

NSRF Summer Activity Roundup

Chris Jones, Indiana

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 along with the number. 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 SMP designed this clinic as the next professional development step for educators who have some CFG 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 facilitated protocols to meet this objective.

There was also a series of equity seminars, starting with a Leading for Educational Equity seminar in Bloomington, 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, all parties worked to hold the space and "the precious time for participants to critically reflect upon what it means to thoughtfully and deliberately include equity in their work as a school leader in her/his local context in a thoughtful and proactive manner." One of the primary goals of the seminar was to work towards eliminating the "predictive value of race, class, gender, language, and special capacities on success in school."

The NSRF Center in San Francisco, San Francisco Coalition of Equitable Small Schools (SF-CESS), also had a series of sessions under the umbrella theme of Teaching for Equity

The offerings were:

- Advisory: How can we plan backwards from our mission and vision to create an Advisory program focused on personalization and high expectations?
- Student Activities: How can students take ownership of an activities program that fosters community and supports the school's mission and vision?

- Data-Based Inquiry: How can we use formal inquiry to foster a culture of shared leadership and develop Professional Development focused on equitable student achievement?
- Portfolios and Exhibitions: How can we authentically assess students meeting our high academic expectations?
- Project-Based Learning: What does PBL look like in my math class?

The Teaching for Equity sessions had a regional impact, with participants from five states. The focus of the work at the SF-CESS Center of Activity is on classroom practices and these sessions were built on this foundation. They provided a space to talk about classroom practice, to model a personalized small school experience, and to gain coaching experience for participants to bring back to their classrooms.

New York had two NSRF-focused professional development sessions. One was on the habit and practice of Looking Collaboratively at Student Work. In this session participants had the opportunity to think together about the settings for looking at student work and about the purposes of looking at student work, including "accountability, equity, depth of learning, depth of teaching, and community building."

The other New York session focused on Facilitative Leadership, the foundation that CFG coaching is built upon. This session focused on building facilitation skills, specifically "establishing group norms, opening and closing meetings, resolving conflicts, enhancing participation and engagement, exploring issues of equality, 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,

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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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Ellen Key Ballock can be reached at ellenkey@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 vision 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

