.

Decisions seemed to take forever, and often became bargaining situations instead of creative problem-solving experiences. They wanted the groups to be able to come to agendas, follow through, seek solutions, assess progress, critique plans and be creative. A tall order. Through a series of consultancies and other problem-solving protocols, it became clear to all that teacher-leaders needed to strengthen their facilitation skills and broaden their repertoire in order to be effective leaders in these collaborative communities.

An institute was hatched by Vivian, Alan and two principals for teams of administrators and teachers from these three schools. The institute was led by NSRF-trained facilitators and was rooted entirely in this line of work. After three intensive days, participants went back to their schools to apply what they learned, having committed to return a month later to talk about their efforts. Teachers looked at how their work (continued on page 18)
Since 1989, the Walt Disney Company has presented Disney’s American Teacher Awards, saluting outstanding members of the teaching profession. Specifically, the program honors those teachers whose approaches exemplify creativity in teaching and who inspire a joy of learning in their students. In 2001, John Pieper was one of 80 teachers nationwide who received this award. CFG Coaches training was one of the benefits included with this special recognition. This is the last of three installments following John’s journey as a new CFG Coach.

A few years ago I picked up extra money working for an auctioneer. We were in the process of combining a number of small estates when a particular group of boxes caught my eye. The word “Kerberger” was neatly printed on the side of each box. To most people, the content was a worthless assortment of faded papers, outdated textbooks, black and white family photos, and old Valentines. A deeper connection flashed through my mind. I was gaz ing at a part of my childhood. Like little snippets from a home movie, my memories carried me back to 1964 and Dale School. Miss Kerberger was my fourth-grade teacher. She was kind and caring. Teaching was her life’s passion. I looked through the boxes with reverence and sadly realized how much had been lost when she passed away. Through experience, teachers accumulate a wealth of knowledge. Unfortunately, most of that wisdom is never effective- ly shared with colleagues. Several days later, while sitting in my own class- room, I envisioned the school as one large compartmentalized box where teachers rarely engaged in meaningful interaction. The potential for oppor- tunities missed was unsettling. I set aside my anxiety and started to search and explore the various avenues of the teaching profession. Documents, articles, and professional interactions are now driving our intellectual development. Protocols are widely used throughout the district to improve the effectiveness of our meetings. We have recently decided to incorporate regular classroom observations as part of our CFG strategic design. We are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to make use of this practice. The observations are strictly voluntary. Members of our CFG who have completed observations have gained new insights into their own practice. By sharing our enthusiasm, other teachers have expressed interest in what we are doing. The learning takes place within the framework of a caring learning community.

Never in our wildest dreams did we imagine that in only one year, our organization would jump from the initial planning and development stages into actually start and sustain a CFG in their local settings. Most of our evi- dence in this regard is still informal and anecdotal, although we’ve begun to collect this data through written surveys. We’re actively interested in learning if there are many more trained coaches in the state than there are active CFGs, and that there’s a fairly high attrition rate during this transition period from the introduction of new practices (I.U. participating in a five-day New Coaches Seminar) to implementation/adaptation at the local level (I.U. starting a CFG). Our sense from talking with other CFG coaches and NSRF facilitators is that the country is that this is a national issue and not just a Vermont issue. Could we increase the likelihood that new coaches will start CFGs by moving toward a co-coaching model for local CFGs, and by more extensive use of peer observation by pairs of coaches in local settings as a form of ongoing support? Because our own experienc- e with co-coaching and peer obser- vation have been so helpful to us as we learn how to grow this work, we wonder how these supports might be made more widely available to other CFG coaches within the state and around the country. We also wonder how we can bring our own positive experi- ence with peer observation into our work with other NSRF facilitators who are part of our Vermont Center of Activity. How can we be more intentional and thoughtful about our facilitation and protocol-based work within our own group so that we are ourselves a CFG and a learning community?

We’re certainly aware that there are many more trained coaches in the state than there are active CFGs, and that there’s a fairly high attrition rate during this transition period from the introduction of new practices (I.U. participating in a five-day New Coaches Seminar) to implementation/adaptation at the local level (I.U. starting a CFG).

Currently, each week we have an effective co-facilitation model for all five-day New Coaches Seminars that are being presented within Vermont and beyond. We can incor- porate the practice of peer observation more systematically into our facilitation of new CFGs. We can teach the peer observation process to Seminar participants for them to incorporate into their work and share with CFG par- ticipants in their local settings. We can use peer observation protocols to give each other feedback on our Seminar planning and facilitation. We can also make our own peer feedback sessions public for participants toward the end of the Seminar so they can begin to see how they could use peer observa- tion to support and strengthen their own coaching practices. As a group of experienced NSRF facilitators organi- zed into a Center of Activity, we’ve become very effective facilitators of introductory experiences for new CFG coaches, but we’re still in the early stages of supporting and building new CFG coaches within our region and around the country. We also wonder how we can bring our own positive experi- ence with peer observation into our work with other NSRF facilitators who are part of our Vermont Center of Activity. How can we be more intentional and thoughtful about our facilitation and protocol-based work within our own group so that we are ourselves a CFG and a learning community? We’re already using an effective co-facilitation model for all five-day New Coaches Seminars that are being presented within Vermont and beyond. We can incor- porate the practice of peer observation more systematically into our facilitation of new CFGs. We can teach the peer observation process to Seminar participants for them to incorporate into their work and share with CFG par- ticipants in their local settings.

How can we as responsible NSRF facilitators support new coaches in their complicated new roles as CFG coaches and change agents/leaders within their schools and communities? What role can peer observation play for school coaches in terms of helping them to plant the seed of CFG work in carefully pre- pared local soil and of nurturing its growth through various – and often predictable – stages of development?

How can we incorporate more planning and growing-the-CFG- seed conversations into five-day New Coaches Seminars, and what role can a co-coaching model coupled with peer obser- vation play in that process?

How can we encourage coaches and facilitators to share their positive experiences, both successes and challenges, with each other?

How can we incorporate more process and grow-the-CFG seed conversations into five-day New Coaches Seminars, and what role can a co-coaching model coupled with peer observation play in that process?

• How can we as responsible NSRF facilitators support new coaches in their complicated new roles as CFG coaches and change agents/leaders within their schools and communities?

• What role can peer observation play for school coaches in terms of helping them to plant the seed of CFG work in carefully prepared local soil and of nurturing its growth through various – and often predictable – stages of development?

• How can we incorporate more planning and growing-the-CFG seed conversations into five-day New Coaches Seminars, and what role can a co-coaching model coupled with peer observation play in that process?

• How can we encourage coaches and facilitators to share their positive experiences, both successes and challenges, with each other?

• How can we incorporate more process and grow-the-CFG seed conversations into five-day New Coaches Seminars, and what role can a co-coaching model coupled with peer observation play in that process?
Learning to See with a Third Eye
(continued from page 3)

Interview with Gene Thompson-Grove
Katy Kelly, Indiana

The following interview with Gene Thompson-Grove, Co-Director of NSRF, was conducted on November 11th, 2004, by Katy Kelly, National Coordinator of the NSRF National Office.

Katy: Gene, you are one of the founders of NSRF. How did that come about?

Gene: Faith Dunne, Paula Evans and I were working for the Citibank Project at the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University.

K: Let’s back up a bit. How did you get involved with the Coalition?

