

Source: National Association of Independent Schools. 2005, 2006. [online].
<<http://www.nais.org/conferences/index.cfm?ItemNumber=147122>> &
<<http://www.nais.org/conferences/index.cfm?ItemNumber=148094>>.

2006 Honorees

CURRICULUM INNOVATION

Hamilton School at Wheeler

Providence, RI

Head of School: Dan B. Miller

In 1988, the Wheeler School invested \$1 million to start the Hamilton Lower School as a "school within a school" to serve its students who needed support with learning differences. The unique program offers specialized academic instruction, then combines Hamilton and Wheeler students for electives.

The Hamilton Middle School, begun in 1996, is both physically and philosophically integrated with the Wheeler Middle School, helping to prepare students for their transition to high school. Hamilton student success is due to both innovative teaching practices and the school's complete integration with Wheeler.

Westover School

Middlebury, CT

Head of School: Ann Pollina

Recognizing the dearth of women in the fields of computer science and engineering, math and science teachers at the Westover School teamed up to create "WISE: Women in Science and Engineering." WISE students engage in hands-on engineering problem-solving projects, study Java script to prepare for the AP computer science exam, and create an independent research project. Girls who successfully complete the WISE program are granted automatic admission to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Latin School of Chicago

Chicago, IL

Head of School: Donald R. Firke

At the Latin School of Chicago, the two lower school counselors don't sit in their offices waiting for a student with a problem to walk in. Instead, they meet with each class weekly to address goals through discussion, role-play, projects, cooperative activity, and analysis of group process. Students develop a personal relationship with their counselor. And the school benefits from a preventative mental health and social-emotional learning curriculum, rather than emphasizing response to individual crisis.

2005 Honorees

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

La Salle College High School

Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania

Principal: Frederick Assaf

Bridging the Digital Divide

Technological transfer is one way to build a more just society. La Salle College School initiated Community TECHServe in 2001 to help more than 15,000 people in Philadelphia overcome the "digital divide."

An emerging model for school-university-community partnerships, TECHServe addresses this gap in technology use in three distinct phases. First, students and school faculty train at La Salle and at Penn. Then, they work with urban community service organizations to identify technology needs and collaborate on appropriate solutions. Finally, TECHServe provides hardware, software, training, and leadership to the local organizations to improve accessibility to technology.

La Salle's mission is to educate students of diverse talents and abilities in the qualities of leadership that will help them bring about a more just society. Community TECHServe views the digital divide as a problem of social justice that can be examined economically, socially, and educationally. The goal is collaborative success. Students work with community organizers and clients to shape solutions that allow the client organizations to assume leadership and accountability.

TECHServe began in 2001 as an extension of La Salle's strong technological infrastructure. La Salle students studied the "digital divide," installed hardware and software, and provided technical training to 10 community organizations, including Project Home (homeless services) and Hospitality House (transition program for prisoners). Affiliation with the Fox Leadership Program at Penn expanded and formalized the program. More than a dozen community organizations and three inner city schools in Philadelphia now have local networks, internet access, and on-site technical leaders thanks to TECHServe and the students and faculty of La Salle College School.

Wildwood School

Los Angeles, California

Head of School: Hope E. Boyd

Reaching Out to Public Schools

An independent school with a public mission, Wildwood School established the Wildwood Outreach Center in 2001 to share the benefits of a small school environment and personalized educational program with schools, teachers, and students in the public sector. The Outreach Center emphasizes lifelong learning; an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum; assessment of students through portfolios and demonstrations; service to the community; and close relationships between schools and families.

The Center provides workshops and technical assistance to new and restructuring public and charter schools on topics including Advisory Programs, Project-Based Learning, Habits of Mind and Heart, and Gateway/Graduation Portfolios and Presentations. The Outreach Center also hosts visits to Wildwood and produced The Advisory Toolkit, a 45-minute video and accompanying workbook to help schools create

an advisory program.

The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) recently named Wildwood a CES Mentor School. Wildwood will act as a mentor to a public school in the Los Angeles area, and will help the Los Angeles Unified School District establish Small Learning Communities in every LAUSD high school within the next five years by offering Outreach workshops and technical assistance. Since its inception, the Wildwood Outreach Center has conducted 12 workshops for administrators and faculty from over 70 public and charter schools, school districts, and educational associations. Four public schools went on to implement advisory programs in their schools. The Outreach Center mentored development of the CityLife Downtown Charter School, which serves 80 students in Los Angeles and will grow to a 560-student secondary school. The Center also mentors schools in Arizona and Washington state, and has hosted over 100 visitors.

Wildwood's Outreach efforts are helping hundreds of children in public and charter schools to benefit from the advantages of a small, intellectually challenging, personalized education. Reaching out to public schools helps to prepare more young people to be successful, contributing members of a global society.

Sonoma Academy

Santa Rosa, California

Head of School: Janet Durgin

Expanding the Concept of Community

Sonoma Academy promoted an expansive meaning of "community," teaching students to actively participate in service and social change on both local and global fronts. The school's community service and study abroad program, CONNECTIONS, requires all students to participate in weekly volunteer or community service projects, addressing local, state, national, and global issues.

Students volunteer with local organizations, including the Redwood Empire Food Bank and Sonoma County Animal Shelter, where they initiate internationally-focused projects, including fund raising for micro-loan recipients in Kenya and survivors of the Iranian earthquake. CONNECTIONS also organizes study/travel trips to China, Costa Rica, Mexico, France, and Thailand. A scholarship program ensures that any student can participate in these global experiences.

