The calendar of NSRF events matched the heat this summer. Between June first and September first there were 45 events on the calendar.

This summer was notable for the variety of sessions and the richness of the conversation. The Center of Activity at UCLA School Management Program kicked it off with a day of coaches’ clinics in Los Angeles on May 31. UCLA SAP designed this clinic as the next professional development step for educators who have some CFE experience. The desired learning objective for the day was to have the participants gain more skills and a greater understanding of how to create and sustain a professional learning community. Participants used a common text on professional learning communities and facilitation protocols to meet this objective.

There was also a series of equity seminars, starting with a Leading for Educational Equity seminar in San Francisco, Indiana. Coaching For Educational Equity is one facet of the work of NSRF that focuses on examining personal practice and experience through the lens of equity. The Leading for Educational Equity seminar was one offering this summer based on this work. A central feature in the design of this seminar was the intentional diversification of both the facilitation and participant pools as an effort to build alliances across differences.

Once the facilitators and participants were in place, we moved into the collaborative norming, opening and closing meetings, building facilitation skills, specifically “establishing group norms, opening and closing meetings, resolving conflicts, enhancing participation and engagement, exploring issues of parity, and learning from texts and speakers.”

There were also several sessions for continued learning for experienced CFG coaches and facilitative leaders. These sessions provided an “opportunity to deepen their learning, reflect on their practice, and develop new skills and approaches for coaching their CFGs.” They also provided a venue for networking with new colleagues in the coaches’ own area and reenergizing their work in their CFG. One continued learning session in Massachusetts had the intriguing title, “So You Are a CFG Coach...Now What?” and focused on sustaining CFGs. NSRF San Antonio had a continued learning session in August to kick off the new school year.

Along with this variety of sessions,
inequities have we identified within our own context? How are we responding?
• What biases and stereotypes have we identified within our practice or within ourselves? How are we responding?
• What are we learning about the relationship between culture and student learning? How are we working towards more culturally responsive practices?
• How do we hold one another accountable to taking action based on what we learn and discuss as a group, whether within our own individual practice or within our organization as a whole?
• How do we know whether we are making progress as a group? How do we measure success? What evidence or documentation do we have of our own learning and impact? What differences can we identify in student achievement across all subgroups?


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Eilen Key Ballock can be reached at elenkey@hotmail.com

there were 32 new CFG Coaches seminars. CFG Coaches seminars are our most typical introduction to the work of NSRF and our mission. These 32 sessions reached educators in 19 states through 20 Centers of Activity in every region from Massachusetts to Hawai'i. NSRF dues-paying membership added a new dimension to sessions this summer. Offering membership to seminar participants provides a new opportunity for them to be engaged in the national NSRF community and support the mission of NSRF. The summer sessions in Hawai'i were the first to build in a one-year NSRF membership for participants.

This summer has been another learning opportunity for all of us. Our continued work has come a long way in spreading our mission and visions for democratic and equitable schools. The door has been opened to hundreds of new NSRF colleagues and scores of old ones have been renewed in their practice and purpose. We look forward to reflecting on the important work of this summer in search of its impact on the lives of our students this fall.

The NSRF events database was the source for the information in this article. This database is only as good as the data provided, so if you are an NSRF National Facilitator, please let the National Center know about any upcoming NSRF seminar experiences, so we may promote them on our website and use the collected information to enrich our network.

Chris Jones can be contacted at cjones@nsrfharmony.org

Greg Peters

Two years ago, Gregory Peters became the director of SF-CESS, the San Francisco Coalition of Essential Small Schools, a regional center of the Coalition of Essential Schools and a center of activity of the NSRF. Prior to this work, Greg served as principal of Leadership High School in San Francisco, a ten-year-old charter school in the southeastern section of this city. Of the 140 students currently enrolled at Leadership, 95% are students of color, and 40% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Greg remains coprincipal of Leadership High School, serving as a liaison between this laboratory school and the larger network of organizations focused on school change.

Greg notes that poor nutrition, gangs, and violence are major factors in his students’ daily lives. Leadership High School is a safe community for our students, but our students are victims and witnesses and even sometimes purveyors of the violence that surrounds them. We absolutely know our children well, and as a result are committed to serving them even though we know any one of them could exist on either side within the cycle of violence and oppression that plagues our urban youth.

How were you introduced to NSRF? What is this organization’s role in your work?

I was a member of a CFG just as they were introduced. The following year (1996) I trained with Juli Quinn as a coach, and coached a group from Oceana High School, where I was a math and art teacher for six years. CFGs became essential in my work as a new principal at Leadership High School.

Just in its third year, Leadership was not a good place for students or for their teachers. The school lacked a strong culture of professional development. CFGs were a natural fit in helping to shift the culture to that of a learning organization. The faculty of Leadership High School was firm in its commitment that I serve as an instructional leader, so we had to negotiate what that meant in the daily life of our school. We spent that first year learning how we needed to work together. CFGs provided a needed structure for our learning. We used that structure, but operated under a different name. At the time, NSRF did not have a presence in the Bay Area, so we chose to call our groups “I-Groups,” a combination of CFG principles and mini-research groups. We trained our department leaders as coaches, although we had heterogeneous groups, not department members. Our I-Groups meet every three weeks in a rotation of collaborative groups - departments, teams, and professional development.

We are very conscious in our school’s I-Groups and in our five-day training seminars about our focus on equity. While it is the challenge for every participant to keep equity at the center of our work, how do we do that? This is the coaches’ responsibility to ensure this. Our school is located in a tough place, but we have a lot to be proud of. Following an independent audit of the San Francisco Unified School District, Leadership High School was one of only two schools cited for making progress in closing the achievement gap. I choke saying this out loud because our progress still is not even close to being enough. We need to share this information to help sustain the work, but in the larger context, our successes are merely a blip on the screen of an intense urban area such as San Francisco.

Greg, please describe the roots of your commitment to equity in your life and your work.

As an openly gay school leader, the concept of equity is an innate part of my individual profile. However, my greater sense of empathy comes from growing up as a gay and a closeted member of a poor Rhode Island family on welfare. As a teenager I passed for straight because that is the first assumption of others, and for middle-class kids born to middle-class parents or for the middle-class - ”I didn’t know I was their target.” I learned quickly what those with power and prejudice said of others when they believed the others were not in their presence. Out of fear, defense, anger and frustration - and in ignorance of what exactly to do - I learned