G: In 1987 I was working for the Boston chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility. I had announced my resignation effective the end of the school year. Joe McDonald, who was a Clinical Professor in Brown University’s Education Department was going on sabbatical and invited me to apply for his position while he was on leave for two years. Ted Sizer was chair of the Education Department at that time and he hired me. At the time the Coalition was not a separate organization from Brown’s Education Department. As the Coalition grew, it moved across the street to a separate space. It had some of its own staff, but the chair of the Coalition (Sizer) was also the chair of the Education Department at Brown.

K: Okay, now back to the Citibank project. Was the purpose of the Citibank project to offer support to teachers in Coalition schools?

G: Yes. What we did was to bring together a group of teachers from around the country that met for one week in the spring. They developed a curriculum on a central issue on educational leadership at the University of Vermont. It is only one of the initiatives that are part of the Coalition.

K: What are some differences between how you envisioned the work then and now?

G: As in most learning opportunities, the way our work is designed has evolved and of course the Coalition has also evolved. We are more involved in professional development that is job-embedded and done within the context of one’s daily practice. It is a long-term commitment that stretches beyond a summer institute or a one-week program. The work is less about a single project and more about an ongoing process of learning.

K: How did Critical Friends Groups come about?

G: We had managed to stretch our Citibank project money from a four-year grant into five years, and we were at a point where we were thinking about what was next.

We knew that a large grant to public education was going to be given by Ambassador Walter Annenberg - but we didn’t know how much or when. Then, one day, we walked into our offices at Brown and found out that the money had been given and that we now worked for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR). We didn’t have a director and we didn’t have a clear mission, and there was a fair amount of confusion about who exactly we were. Paula Evans, the Director of Professional Development, was visionary and action-oriented. So, we gathered about twelve teachers and administrators from around the country with whom we had been working, and said to them, “We could apply to AISR for a large grant to do professional development the way we think it ought to be done, using what we have learned over the last five years. If you could do anything, what would you do?”

We used people’s own experience - what they said they needed and what they had learned about effective professional development - and we read the research. The beauty of that kind of professional development that we described as being most effective and equitable was also being mirrored in the research. People like Milbrey McLaughlin, Joan Talbert, Ann Lieberman and Judith Warren Little were writing about professional development that was job-embedded, and done within the context of one’s daily practice. We knew that summer institutes, where you go to get re-energized or maybe even transformed, were in many cases ineffective. Practitioners said that even though they had made a commitment to be different when they got back to school, by October they pretty much did things the way they always had, not because they hadn’t made a commitment to do things differently, but because it was too hard to change one’s practice all on one’s own.

We knew the professional development needed to be in the context of the classroom and counter to the way schools are set up in which teachers work in isolation, don’t make their practice public, and are not accountable to each other and there are no norms in place for giving or receiving feedback on their practice. So, in 1995, the National School Reform Faculty and its Critical Friends Groups became the first professional-development initiative of AISR. Paula Evans, Faith Dunne and I were the first co-directors of the program. Financially, the program was well supported by Annenberg, but our focus was on developing work that would eventually be self-sufficient.

K: So how did Critical Friends Groups come about?

G: Our work was different from the traditional review teams that most often were set up within a school or district. We were bringing in teachers from across the country and holding them accountable for their work. We were setting the agenda, and we didn’t have a director or chairs or a formal mission statement.

K: What are some differences between how you envisioned the work then and now?

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K: What are some differences between how you envisioned the work then and now?
Introducing and Practicing Peer Observation With New Coaches
Edorah Frazer, Vermont

We are currently in our second year of introducing the concept of Coached Observing (CFG) to our schools and districts. In our continuous effort to improve our practice, the NSRF facilitators in the Vermont Center of Activity have begun a process of peer observa-
tion as we facilitate New Coaches Seminars. David Leo-Nyquist and I have been coaching a CFG for three years in the context of a graduate sem-
in educational leadership that we take together. It is our intention that over the course of our three-year semi-
in, we will have introduced all of the elements of a five-day New Coaches Seminar and practiced them in many ways. In this, the third year, David and I decided to introduce peer observation to the group, and it was during this peer observation “lesson” that David and I also engaged in peer observa-
tion between us for the first time. Our intentions were both to model good peer observation practices and to improve our teaching. In my own practice as a teacher, I have found peer observation to be the most transforma-
tive part of Critical Friends work. I was eager to share the power of peer observation with our students and with David, who had never engaged in it before.

In our first session on peer obser-
vation, David observed my facilita-
tion using the Observer as Coach protocol. My focus question was, “Am I giving the group members the skills they need to try the Observer as Coach protocol with a peer observa-
tion partner in their schools?” My approach to teaching this material was to ask by bringing everyone into the conversation the protocol, “Peer Coaching: Observer as Coach.” (protocol avail-
able online at www.nsfharmon.org/ connections.html) Then I explained that I would be taking the role of a classroom teacher whose class they would observe on videotape, using this protocol. I asked the participants to form small groups and to plan the questions they would ask me during the pre-conference. Then, in character, I fielded questions from each group in a mock pre-conference. I paused and stopped out of character to debrief the pre-conference, then we watched a video of “my” class engaged in an inquiry science lesson. I chose a 20-
minute video clip of an ambitious sci-
ence lesson that presented some com-
plex teaching challenges. Following the video, the small groups reconvened to plan the debriefing and again I fielded their questions in character and stepped out of character at the end to debrief the debriefing.

David observed and took notes throughout all of this without partici-
paring or interrupting. In debriefing with me later, he first restated my focus question: “Am I giving the group members the skills they need to try the Observer as Coach protocol with a peer observation partner in their schools?” He then offered the impression that the participants were very ready to engage in the protocol back in their schools, citing data from his observations. He noted that they had skillfully engaged in both the pre-
conference and the debriefing. He also mentioned that in the final debriefing of the process, the participants had asked many insightful questions.

During our debriefing, David asked me the following probing ques-
tions:

• What did you intend for them to be planning in the pre-conference triad? Do you have some stock pre-conference questions that you want them to know/arrive at?

• Why did you choose to show this particular video? What are its strengths and liabilities for this pur-
pose? How might this video be made more useful?

• You role-played an essentially con-
fident teacher who was very open to challenging feedback. How will you help these participants deal with embarrassment and defensiveness if they should encounter these in future peer observation partners?

• Does it serve your purposes to com-
bine your roles of role-player and facilitator, or would it be more effec-
tive to have your co-facilitator take one of these roles?

I found these questions to be very provocative and useful. Over the course of a 45-minute debriefing, I struggled with them and concluded that when I introduce a group to peer observation in the future, I will: (1) provide some stock pre-conference questions upon which the group can build; (2) seek out their own role-played video and/or edit the one I used to better suit this purpose; (3) ask my co-facilitator either to role-
play the teacher or to facilitate the

In the beginning, there was an appli-
cation process that we don’t have now. We had to get money to pay for coaches to attend the initial seminar – as well as funds to provide ongoing support to the school. The principal and the school had to make a commitment to CFG work before they sent teachers to the new coaches seminar, and principals had to attend a three-day seminar as well. In the application, the school had to write about how CFGs would help them achieve their goals for improved student learning. During the first three years, we paid coaches a stipend of $2,000 per year. Part of the commitment was to attend the Winter Meeting.

The application process also included the condition that CFG mem-
bers, coaches and principals would work toward completing professional portfolios in which they documented changes they made in their practice and student learning as a result of their participation in a CFG.

