“I Don’t See Color, Kids Are Just Kids”  
Tanisha Davis-Doss, Washington

I have heard this statement over and over in my years of education, and quite frankly, I’m terri-
fi ed rather than being impressed. Educators tell me this continually, and I believe they want me to be impressed with their color-blind philosophy, but I am not. Let me tell you why.  

When you say you do not see color, you are telling me that you do not see me. So, if you say you don’t see color and kids are just kids, you are telling me that you are ignoring specific details that comprise the character and being of individual children. Each child comes into your classroom with different experiences, needs, thoughts, and perspective. That child’s color is not a great deal to do with their experiences, needs, thoughts, and perspective. For instance, I have many identities that make me who I am. I am black, female, single, a woman, and I’m an educator, just to list a few. Black is the most essential iden-
tity because it is the one element that I am judged on every single day of my life. Before society sees a woman, they see a black woman; before society sees an edu-
cator, they see a black educator. With both positive and negative implications alike; it is how I am viewed once I step out-
side of my home each day.  

If I am being judged day by day by the color of my skin, how can we ignore the color of our students? When we teach, we must realize that the color of a person’s skin has not necessarily had the exact same experiences that we may have had. Judging those students on our own experiences and biases leads to institutionalized racism, so I ask you, how can you not see color? I am simply asking you to be aware of those differences and allow yourself to live in “awareness.” Living in awareness simply means that you realize the dif-
ferences, you don’t feel compelled to apologize for the differences, and that you consider those differ-
ences when you are working with all students.  

Please do not read my message and confuse the term color with low-income. The two are not the same. Low-income children do not equal chil-
dren of color. I am stating this for my colleagues teaching in private schools and privileged neigh-
borhoods. Just because a student of color comes from a middle-class family, does not mean that student is now “confused” to disrespect to Ruby Payne, but we edu-
cators tend to hide behind the poverty issue when speak-
ing on racism and the two are different entities. Each adds to the disproportionate-
ate circumstances in our nation’s school buildings, but they are not the same.  

I get discour-
aged by the end of our trainings when participants make comments like, “I like the training, but leave the equity stuff out, kids are just kids.” I’m even more discouraged when I realize these educators are teaching children, and I’m not sure I have succeeded in my goal of energizing them about CFG work. To me, CFGs give us a tool to live in “awareness,” so if a participant in my training still feels that “kids are just kids” at the end of the week, I feel as though I have failed that educator, but most importantly, I have failed their students.

Tanisha-Davis-Doss may be contacted at tanishad@rdcc.org

Taking Up the Research Challenge  
(continued from page 2)

progress that has been made so far. I was asked to serve in this role and have done so during this busy and exciting past year.  

National Research Conference: Another impor-
tant research-related step that NSF took last year was to host the NSF Research Conference. At the 2005 Winter Meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a number of folks interested in research-related issues met and learned ways to both support and focus research efforts around NSF work. One suggestion was to sponsor a con-
ference to highlight CFG-related research, offer scholars and practitioners an opportunity to learn from each other and to connect the efforts of NSF scholars nationwide. Jesse Goodman, Director of the Harvard Center of Education Research, offered to coor-
dinate the first conference. This small group was excited by the possibility of a conference; however, not a few of us wondered if we would end up with just the same group sitting around the same table, except this time in Denver.  
The very good news was that over twenty researchers presented papers and another thirty participated in the many related conversations. Scholars from San Antonio to Gainesville to Seattle to New York presented on issues such as sustain-
able CFG work, small school CFG work, and CFG theory. Many papers can be found on the research page of the NSF web site. On January 24th, the Second Annual Research Forum will take place before the Annual NSF Winter Meeting in Seattle (see page 3 for more information).  
Scholars, practitioners, researchers, teachers and students are encouraged not only to attend, but also to present papers, studies, and works in progress.  

Multiyear Research Agenda: This spring, a small group of NSF folks including Frances Hensley, myself and Daniel Baron began a conversation about how it was time – or past time – for NSF to craft and fund a multiyear research project that would inform our work and help it move forward. Scott Hutchinson, the Harmony Education Center Director of Development, quickly suggested that we meet with Rockman et al., a national research and evaluation organization with offices in Bloomington and multi-

(continued on page 16)