Apples and CFGs in Harmony: 
A "Core" Curriculum
John Pieper, Wisconsin

Since 1989 the Walt Disney Company has presented Disney’s American Teacher Award to 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 2003 John Pieper was one of 30 teachers nationwide who received this award. CFG Coaches training was one of the benefits included with this special recognition. This is the second of three installments following John’s journey as a new CFG Coach.

“Y ou do realize we will have to...” Brenna chimed in as the three of us began to plan our first CFG meeting in the same room. Brenna would bring the treats. A message was sent out to all building staff members and then we anxiously waited to see who would show up. Brenna and Kathy had been through the CFG training early last summer. They too were eager to put their training to use. The day of the organizational meeting, eight souls unaided stared at each other. There were a few questions pertaining to when the group would meet, how much time would people have to invest, and the truly important question—how would this work help the students? Stacey agreed to bring in a sample of work. November third would be the date of our first authentic CFG meeting. The group was now delighted. I arrived early, and sure enough, there were CFG notes everywhere. The group talked about the ways their work, and the comments from others, could affect my work. Not only did the process help Stacey, it helped me as well. This is really neat stuff!”

The group was now ready to begin our first CFG meeting. We were all anxious to go home and share our ideas. I felt so impressed by the depth of thinking all of you were doing for me. This has really been a helpful experience. Thank you for being there for me.”

Jo’s comments were equally gratifying. “As we were discussing Stacey’s dilemma, I found myself thinking of ways her work, and the comments from others, could affect my work. Not only did the process help Stacey, it helped me as well. This is really neat stuff!”

We started with the Protocol. I thought I would be nervous about preparing, but I actually enjoyed it. I was so impressed by the depth of thinking all of you were doing for me. This has really been a helpful experience. Thank you for being there for me.”

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The true power of the protocol came out when we debriefed the process. Stacey’s words were an affirmation to the value of the work. “At first I was nervous about presenting.” She said. “But the further into it we got, the more secure I felt. I was so impressed by the depth of thinking all of you were doing for me. This has really been a helpful experience. Thank you for being there for me.”

So, our first organizational meeting was a bit of a dilemma, but we all knew that the warm feedback is there to take time for our work to branch out across America. If we stay the course and continue to successfully reach out to more districts, we will see the potential good the CFG work can bring to our schools. Yet we understand it will take time for our work to branch out across America. If we stay the course and continue to successfully reach out to more educators, then at some point, our patience, persistence, and passion will come to fruition. When that epiphany occurs and there is a magnitude paradigm shift in the way schools function, then it will be time for a “Gala” celebration for our students and colleagues. Isn’t life delicious?”

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John Pieper, Brenna Garrison-Braun, Lori Satterstrom, Kathy Rieders, Sarah Paquette, Stacey Reece, Angie Thurn, Marcie Gundlach, and Angela Kurc

Webster Stanley Critical Friends Group

long-standing relationship with several school reform organizations locally, including: ATLAS Communities, Educators for Social Responsibility, The Education Alliance and Northeast Regional Lab at Brown, Project Zen at Harvard, SmART Schools at EDC, and the CT Center for School Change, and have begun work with the Tripod Project at Harvard, as well as with EDCO (Education Collaborative of Greater Boston). They also have an on-going relationship with some of the local colleges and universities connected with the Institute on Disadvantaged Students at the University of New Hampshire. Finally, the Massachusetts/ southern New Hampshire NSRF Center has as both a policy and a practice “cross-pollinating” with other CFG Centers of Activity from across the country. Last summer alone, we invited NSRF Facilitators from CT, ME, Salt Lake City, UT, and VT to work with us. One of the best examples of “learning from each other” has been our long-standing relationship with the Northeast Independent School District (NEISD) of San Antonio. NSRF Facilitators from Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire have worked with schools and district personnel in San Antonio since the summer of 2000, when twelve educators from the NEISD and Trinity University attended a CFG Coaches seminar facilitated by NH and MA NSRF Facilitators. San Antonio now has three NSRF Facilitators as well as three interns in the process of becoming NSRF Facilitators. This reciprocal relationship has formed the basis for important learning by CFG Coaches and NSRF Facilitators alike in both locales.

Gene Thompson-Grove is one of the Co-Directors of NSRF, and can be contacted at gthompsongrove@earthlink.net

of really helpful feedback. I was making notes all over the document. Then we were done—out of time—and it hit me... I had NO IDEA if there was ANYTHING, anything at all worth keeping. By skipping the warm feedback, I had seriously shortchanged the experiences. The warm feedback isn’t there for warm fuzzies. It’s there so we don’t throw the baby out with the bath water! What IS worth keeping? Additionally, we were done—out of time—and it hit me... I had NO IDEA if there was ANYTHING, anything at all worth keeping.

Through the process, I came to realize that the CFG process “cross-pollinates” with other educational groups. For example, the幫你schools, and district personnel in San Antonio since the summer of 2000, when twelve educators from the NEISD and Trinity University attended a CFG Coaches seminar facilitated by NH and MA NSRF Facilitators. San Antonio now has three NSRF Facilitators as well as three interns in the process of becoming NSRF Facilitators. This reciprocal relationship has formed the basis for important learning by CFG Coaches and NSRF Facilitators alike in both locales.

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As a group VTSRF is excited by the change in our school coaches and the opportunity it could bring to further the depth of change of practice in Vermont Schools. They believe by 2005 that they will have made strides in this area.

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in our own Coaches CFG. All current coaches attend the Winter Meeting every year and use time away on the trip to infuse our work with new energy and ideas. We bring dilemmas from our Coaches CFG to share with coaches and NSRF Facilitators from all over the country and can bring back collective wisdom to help us here at Watkinson. Increasingly, lately, we find ourselves moving towards becoming a part of the NSRF National Facilitators and trying to bring the work to other schools in Connecticut through LASW and New Coaches’ Institutes. In that way, we hope to make an impact beyond the walls of Watkinson.

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