K: Two things you mentioned – princi-
pals being involved and taking part in a principals’ institute, and the portfolio component – are no longer required. What do you think about that?

G: What happened was that each year we had less and less money to sup-
port this work. It took huge financial resources to bring people together to insti-
tutions, meetings and conferences. It was difficult to require portfolios when we didn’t have the funds to sup-
port either their development or ways to give each other feedback on them.

We were just determining how we might use portfolios constructively in the context of changing practice when we left the Annenberg Institute and moved to the Harmony Education Center. Although schools and districts contributed a portion of the costs for preparing and supporting the CFG, in the last two years we were at AISR, since we left nearly all of our funding has come from fees for service from schools and districts.

K: Were principals integrated into CFGs in the first years?

G: Several of our CFGs had principals in them the first year. It was our belief that if we were going to change the culture of our schools, principals needed to do the work with their teachers.

K: I know that question still comes up: Should a principal be part of a teacher’s CFG? Will their participation inhibit the CFG or will it enhance the whole?

G: That’s not the right question. What is the question?

G: The question is: What does the fact that we are asking this question tell us about the culture of our school, and is that the kind of culture we want?

K: Two things you mentioned – princi-
pals being involved and taking part in a principals’ institute, and the portfolio component – are no longer required. What do you think about that?

G: What has really surprised me is that even though schools were wrestling with more and more mandates, including No Child Left Behind, people continue to be willing to do work that runs coun-
ter to most of the profession’s norms – that they have been willing to do the hard work of making their practice public for the purpose of receiving feedback, of situating themselves as learners, of believing that collaborating with their colleagues is time well spent. I think this work taps into the reason many of us became educators, because ultimately it is about empowering our-
selves to trust our professional judg-
ment and our collective wisdom.

K: Gene, what are your hopes and fears for the future of the NSRF?

G: My hope is that we can assemble the kind of resources that will allow us to bring together the expertise and knowledge that’s in our network, as well as in our partner organizations. I think collectively we have a lot of knowledge and experience that we don’t benefit from because it’s not all in one place. I believe our continued research and documentation ini-
tiative will be key. We need to all reach for brilliance in our work – our students deserve no less, and we need each other to do that.

My fear is that CFGs and Professional Learning Communities will go the way of Cooperative Learning and Multiple Intelligences, where people do the work at its most superficial level. We need to tell the story about the roots and the principles underlying this work. I am less interest-
ed in having our work described in the educational literature, just for the sake of having our name out there. What I do care about is that our work is cited in the literature in a substantive way. I want this work to change the culture of our profession. I want our work to make a real difference for students.
lenged by the effects of a history of inequitable education provided to stu-
dents of color. The system loses over 75% of all of its high school students. The situation is dire and the moral imperative is clear.

In the spring of 2003, Nancy Sutton, former NSRF principal and for-
mer principal of Manual High School in Denver, invited Steve Bonchek (Executive Director of HEC) and me to the University of Indianapolis to discuss the potential of a new Bill and Melinda Gates Project. The intention of the grant was to transform all five Indianapolis comprehensive high schools into a total of more than twenty equitable small schools that demonstrate their commit-
ment to student and the academic success of each student.

After several months of conversa-
tion, HSFR became the professional development/school transformation technical assistance provider for the University of Indianapolis through its Center for Excellence in Learning and Leadership (CELL). My fellow national faculta-
ty members were Joanne Greene, Lois Butler, and Carol Myers and I began meeting regularly to co-construct a strong part-
nership between CELL, the IPS District, the Indianapolis Education Association and HSFR.

The HSFR coaching team in this initiative includes Lois Butler, Kevin Horton, Virginia Hardy, Wendy Brannen, Tom Gregory, Megan Howey, and Naomi Youth. HSFR tapped from both New York and Chicago facilitator
talent to help build our capacity to lead and sustain a new ongoing collabora-
tion process. This cross-pollination has been invaluable to all of us.

Each coach was matched with one high school and has been supporting the school’s orientation, exploration, and implementation planning process. The team explicitly promotes the purpose of the effort and our role in supporting the school’s orientation, exploration, and implementation planning process. This collaborative process will ensure that there are at least two CFG coaches in every small school.

Over the course of the last two years, HSFR has worked to build the capacity of IPS to convert its five comprehensive schools by:

- facilitating the district’s transforma-
tion known as the Moral Imperative
- facilitating monthly Leadership team meetings
- facilitating monthly Network Learning Community meetings for small-school leaders
- supporting a small-school leader-
ship design that includes a full-time Facilitator of Teaching and Learning position
- facilitating the steering committee that is made up of District leaders, small-
school leaders, student union leadership and building administrators. Its purpose is to remove obstacles that get in the way of transformation
- facilitating monthly professional development of all of the district’s Instructional Coaches
- providing all IPS Instructional Coaches with coaches training this summer
- in August of 2005, 22 brand-new small schools will begin a “year of residency” with their autonomies in place as defined by a Memorandum of Understanding...
The Harmony/VISTA Project Helps Indianapolis Students Research Student Engagement in Their Schools

Megan Howey, Indiana

The Harmony/VISTA Service Learning Demonstration Project, an NSRF brainchild, works with educators, students, parents and community members to create sustainable opportunities for youth voice, leadership, service learning, and parent engagement. In Indiana, most of this work takes place in Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), Indianapolis’ urban school district.

With funding from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and What Kids Can Do, the Harmony/VISTA Project coordinates a student-led research project in five IPS high schools.

The purpose of this research is for high school students to examine the beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of their peers regarding their school communities. Ten-member research teams were created at IPS five large high schools in the fall of 2004. Students applied to be on these teams, and created contracts to hold themselves accountable for their attendance and participation. Students who participated fully received a $150 stipend. The Harmony/VISTA members serve as adult sponsors for each team.

Indianapolis Public Schools is currently transitioning their five large, comprehensive high schools into small schools through funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This offers a powerful backdrop for students to research exactly what their peers believe about school currently, and how they think school needs to change in order for every student to graduate ready for college or a challenging career. The data they collect is used to inform the school change process in their schools.

The student researchers began their year by distributing a survey at each high school campus to assess students’ beliefs and opinions about their relationships with teachers, school climate and safety, academic engagement and aspirations, and perceptions about small schools. This survey was adapted from one used by the Gates Foundation in other school districts.

Over 4,100 students were surveyed district-wide. Some of the findings included:

- 53% of students felt that their teachers had given up on some students
- 75% of students said their school work was really interesting only half of the time or less
- 80% reported that many students at their school do not respect one another
- 71% believe that they will graduate from high school and will complete a 2-year, 4-year, or graduate degree

Each research team analyzed their school’s data and compared it to the district data. With the support of Harmony/VISTA Volunteers, two students from each school prepared a synopsis of what their team thought to be the most pertinent data for their school and presented this data to members of the district administration, principals, teachers, parents, and community partners at a district reform meeting, helping these adults understand the real issues their students face.

They were given 90 minutes to present their synopsis and lead a data-driven discussion with their school’s teachers and administrators in attendance. Many educators reported this meeting as being their most productive discussion to date because they were able to hear what students needed directly from the source.

At each school, the researchers have also planned and implemented “informal data collection activities.” These activities include Chalk Talks during lunch periods and “Poll Boxes” for students to address issues in their school by writing anonymous answers to questions posed to them. These questions include:

- “In your opinion, what does it take for you to be successful in school?”
- “What does a good student-teacher relationship look like?”
- “What questions do you have about small schools?”

