Principals often tell me that they miss their time with students, those times when they are privy to the wonder of young minds learning and growing, the times that energize us and make our work worthwhile. Stuck in their offices with deadlines looming and seemingly endless meetings to attend, administrators can sometimes feel isolated and out of touch. However, at a recent CFG meeting in Philadelphia, our group was treated to a heartwarming story of the power of the principal’s role and a glimpse of the exponential power of principals who collaborate across the city and beyond.

During my time as a member, Karen Dean, began to share the story of a new student, a student who was not happy about changing schools midyear. The young boy was fussing and actively resisting the situation with Nelson, so she called her fellow CFG member, Mr. Nelson Reyes. After quickly sharing the story of a new student, a student who was not happy about changing schools midyear, Karen went into the new principal’s office with his brief conversation, and once again, Nelson was able to speak to the child and help him calm down. It has been months since Karen and Nelson shared these stories in our CFG meeting, but I find my thoughts returning to that young boy’s words whenever I’m feeling overwhelmed or anxious about the next steps I need to take in my work. “Ask Mr. Reyes” has become a code for me, a reminder that I may not know what to do alone, but I can always turn to my CFG colleagues for personalized support and encouragement I need.

Nelson Reyes and Karen Dean

NSRF’s New Membership Model

This summer, NSRF will begin a new chapter in our organizational development by becoming a voluntary, dues-paying membership organization. This decision has been made carefully and collaboratively between the director and staff of the NSRF National Center and has been informed by a growing chorus of national colleagues. We have relied on the work and feedback from many groups including Centers Council meetings, regional summits, Accountability Council meetings, and a special summit specifically on membership. All these gatherings of national colleagues have helped us to construct a membership plan that cultivates our national reach while remaining committed to and grounded in our mission.

Watch your mailbox for the NSRF Membership Report!

Written by Debbie Bambino with the permission of Nelson Reyes and Karen Dean, principals in the School District of Philadelphia.

Ask Mr. Reyes
A Tribute to the Power of Principal Collaboration
Philadelphia Area Leadership CFG

Winter Meeting Reflections
Sarah Childers, Indiana

Another January has come and gone, and with it another Winter Meeting. After 400 of us gathered in Seattle, we’ve now gone back to our homes and begun the process of sorting through our learning and experiences from those jam-packed two and a half days that are the Winter Meeting. All of us, I believe, have come home changed from our experiences in Seattle. We’ve learned, laughed, cried and come to a renewed commitment to our work together for the sake of students.

Throughout the exciting two and a half days, participants could be seen talking in small groups in the lobby and hallways of the buildings, or taking part in activities such as the zones of comfort, risk and danger in the foyer. Also seen in the halls during the Winter Meeting were some wonderful people from Youth In Focus, a Seattle area group that works with young photographers and filmmakers. We were very happy to have them working with us and taking wonderful pictures of our children and their experience. All of the pictures throughout this piece were taken by our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Wendy Dang and Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Hans Petrie. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Hans Petrie. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Hans Petrie. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Hans Petrie. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Hans Petrie. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton. More photographs are viewable on our Youth In Focus photographers, Jacob Eaton.

This year, we used a new structure for home groups - strand topics. Participants were able to select a topic to focus on in their home group. Topics offered were:

• Coaching for Educational Equity, an Introduction,
• Collaborative Inquiry,
• Context Coaching,
• Facilitation, Collaboration and Reflection,
• Facilitative Leadership,

Teachers who want to construct more equitable, more meaningful, and more lively educational experiences for children must also concern themselves with issues beyond the classroom walls.

- Sarah Smith

“I’m pleased to be gently encouraged to be a facilitator. (I probably would not have done that otherwise.) Being expected to share and facilitate this week put me out of the comfort zone and into the risk zone. I needed that.”

- Linda Geist

“Today has created a comfort with talking about and handling issues of race/ethnicity. I have never really had a problem with it in the past but today’s experience put it at a different, higher place when dealing with that issue. It brought out an awareness and connection of how it resonates in my own life which provides power and confidence when dealing with it in the future.”

- Bennie Patterson

(continued on page 16)
Spring 2007
Connections: the Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

Winter Meeting Reflections
(continued from page 9)

Keynote Address
Linda Christensen delivered the keynote address to a packed ballroom this year. Her speech was described as “energized” and “excellent” with “well-established content” by participants. The reading she provided, the introduction to her upcoming book Rethinking Our Classrooms, served as a common text across the home groups and a uniting experience for participants. One participant even said she had rewritten a test on her plane ride home based on what she got out of it! This certainly speaks to the strength of having a classroom-based practitioner as our keynote speaker. A transcript of Linda’s address is available online, along with the reading.

Participant Evaluations
With the help of Ross Peterson-Veatch, our resident data-cruncher, we’re able to mine the evaluations to identify our strengths and challenges and then address them in the planning of our next Winter Meeting. Take a look at some of this year’s data in the sidebar.

Molly’s family
"The members of Mr. Marston’s kindergarten class are busily cleaning and decorating their room for the upcoming Open School Night, when everybody’s family is invited to visit. Molly and Stephen and Tanya and Tommy work on drawing pictures to put on the walls. Molly draws her family: Mommy, Mama Lu, and her puppy, Sam. But when Tommy looks at her picture, he tells her it’s not of a family.

Sarah Childers by Nancy Garden
"Daddy and Papa: A Story about Gay Fathers in America" by Johnny Symons

Resources for Gay and Lesbian Families and Students
Sarah Childers and Afriyle Daniels, Indiana

J ust a couple of weeks ago, I found myself in one of the most anticipated and/or dreaded moments of parenthood - the big question. My son, a very scientifically-minded young man at the ripe old age of seven, turned to me as we scrambled eggs one morning and asked me why there were no baby chickens in the eggs. Thus began “the talk” on fertilization and (heterosexual) intercourse. He handled it very well, and, as is his wont, with flair. “Mom,” he said, “I always say ‘expect the unexpected,’ because that is just weird!” Not long after this, he asked me what “gay” meant. As a student at Harmony School, he’s probably more exposed to gay families than his contemporaries in more traditional schools, so he didn’t balk at my explanation in the slightest. For a second grader, it seems the concept of two people who love each other and are of the same gender is much more reasonable than explanations of the strange and murky operations of sexual reproduction.

Winter Meeting Evaluation Responses
Total Responses: 217

1. I had the opportunity to present and get feedback on substantive work that is important and meaningful in my own setting. 87.5%
2. My seminar group became a place for professional interactions that embody the characteristics of a CFG. 93.5%
3. I learned something meaningful about the relationship between the work a CFG does together and the potential impact CFGs can have on student learning. 88.0%
4. I learned something meaningful about the relationship between the work a CFG does together and the potential impact CFGs can have on educational equity. 85.0%
5. The Open Space Technology sessions I attended enriched my learning at this meeting. 62.0%
6. Overall, I would rate this meeting as outstanding. 89.0%