CONNECTIONS aims to instill in students a sense of responsibility and value for involvement in their communities. These goals align with the mission of the school, which also emphasizes a commitment to learning, ethics, cross-cultural communication, and leadership. Board leadership and commitment to the program have been central to its success. Supported by a full-time director and with time built into the curriculum for community service and travel, the program literally "connects" every member of the student body with members of local and global communities. Students benefit from opportunities to learn and practice cross-cultural communication and leadership. Student volunteers have assisted many organizations in meeting their goals for providing client services and fund raising, and 62 students nearly half of the student body; have traveled abroad through CONNECTIONS over the past three years. Sonoma Academy expects that as a result of this program and the school's curriculum, its graduates will become responsive and thoughtful citizens of the world.

CURRICULUM INNOVATION

Kentucky Country Day School
Louisville, Kentucky
Head of School: Bradley E. Lyman

Learning to Give

While the desire to give may be strong, the actual practice of philanthropy can be a challenge. You have to raise sufficient funds, establish rules and procedures for giving, and make tough choices about which worthy causes to support. Students at Kentucky Country Day School are mastering the skills of giving in a new course that focuses on the art of philanthropy. A \$10,000 grant provided the seed money to establish The Artemis Fund, an advised fund within the Community Foundation of Louisville governed by by-laws written by the students.

As trustees of the fund, the students learn the importance of philanthropy and develop the skills necessary to make charitable efforts more effective. They started by developing a mission statement to guide their efforts. The Artemis Fund seeks to strengthen the Greater Louisville Community by supporting local organizations that encourage the development of youth and promote the fundamental values of love, family, and respect. Students at Kentucky Country Day School clarify their own values by studying the philanthropic currents in other civilizations as well as their own. The course also builds sound money management skills. Students seek to ensure the Fund's financial stability through good governance and relationship building with grantors and grantees. In reviewing the Fund's financials, classes quickly realize that adding to principal must be a priority. Fund raising through direct solicitation and special events is a major part of the course.

Students then must decide how to distribute the funds. Using a student created grant application, they review each request and evaluate each applicant through the "lens" of their own values and priorities. Students organize site visits, interview key personnel, and consult experts from local non-profit foundations before making their final, gut-wrenching decisions. Starting with \$10,000 just three years ago, the philanthropy class at Kentucky Country Day School has built a charitable trust of more than \$53,000 and dispersed \$11,600 in grants to local community organizations. Students learn to view philanthropy with seriousness, spirit, and creativity. The education students receive as trustees of The Artemis Fund encourages a lifetime of service and philanthropy.

Cincinnati Country Day School
Cincinnati, Ohio
Head of School: Robert Macrae

Focusing on Expression

"FOCUS: An American Teenage Vision" is an annual project that challenges student photographers from seven public and private schools around the country to document teenage identity in the 21st century. Bridging gaps created by geography, culture, identity and class, FOCUS enables student photographers to express their shared experience. Guided by documentary photographers and project mentors Mary Ellen Mark, Bruce Davidson, Wendy Walsh, and Josh Withers, the FOCUS students investigate themes of intimacy, self identity, alienation, and emergence, and document the reality of life as they perceive it.

The FOCUS project reflects the culture of Cincinnati Country Day School, which is dedicated to the arts, technology, diversity, student-centeredness, and the sense of local and global community membership. The school's technology-rich environment serves as the foundation for this multi-school collaboration. Cincinnati Country Day School hosts a project website with galleries, press media, and discussion critique. Video conferencing provides a personal interface between partner schools. This year, the zenith of the project was a student-curated exhibition at Cincinnati's Contemporary Art Center.

Two years of FOCUS workshops, online critiques, publications, and an exhibition are just the beginning of an infectious teenage movement. More than 200 students have participated in the project from coast to coast. Lifelong friendships have been formed between students who otherwise would never have met. Educators and students are collaborating on a book project showcasing FOCUS work, outlining lesson plans, and offering commentary from the project mentors. In addition, a traveling exhibition of student works is planned.

One FOCUS student calls the project "a movement to liberate students and their work." By involving public and private schools that are socially, ethnically, and culturally diverse, FOCUS helps students break down societal barriers and create a single voice through images.

Darrow School

New Lebanon, New York

Head of School: Nancy Wolf

Teaching Sustainability

Darrow School provides an education in sustainable living, learning, and being. This is a logical extension of the original inhabitants of the campus, the Shakers, who left a legacy of simplicity of purpose, relation, and design. Sustainability is integrated throughout the academic and residential curricula, and serves as a foundation for unique extracurricular offerings. Darrow's mission statement includes the words "environmental consciousness," and emphasizes the development of interests and abilities through applied learning experiences. All academic departments teach sustainability, and students progress from an appreciation of environmental issues to a comprehension of sustainable solutions. Students and teachers work together to determine and implement environmental solutions on campus, extending their commitment to the school's buildings, maintenance, and grounds.

The Samson Environmental Center, an award-winning green building on campus, provides a community sustainability resource center. The SEC maintains a Living Machine wastewater treatment plant and a photovoltaic array that shares performance data with 49 schools across the state, including the local public district. Students lead tours of the SEC for more than 400 visitors each year. Student/faculty teams also visit exemplar sites and make conference presentations on sustainable living and education. Goals for the program include a continued emphasis on sustainability as a lifestyle as well as a context for learning. Darrow plans to conduct an energy and resource use inventory; to deepen the integration of sustainability into non-science classes, including an increased emphasis on international contexts; and to convene an Environmental Policy Action Committee.

Students are encouraged to view complexity in environmental problems as an opportunity to design elegant solutions that do not place the environment in opposition to the economy and human health. Conducting joint research projects with colleges like Williams College, hosting the annual Clean Water Congress for regional high schools, and participating in campus-wide service learning programs like Hands-to-Work help prepare students for the complexities of life in the 21st Century.