The final component of this research project is a documentary that is currently being created in partnership between the students, Harmony/VISTA and the district’s television station. This documentary will include interviews with teachers and students and an explanation of how this research project came about.

Research Student Engagement in Their Schools

Why did you choose to be a student researcher?

“This has given me the opportunity to do what I’ve wanted to since I was little – to make a difference for others. I’m stepping up to the plate for students who don’t feel like going to school or staying in school. I’m showing them that there is a point and teachers do care if you get an education.” – Ronald Craig, junior, Broad Ripple High School

“At first I thought it would just be fun. Now I realize I am doing something productive, learning about research, and earning some money while I help others.” – Todd Willis, sophomore, Broad Ripple High School

To learn more for myself about what is going on with small school reform and tell others what I learn.” – Shenoria McGowan, sophomore, Arlington HS

How has this project made an impact on you?

“It’s helped me learn to cooperate with people better and to listen to what they have to say.” – Erica Shovan, junior, Northwest HS

“I didn’t know about small schools until I became a researcher. Now I feel like I know most of the stuff that’s happening.” – Janessa Goodman, sophomore, Northwest HS

“It helped me a whole lot to get to know people. Now I have confidence to talk to people I don’t know. I can get my opinion out and voice it.” – Isaiah Owensby, sophomore, Northlake HS

“I’ve become more of a leader in school, and have become more involved.” – Meredses Calloway, sophomore, Arlington HS

“I can express myself. I feel like I am a part of the school, not just going there. I need to have a reason to be there besides just learning. It helps me see that not only do student struggle but teachers struggle as well.” – Shenoria

How is this [research project] taking a toll on your school?

“It’s helped a lot. Students are getting more involved in school and learning about small schools. It has helped us become leaders in our schools – I think that is really important.” – Meredses

“(Teachers) are becoming more aware that students can be involved. Before, teachers were not interested in what students had to say and now they are more apt to listen to us.” – Erica

Why is it important to have student voice in school?

“Because most things in school affect students. If students don’t have a voice they won’t be interested. If they are not involved, it increases the drop out rate. If the students feel that people are listening to them, they’ll feel like people care about them. I mean teachers, principals, and the superintendent.” – Alex

“A lot of students have great opinions. [Because they’re] students, many teachers think they’re young and don’t have things to say. But they do have great ideas that can help the school.” – Isaiah

“Education should be symbiotic. If teachers and students were working together we would both benefit. School should be like a family.” – Ronald

“A lot of students don’t get to say how they feel right now. If they didn’t we’d have a better school.” – Meredses

“Help students put their ideas into effect.” – Alex

“Always listen to students if they have something to say. If you disagree, say you disagree but understand where [the student] is coming from.” – Isaiah

“Is it not going to be easy. You have to put a lot of effort and time into it. Be willing to have an open ear and a heart that’s willing to learn.” – Shenoria

If you were to advise other educators about how to support a student-led research project, what would you tell them?

“Let students say what’s on their mind.” – Erica

“Help students put their ideas into effect.” – Alex

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Student Researchers Speak about Their Experience:

Why did you choose to be a student researcher?
• “I thought no students had a voice and everyone needs to be heard.” – Alex Edmundson, freshman, Arsenal Technical HS
• “Because it gives me the opportunity to do what I’ve wanted to since I was little – to make a difference for others. I’m stepping up to the plate for students who don’t feel like going to school or staying in school.” – I’m showing them that there is a point and teachers do care if you get an education.” – Ronald Craig, junior, Broad Ripple HS

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How has this project made an impact on you?
• “It helped me learn to cooperate with people better and to listen to what they have to say.” – Erica Shovan, junior, Northwest HS

I didn’t know about small schools until I became a researcher. Now I feel like I know most of the stuff that’s happening.” – Janessa Goodman, sophomore, Northwest HS

It helped me a whole lot to get to know people. Now I have confidence to talk to people I don’t know. I can get my opinion out and voice it.” – Isaiah Owensby, sophomore, Northwest HS

Why is it important to have student voice in school?
• “Because most things in school affect students. If students don’t have a voice they won’t be interested. If they are not involved, it increases the drop out rate. If the students feel that people are listening to them, they’ll feel like people care about them. I mean teachers, principals, and the superintendent.” – Alex

A lot of students have great opinions. [Because they’re] students, many teachers think they’re young and don’t have things to say. But they do have great ideas that can help the school.” – Isaiah

“Education should be symbiotic. If teachers and students were working together we both benefit. School should be like a family.” – Ronald

A lot of students don’t get to say how they feel right now. If they did we’d have a better school.” – Mersedees

“Research is nothing but numbers and words unless you put it to good use and manifest something good.” – Ronald Craig, junior at Broad Ripple High School

Research does not have to be fun. Now I realize I am doing something productive, learning about research, and earning some money while I help others.” – Todd Willis, sophomore, Broad Ripple HS

I’ve become more of a leader because we get to meet new people. Now I have confidence to talk to people I don’t know. I can get my opinion out and voice it.” – Isaiah Owensby, sophomore, Northwest HS

It helped me with a lot of time, work and commitment. It is fun and a great experience. I’ve gotten so focused on helping that I forget about the money.” – Todd

“Communication is the main key. If you don’t communicate (student to teacher) then nothing will work.” – Alex

A final message to fellow students (and teachers): “If you really try hard to get your voice out, keep trying until your voice is heard. If you give up, your opinion will never be heard regardless.” – Isaiah

I couldn’t have said it better myself.” – Megan Howey is the Indiana Director of the Harmony/VISTA Service Learning Demonstration Project. She can be reached at meghanhowey@yahoo.com
Facilitators as Peer Observers

Indiana Center of Activity Report (continued from page 4)

lenged by the effects of a history of inequitable education provided to stu-
dents. The system loses over 75% of all of its high school students. The situation is dire and the moral imperative is clear.

In the spring of 2003, Nancy Sutton, former NSRF principal and for-
mer principal of Manvel High School in Denver, invited Steve Bonchek (Executive Director of HEC) and me to the University of Indianapolis to discuss the potential of a new Bill and Melinda Gates Project. The intention of the grant was to transform all five Indianapolis community high schools into a model of more than twenty equitable small schools that demonstrate their commitment to student and academic success of each student.

After several months of conversa-
tion, HSFR became the professional development/school transformation technical assistance provider for the University of Indianapolis through its Center for Excellence in Learning and Leadership (CELL). My fellow national faculty members are Greene, Butler, and Carol Myers and I began meeting regularly to co-construct a strong part-
nership between CELL, the IPS District, the Indianapolis Education Association and HSFR.

The HSFR coaching team in this initiative includes Lois Butler, Kevin Horton, Virginia Hardy, Wendy Brannen, Tom Gregory, Megan Howey and Naomi Milestone. HSFR tapped from both New York and Chicago facilitator talent to help build our capacity to lead the work on the ground and to refine our collaboratively generated process. This cross-pollination has been invaluable to all of us.

Each coach was matched with one high school and has been supporting the school’s orientation, exploration, and planning process. The team explicitly promotes the cause of equity and our purpose is to promote the interruption of past inequitable practices of the schools and district and to replace those practices with democratic, reflective, equitable, and inquiry-based teaching, learning, and leading.

Students and parents have led the way. Megan and Naomi lead the Harmony VISTA Student Voice Initiative that works directly with students and parents in each school (see Megan’s article in this issue). Each VISTA vol-
unteer is trained as a CFG coach. The VISTAs have worked collaboratively with other community-based organiza-
tions. They provide student and parent leadership services, convene both Parent and Student Conferences, and facilitate student and parent leadership institutes. The Parent and Student Conferences meet concurrently during the CFG summer seminar. All three strands use CFG principles and practices and each strand works to “tune” and share each other’s work.

Students initiated my most powerful memory of this project to date. I will never forget the official public launch of this initiative. Gathered in Union Station were government, business, and educational leaders who came to learn about the potential of small schools. A pair of young, inspired, and passion-
ate student leaders facilitated every round-table conversation in the huge hall. Those young facilitators demon-
strated what the adolescent youths of Indianapolis are capable of achieving.

Although there has been an extraordinary amount of meaningful work over the last few years, HSFR is still discovering the potential of our work as we proceed on a journey of placing equity at the center. We are working tire-
lessly to interrupt inequities and trans-
form current unacceptable practices into educational experiences that embody the words of NSRF’s mission to “foster edu-
cational and social equity by empowering all people involved with schools to work collaboratively in reflective democratic communities that create and support powerful learning experiences for every-
one.”

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Preparing for Peer Observation: Addendum to the Observer as Coach Protocol

Full protocol available online at www.
nsrfharmony.org/connections.html

Peer Observation Pre-Conference Questions (The following questions were developed by Edorah as a result of our debriefing.

• What should I know about the class and les-
sion I am observing?

• What do you want me to look for? (What is your focus question?)

• What data do you want me to collect? Is there a particular way you would like me to collect it?

• Where would you like me to be in the room? Do you want me to be involved in class, or quietly observing from one place in the room?

• Is there anything else you want to tell me before I observe your class?

Peer Observation Debriefing Steps

Step One: Observer asks observer, “How do you think the class went, relative to your question?”

Step Two: Observer shares data relative to the focus question, starting with warm feedback.

Step Three: Observer asks probing questions relative to the focus question in light of the data.

Step Four: Discussion between observer and observed. Observed takes the lead here – might ask for direct suggestions.

Step Five: Observer ends with warm feedback and thanks for the opportunity to watch a lesson. Variation: Combine steps two and three to ask questions specific to each part of the data being shared.

Facilitators as Peer Observers

those people who are experienced CFG coaches and who have completed the preparation required to facilitate CFG Coaches Seminars. We use the term “CFG coach” to refer to a much larger group of people who have participated in a CFG seminar and are engaged in some way in coaching a CFG. We’re using these terms in order to clarify different kinds of roles and responsi-
bilities within the common body of work that we’re all engaged in, not to establish an unnecessary sense of hierarchy.

Edorah Frazer and David Leo-Nyquist.

Exploring Possible Applications of Peer Observation in Our Work as Coaches and Facilitators

Daniel Baton, Vermont

Peer observation is a powerful catalyst for reflecting upon and changing our professional practices with the support of a trusted colleague – and we truly believe that it is – then how can it be harnessed to support and improve our specific practices of CFG coaching and Coaches Seminar facilitation? We have worked over the past three years with a cohort of K-12 educators (mostly teach-
ers) that has functioned as a monthly CFG, with a focus this school year on peer observation, thinking about the CFG Coach role, and implementing CFG work in their home schools. Our positive experi-
ences with peer observation have led us to think more deeply about the complexity of our responsibilities as CFG coaches and as NSRF facilitators in various contexts, and we have found it to be extremely useful and supportive for our own growth in those roles (see Edorah’s description on page 8). As usual, we’re left with more questions than answers. Here are some of our questions for CFG coaches and for NSRF facilitators that were prompted by our experience with peer observation. We believe that an important factor in our ability to sustain a very high level of protocol-based colleague conversations each month and to nurture a high level of trust in our non-flourishing learning communities is the ongoing practice of planning and debrief-
ing together (prompted by the detailed written Reflections generated by participants at the end of each monthly session). During the cur-
rent school year this informal feedback about the CFG-Coach role, and the form of a more structured peer observation process. We’re convinced that we’re bet-
ter and more effective CFG coaches together than either of us could be working in isolation. If that’s our experience as veteran coaches, then why wouldn’t that also be true for most new CFG coaches?

The new coaches in our cohort are overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of starting CFGs in their home schools, in addition to continuing their full-time teaching (and often other) responsibilities. In Vermont we don’t have precise data on how many teachers and other educators who participate in five-day New Coaches Seminars...
Interview with Gene Thompson-Grove (continued from page 7)

Gene Thompson-Grove can be contacted at gthompsongrove@earthlink.net

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Interview with Gene Thompson-Grove

G: My hope is that we can assemble the kind of resources that will allow us to bring together the expertise and knowledge that’s in our network, as well as the input and energy of all of our leaders who are involved in our work. I think collectively we have a lot of knowledge and experience that we don’t benefit from if we don’t bring all of our partners and leaders together.

K: Gene, what are your hopes and fears for the future of the NSRF?

G: In the beginning, there was an application process that we don’t have now. We had to pay for coaches to attend the initial seminar – as well as funds to provide ongoing support to the school. The principal and himself had to make a commitment to CFG work before they sent teachers to the new coaches seminar, and principals had to attend a three-day seminar as well. In the application, the school had to write about how CFGs would help them achieve their goals for improved student learning. During the first three years, we paid coaches a stipend of $2,000 per year. Part of the commitment was to attend the Winter Meeting.

The application process also included the condition that CFG members, coaches and principals would work toward completing professional portfolios in which they documented changes they made in their practice and student learning as a result of their participation in a CFG.

K: What has surprised you about the evolution of this work?

G: What has really surprised me is that we are asking this question about principal participation tell us about the culture of our school, and is that the kind of culture we want?

K: What is the question?

G: The question is: What does the fact that we are asking this question about principal participation tell us about the culture of our school, and is that the kind of culture we want?

K: What has surprised you about the evolution of this work?

G: What has happened was that each year we had less and less money to support this work. It took huge financial resources to bring people together to meetings, conferences and training. It was difficult to require portfolios when we didn’t have the funds to support either their development or ways to give each other feedback on them. We were just determining how we might use portfolios constructively in the context of changing practice when we left the Annenberg Institute and went to the Education Harmony Center. Although schools and districts contributed a portion of the costs for preparing and supporting CFGs, in the last two years we were at AISR, since we left nearly all of our funding has come from fees for service from schools and districts.

K: Were principals integrated into CFGs in the first years?

G: Several of our CFGs had principals in them the first year. It was our belief that if we were going to change the culture of our schools, principals needed to do the work with their teachers.

K: I know that question still comes up. Should a principal be part of a teacher’s CFG? Will their participation inhibit the CFG or will it enhance the whole?

G: That’s not the right question.

K: What is the question?

G: The question is: What does the fact that we are asking this question about principal participation tell us about the culture of our school, and is that the kind of culture we want?

K: What has surprised you about the evolution of this work?

G: What has really surprised me is that the concept of CFGs has continued.

As we did our work in the late 1990s, we were always conscious that schools were becoming more and more standardized, with a great deal of pressure, along with sanctions, being exerted from the top.” We were championing lateral accountability, as opposed to top-down accountability, and we were interested in empowering ourselves to set our own high standards, and to take collective ownership and responsibility for the success and learning of all our students.

K: Why are you surprised that the work has continued?

G: It has surprised me that even though schools were wrestling with more and more mandates, including No Child Left Behind, people continue to be willing to do work that runs counter to most of the profession’s norms – that they have been willing to do the hard work of making their practice public for the purpose of receiving feedback, of situating their work with learners, of believing that collaborating with their colleagues is time well spent.

I think this work taps into the reason many of us became educators, because ultimately it is about empowering ourselves to trust our professional judgment and our collective wisdom.

K: Gene, what are your hopes and fears for the future of the NSRF?

G: My hope is that we can assemble the kind of resources that will allow us to bring together the expertise and knowledge that’s in our network, as well as our partner organizations. I think collectively we have a lot of knowledge and experience that we don’t benefit from if we don’t bring all of our partners and leaders together. I hope we can get to the point where that happens, and I believe that we will. The research and data that we have accumulated and the research and documentation initiative will be key. We need to all reach for brilliance in our work – our students deserve no less, and we need each other to do that.

My fear is that CFGs and Professional Learning Communities will go the way of Cooperative Learning and Multiple Intelligences, where people do the work at its most superficial level. We need to tell the story about the roots and the principles underlying this work. I am less interested in having our work described in the educational literature, just for the sake of having our name out there. What I do care about is that our work is cited in the literature in a substantive way. I want this work to change the culture of our profession. I want our work to make a real difference for students.

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Connections: a Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

Interview with Gene Thompson-Grove (continued from page 7)
for active listening and regular real-
ity checks with “insider participants.”
Before that, students of color and their
families with whom I’m work-

ing. I need to “check-in” about my

students’ learning, and we reflect on

our evaluation in order to examine and

assess my assumptions for the inevitable bias I bring to the

action-research and change processes.

Basically, I hear Dr. Irvine’s words as a caution that I need to “know what I

don’t know” before I can learn to con-

struct valid meaning and propose

positive interventions in support of

“other people’s children.”

While Dr. Irvine’s analysis has given me much to chew on as a doc-
toral student in training, it has also

moved my thinking about this situation in the here and now. So I’m thinking

about what I want to do differently this

week in my meetings with new

coaches of learning communities,

and that has led me to revise the reflective

questions that Nancy Mohr penned a few

years ago. Nancy wrote:

Reflections: Whatever activity

you are engaging in can be explicit

ally about equity.

How does this promote equity?

What does this have to do with equity?

What does this mean in terms of

equity?

And I have added:

Who’s at the table? Who’s miss-

ing? Why aren’t those voices included?

How can we include them?

How does the work we’ve just

done serve all of our students?

How does it serve those students who have been marginalized in the past?

“Lunchtime Learning” sessions about

professional development that was job-

embedded, and done within the context of one’s daily practice. We knew that

summer institutes, where you go to get

inservice training, and that it was too hard to change one’s practice all by oneself.

We knew the professional devel-

opment needed to be in the context of the classroom and counter to the way schools are set up in which teachers work in

isolation. So, we gathered about twelve teachers and admin-

istrators...
We have recently decided to incorporate a second CFG next year. There have also been changes in my classroom. At the beginning of the year, the students created a list of classroom rules. We revisit them often, and they have evolved into classroom norms. Reflective writing has become a regular part of our school day. Various protocols, such as The Final Word, Success Analysis, Chalk Talks, ... achieve greater meaning from their work. The learning takes place within the framework of a caring learning community.

Never in our wildest dreams did we imagine that in only one year, our interaction. The potential for opportunities missed was unsettling. Time passed and fate revealed a new and wonderful destiny for me. I experienced CFG training. The power of collaboration opened up a whole new world. A little over a year ago, my principal, Mrs. Patti Vickman, and I were putting the final touches on an ambitious CFG action plan. First we would introduce the staff to CFG ideas, and then we would gradually develop a core group for our school’s first CFG. We also shared a vision of what this work might look like if it was utilized effectively in our meetings.

We have recently decided to incorporate regular classroom observations as part of our CFG strategic design. We are fortunate enough to have the flexibility within our building to provide opportunities for classroom observations. The observations are strictly voluntary. Members of our CFG who have completed observations have gained new insights into their own practice. By sharing our enthusiasm, other teachers have expressed interest in what we are doing. We have discussed the possibility of starting a second CFG next year. There have also been changes in my classroom. At the beginning of the year, the students created a list of classroom rules. We revisit them often, and they have evolved into classroom norms. Reflective writing has become a regular part of our school day. Various protocols, such as The Final Word, Success Analysis, Chalk Talks, ... achieve greater meaning from their work. The learning takes place within the framework of a caring learning community.

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has undertaken to ensure that the California State Standards for English/Language Arts are accessible to middle and high school students throughout the district by reorganizing the standards into a more manageable, coherent format. Rather than continuing to work from the state’s list of any-where from 46 to 83 standards for each grade level, LAUSD has organized the standards into separate components, such as narrative, exposition, literary response and analysis, and persuasion. The standards most relevant to each component are addressed during a given period of instruction, and those standards are assessed periodically (roughly quarterly), hence the name Periodic Assessments.

Each of these Periodic Assessments can provide educators with, literally, tons of data about student progress. Our CFG spent one of our early meetings simply getting acquainted with all the different types of data from these assessments. We were amazed, maybe even a bit over-whelmed, by all the data in front of us.

The data are available as broadly or as specifically as the person examining might like: individual student, indi-vidual teacher, period by period, grade level at a single school, grade level per local district, aggregated or disaggre-gated, within and across subject areas, with information by specific content standard, and on and on. The district has remained true to its commitment that these assessments are not high-stakes; the purpose of the assessments are to inform instructional practice and enhance student learning.

The dilemma that our CFG saw was this: the data were, at least in schools where we worked, rarely being used effectively, if at all. Most teachers were as overwhelmed as we were by the sheer magnitude of the data. Even more daunting, because most teach-ers had had previous experiences that had taught them that “data are not our friends,” there was widespread distrust of how the data would be used.

As we continued to plow through mountains of data reports, we became clear about a few principles that guided our protocol development. We wanted to be sure to:

• think about ways to help teachers, individually and collaboratively, reflect on these data reports so that they are not viewed as threatening or as a basis for evaluation;
• keep the focus on evidence of what students are learning, not on how teachers are teaching;
• set up conditions so that teachers approach the data analysis in a spirit of inquiry, bringing to the process their own questions. We connected to our own experiences in using protocols to learn from student work. We knew that there were road maps to guide us in both the ATLAS Protocol and the Collaborative Assessment Conference. Our first attempt to use a protocol-like approach to analyz-ing the data went something like this:

1. We were clear that the data analysis should not be a “fishing expedition.” There were just too many reports for us to go in without ques-tions to guide our inquiry. So, before we looked at the data, we did a two-minute quick write in response to the question, “What information do I hope to find out by looking at these data? Or, what do I hope to learn by looking at these data?” We shared our thoughts and generated some guiding questions for our group.
2. We agreed on one type of report, and made sure we all had copies of the same report type for one grade level. We then asked the following questions, in rounds:

• What do you see/notice/observe?
• What surprises you? What makes it surprising?
• What questions do the data raise for...
W e call the Indiana Center of Activity the Hoosier School Reform Faculty (HSRF). The name HSRF evolved out of an inquiry question: What is the potential of a local Center of Activity to build on our previously strong relationship with the School of Education (SOE) at Indiana University? Cathy Brown, an Associate Dean of the School of Education, was involved in a three-year project working with NSRF. As a result of the work, the IU Math Department, the SOE Mathematics Education Department, and local school districts in Monroe County. The project design was based on the Japanese Lesson Study model. After the first year, Cathy was con-

cerned that the study group had not built a professional community where members felt safe enough to take risks, ask the tough questions, or expose their professional vulnerabilities. She then invited me to introduce the concept of Critical Friends Group to the Lesson Study Group. It was a great match, and working together with NSRF facilitator Ross Peterson-Veatch, the group made the transition from study group to CFG. This early success led to HSRF facilitating two full-day retreats of the IU SOE faculty in two consecutive years.

Indiana University has also sponsored coaches seminars for I.U. faculty and Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCSC) teachers and administrators for the last two summers, with another seminar scheduled for this August. Betty Bushinghoff from the Athens, Georgia Center and Ross have been invaluable members of the facilitation team.

Last June, HSRF and Indiana University entered into a formal partnership to offer professional development services to IU faculty as well as to offer services to every district in Indiana. The services are offered through I.U. by HSRF.

Those first two coaches seminars have evolved into an extraordinary partnership between MCSC and HSRF. The critical incident that led to our deep relationship with MCSC came on the last day of coaches training, when the Superintendent, Dr. John Maloy, and his Associate, Bruce Law, came for lunch.

Over twenty-five teachers engaged them both. They wanted their central office administrators to know about the power of the work. Perhaps equally important, they wanted to communicate the technical transformation they had to occur in order for the work to take root in their schools. They insisted that their principals had to understand this work so that it could become the core of professional development for their buildings.

Dr. Maloy invited these impas-
sioned teachers to attend the Administrators’ Advance (retreat) on August 15th. That respectful invitation led to the new coaches planning and facilitating the afternoon of the Advance. The coaches facilitated their administration through a Collaborative Assessment Circle. In one of the HWK Talk Document from their June seminar that responded to the questions “What makes this work so powerful and what will it take to sustain the work back in your schools?”

They also created small groups to have text-based conversations and to participate in looking at student work sessions for all administrators. I had the great pleasure to observe my daughter Heather, a teacher, facilitate a group with Dr. Maloy and to hear her ask him “and what evidence do you have to support your perspective?”

Over the course of this school year, MCCSC has demonstrated its commitment to CFGs as the heart of their professional development for the district. This year, HSRF provides:

- Monthly two hour meetings of the entire Leadership Team (all instructional and noninstructional administrators in the district)
- Monthly principal CFGs for 14 of the 22 MCCSC Principals (with plans for all principals participating next year)
- Monthly two and a half hour meetings for all CFO coaches to deepen and sustain their work in their school
- Monthly HSRF facilitation support for every coach of a CFG in this year’s seven identified schools

As our CFG worked our way through this creation process, we gained new insights and we reinforced something that we already knew about the spirit that sustained us through the months of our inquiry and characterizes how we’ve learned to view data: “Human Understanding of Diversity Initiative”

Last June, HSRF and Indiana University entered into a formal partnership to offer professional development services to I.U. faculty as well as to offer services to every district in Indiana. The services are offered through I.U. by HSRF.

However, the unexpected bonus that I’m seeing, for myself and for other members of our CFG, is the learning that we’re gaining about those underlying questions about pro-
tocol development, the questions we didn’t even know we were asking.

What processes best support collaborative dialogue and enhance collaborative learning? How do we know if our data is generated to engage in a data protocol.

Additional concerns, which the data may be used are never far from the surface. If anyone in the group (whether the leader of the group or an admin-
istrator) appears to already have reached some foregone conclusions which the group now needs to reach, the process is likely to backfire. This is one of the reali-
ties that led us to set the context for the data analysis by reading the text mentioned earlier.

What characterizes an effective protocol?

It is important for us to remember that we have a protocol, to quickly explore these protocols to be used: in grade-level or department-level groups, with educators who have not necessarily signed on to work together colleague-

ally in a CFG and who, therefore, have probably not developed the cul-
ture of trust needed to look at these issues straightforwardly in the early stages of this work. (In our desire to push the envelope relative to these questions in the pursuit of equity, it was tempting to want to design the process so that the issues that can be revealed by disaggregat-
ing the data are confronting head-on.

Creating a protocol because there is a need we feel driven to fill, a set of questions that we need to explore was key for us. I don’t think this would have been meaningful if we had simply said, “Why don’t we see if we can create something like this protocol?”

Allowing room for the individual’s and the group’s own inquiry questions, and not feeling tied to the questions that we’ve suggested, is an important point to remember.

With this in mind, the “Querying Data” process can be overwhelming. We came up with some very good questions, but for someone who is getting started in analyzing the data, the sheer volume of questions (not to mention all the materials that are required for the protocol) might seem daunting.

How do we know we have a pro-
tocol that we’re ready to try with other educators?

We may never know that we’re ready. But we can point when we decided, “It’s good enough. Let’s do it.” In our case, I sought out a school site leader, Michelle O’Doherty, to take this role at her school. We designed impact of our work so that it could become the core of professional development for their buildings.
with colleagues and students changed. Formal leadership looked at how they supported staff, worked with teacher-leaders and helped others develop skills and begin to change habits. The cycle repeated twice.

Throughout the process, participants were encouraged to pursue NSRF NY Endorsement by ultimately presenting a portfolio of their work demonstrating their facilitation skills in action. Five of the twenty-five participants received endorsement. All participants left more skilled.

We see examples of formal and informal leaders at all levels within the district applying NSRF principles and practices:

- **We model and encourage the use of feedback as teaching/learning and community-building tools.** Not only does this allow us to take the pulse of the group, it engages everyone in a reflective process in which we experience how feedback can shape future events. This happens when a good leader is able to synthesize input, especially when a few of them lead and is an essential dimension of building a reflective community of learners.

- **Our practice of “transparent facilitation” (characterized by public reflection and sharing your thinking as facilitator regarding choices and intention) allows the group to see us as leaders who with all the answers but as colleagues striving to help members learn to ask better questions and take increasing responsibility for their own learning and the learning of peers.**

- **In Vivian’s school (Landmark HS) the teachers have undertaken an extensive re-examination of their twelve-year-old portfolio process.** This inquiry makes extensive use of feedback and NSRF structured protocols to guide them in this work. Staff trained as facilitators have emerged as leaders of this process of investigation and reform.

- **Two of Alan’s largest high schools are engaged in the process of forming smaller learning communities.** They believe that facilitation skills acquired through applying NSRF principles and practices are absolutely necessary to sustain any change from within.

- **Local Endorsed Facilitators have gone on to form Critical Friends Groups and still others have taken on teacher-leadership roles in their schools or stepped up to help plan and facilitate a variety of professional development opportunities.**

- **A recent series of professional development sessions for Assistant Principals (co-facilitated by Vivian, who was the only participating principal on the team of district facilitators) looked very much like a CFG coaches training, and participants went on to take responsibility for working with their colleagues in ways which closely resemble Critical Friends Groups.**

- **These are a few examples of the way NSRF NY works.** NSRF NY works almost entirely from the outside. You can’t “go to NSRF NY,” but you can find it in more places than you think.

NSRF NY Endorsement requires participants to attend approximately 30 hours of training and then to present a portfolio of their work demonstrating their ability to apply what they have learned in their work. An alternative route to endorsement is through an apprentice experience, where the “training” takes place by working along with a National Facilitator. See www.nsrfny.org for a complete description of the Endorsement Process and Standards for Facilitators.

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**I believe nothing happens by chance.**

A discussion about the possibility of Oshkosh becoming Wisconsin’s first NSRF Center of Activity. We dare to dream.

I believe nothing happens by chance. Sometimes along the path of life an event causes an individual to pause and seek the greater meaning of his being. It is through these moments of reflection that we study the path and contemplate the future. There was a reason why I came across Miss Kerberger’s boxes. Maybe that memory was the spark that is now allowing me to step forward in a leadership role. Maybe it was to help me remember how important teachers are in the lives of the children. Where I once only saw memories in boxes, I now see the future unfolding. Reaching the destination at the end of a journey is not the important part. What we learn, and who we share those experiences with along the way, are the things that give meaning to our journeys. Creating a smoother path for those who follow in our footsteps is the precious gift which we can offer.

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**NSRF Mission Statement**

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

This is not a standard book review; rather, it is a glimpse into my transaction with the text Educating Teachers for Diversity: Seeing with a Cultural Eye by Jacqueline Jordan Irvine.

A few years ago we revised NSRF’s mission statement to include language about working to “foster educational and social equity...” and since that time I realize I have often been responsible for trying to just “add on” a focus about issues of equity. The revision of our mission statement was in response to a request to me as a former Philadelphia Middle School teacher, as a current Urban Education grad student and as a facilitator of CFGs. In each of these roles I have become increasingly convinced that racism and other forms of bias are the greatest barriers we face in our efforts to positively transform the educational experiences of our kids, especially when our kids are poor, inner city, kids of color.

A first step in moving forward around issues of equity for me has been getting in touch with what I don’t know. As a white, female, heterosexual educator, I know I need to consciously incorporate a focus on those differences that I don’t “know” by virtue of my own lived experience. In other words, I have to choose to acknowledge the presence and impact of racism, cultural chauvinism and homophobia in our system and in my own practice continuously. As a facilitator, I have the choice by adding an activity or protocol here and a reading there, without thoroughly reworking the framework of the coaching support I offer as an external coach in a number of districts and schools.

By treating equity as an "add on" to an already full agenda, I have unwittingly set up the context for it to be “left off.” Consequently, when time gets short, the articles and activities that explicitly deal with equity are given less time, or they are postponed.

Despite my intellectual understanding that these issues lie at the heart of our failure to successfully breach the persistent achievement gap.

Recently, as a grad student, I have been reading Jacqueline Jordan Irvine’s book, Educating Teachers for Diversity: Seeing with a Cultural Eye, and I have been struck by her analysis that we all can work to see with a “third eye,” an eye that “sees a different picture and examines alternative explanations.” She goes on to call for collaborative action research wherein outside/inside educator/researchers like myself “assume the humility of good anthropologists.” By calling myself an outsider/insider I am making explicit my role in buildings and systems where children of color predominate. I understand Dr. Irvine’s call for humility as a demand in my own practice.
Sixteen biology students sit in a circle with their teacher working along gain a better understanding of an article on memory. Today the teacher is using a Rich Text Protocol as a testing ground for student engagement. She is not sure where the discussion will go, but trusts in the process and the students’ ability to thoughtfully explore complex ideas. Nicole makes a strong case for the group to explore the idea of confabulation, or how the brain makes up things when there is a void in the memory. Other students listens to Nicole’s case, but they want to discuss the idea of rehearsal when trying to memorize different ideas or facts. Nicole concedes, but the facilitator, sensing her strong desire to explore this idea, promises to return later to confabulation. Students return to the section they planned the night before, knowing they will present their perspective and how it applies to their own learning. Each student re-reads the text, although not everyone agrees with what is written. Justin presents a different point of view and Anisa challenges his interpretation.

There is further discussion (including references to confabulation) and the students recommend ways teachers can apply some of the concepts from today’s class to enhance their instructional practice. The teacher asks students to write about rehearsal from their perspective and share the ideas from their writing in pairs. Even though there is not enough time for the last step of the protocol, it is obvious that the students now have a greater understanding of the complexities of memory and how it relates to their own learning.

Protocols can be used to create a different type of classroom that impacts students’ learning. In a classroom, such as the biology class we are discussing, students are engaged in the content and connecting it both to their prior learning and to their own experiences. Students are engaged because they have a desire and a need to understand the content. Students are aware of what they do and do not understand and they ask specific questions to complete their understanding. At the end of the period, the students are fatigued, but excited about what they have learned, and will ponder questions after the class is over. The questions naturally recur throughout the unit of study and the students know there is not just one correct answer.

In this classroom there exists a community of learners: they work in pairs, triads, small groups, and as an entire class. Students are respected for their unique insights and strengths. Each member of the class encourages others to take intellectual risks. Students feel safe, respected, listened to and cared for as individuals. They value each other’s diverse backgrounds. They are interested in each other’s lives beyond the classroom and share in each other’s successes and disappointments. They are learners - individually and collectively grappling with the content and its implications. They work to improve not only their understanding of the content, but their skills as scholars. They are learning the art of thinking and reflecting. The teacher is a part of this community and is learning along with the students.

In this classroom, the students are the workers. They have prepared carefully before using protocols so they are fully aware of their individual responsibility for the success of the class. Their role is that of a scholar. Their responsibility is to push their own thinking and that of their classmates to a deeper level. They monitor their own learning and their interactions with others. They reflect on the content and the process of learning. They challenge their own assumptions and the assumptions of others. All information, regardless of its source - from teacher, textbook, media inside and outside of the classroom - is critically examined for inaccuracies and bias.

The teacher in this classroom does the hard work of teaching long before the class begins. She has studied to obtain a rich understanding of the unit, and has communicated the desired learning to the students, the teacher in this different kind of classroom. This protocol is designed for use by groups of 5 to 15 participants. It can run in variable amounts of time, but generally takes about an hour and a half. The facilitator must be deeply familiar with the text.

Connections: a Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

Protocols in Practice

A Different Kind of Classroom: Using Protocols to Increase Student Understanding

Dave Schmid and Cindy Gay, Colorado
What processes best support collegial dialogue and enhance collaborative learning? What characterizes an effective protocol? How can we tell when we have a process that we’re ready to try with other educators? These were some of the questions that members of my CFG and I started wrestling with, even though we didn’t know at the outset that we’d be going in this direction.

I’ve been a member of the same CFG for nearly three years now. Our membership has changed slightly; we’ve lost some of our original members when major career moves made getting together really tough, we’ve gained some new members who’ve added new facets to the group’s work, and we’ve struggled to overcome challenges in scheduling. In other words, we’re a very typical group of critical friends.

When we convened at the beginning of the school year, we began – as usual – by brainstorming goals for our work. As we tossed out several questions that we might want to pursue, one area for study kept coming up over and over, worded in different ways: What do we know about looking at hard data about student performance? Schools we’re working with are generating so much data, and people keep saying the data is supposed to inform instruction, but how can the data inform instruction if we aren’t really analyzing the data? We have lots of protocols for looking at student work – written products and other artifacts – but how do we look at the hard data, the numbers and graphs, in ways that are productive?

We agreed that we wanted to put forth a concerted effort to develop a protocol that would encourage teachers to see data as nonthreatening, non-evaluative, informative, and worthwhile. Since the members of our group were all in some way connected to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), either as teachers or administrators or as consultants from the UCLA School Management Program, we decided to focus our development efforts on the LAUSD Periodic Assessment Program for English/Language Arts.