

## Chais Teacher Institute Summer 2008 Training



The Israel Center for Excellence through Education\*

Jerusalem, Israel

\*Formerly, The Society for Excellence through Education

## Chais Teacher Institute (C.T.I.) Summer 2008

"One's work may be finished someday, but one's education never."

— *Alexandre Dumas*

This is the sentiment which the Israel Center for Excellence through Education embraces in general, and for Chais teachers in particular. Excellence 2000 teachers attend Chais training seminars year-round, meeting for 3-day workshops in the fall, winter, and spring. The summer training workshops, however, serve as a highlight and a chance for teachers to re-energize their materials and methods.

The 3-day intensive training that the teachers experienced at the Chais Center for Excellence will be only the first in a series of teacher training workshops. As Dr. Avi Poleg, Director of the Chais Teacher Institute, explained, "Teachers don't 'graduate' out of the Chais teacher training program; rather, they return each season to acquire new skills, tools, and techniques for meeting the unique educational needs of highly talented and motivated students".



This year 450 teachers from over 190 different schools made the decision to further their education at the Chais Teacher Institute. This marks the largest summer training seminar to date, with 97% of eligible teachers attending. The teachers who participate are representative of the wide range of students they educate; religious, non-religious, Jewish, Christian, Druze, Muslim, from big cities, and from small towns. The Chais Teacher Institute has developed 19 different training tracks to meet the needs of teachers of



different subjects, grade levels, and levels of experience. Each track meets for 2-3 days of seminars, lectures, hands-on activities, and idea-sharing. Not only do teachers attend these seminars during their summer vacations and without pay – but there is a lengthy waiting list for joining the program.

Highlights of this year's training included new sessions on cultivating leadership, and the introduction of the "Pass it Forward" tutoring program. "Pass It Forward" creates a way for students to assist their classmates with

homework, tutoring, etc. – but also obligates the tutored students to find a way that they too can give back and contribute to society. Another major addition to the Chais training this year was the distribution of CD's that accompany the teaching units. These CD's contain all of the projection pages and student worksheets from the units, to facilitate easier use and reproduction by the teachers.

Chais Teacher Institute participants were oriented to the program by Dr. Avi Poleg, Mr. Hezki Arieli (Chairman of the Israel Center), and Mr. Moish Berdichev (Director of the Excellence 2000 Program). The teachers were also given the opportunity to meet with and get to know the regional coordinators with whom they will be working closely throughout the coming school year.



As an integral part of their training, new Chais teachers were introduced to the Israel Center's Virtual Distance Learning program. Spread out in 7 different locations, the teachers experienced a simulation of how schools from all over Israel can interact in real-time, to compete on math and science quizzes. Regardless of how they placed in the Virtual Competition, all the teachers left excited and eager to sign their students up for virtual activities in the fall.



Experienced Chais teachers attended an advanced workshop on "Lesson Building". The didactic concepts and methodologies practiced by the Chais Teacher Institute can be adapted to any and all areas of study – and the "veteran" teachers are just the ones to do it. One teacher commented, "These kinds of tools are the most

important to give E2K teachers; not just what materials to teach, but how to teach it."

All of the teachers participating in the various Chais seminars received new units and materials. New subjects introduced this year included one science unit on resonance and two units on ecology. The existing unit on chromatography has also been completely revised. In math, the new units involve geometry and mechanical engineering, as well as a unit on the theories of mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange. In all of the classrooms and sometimes spilling over into the hallways, one could hear the "E2K" kind

of classroom noises – learning through group work, sharing, praising one another and thinking out loud as these new materials were introduced.

In addition to the continued training that all Chais participants receive throughout the year, seminars will also be held for those who have chosen to delve deeper into excellence. Teachers who participate in the Space Team Program or Young Detectives Club will receive an additional 25-28 hours of Chais teacher training during the school year, focusing on their particular subject.



One of the most inspiring aspects of the Chais summer training is the "Teachers' Forum" panel. This session allows teachers to share with one another both their frustrations and successes from teaching in the program. One teacher gave a presentation about her initiative during this past school year to include "excellent" parents and family members into the E2K program. By making the most of

connections to the students' parents and relatives, the Chais-trained teacher was able to arrange field trips and lectures, to expose the students to a variety of new scientific and technological concepts.

This summer's Chais Teacher Institute teacher training seminars were a clear success. Based on the cooperation of all those writing the materials, lecturing, organizing, planning logistics, and evaluating pedagogy – over 200 teacher training hours went smoothly. The Chais Teacher Institute 2008 summer training might best be summed up by the teacher who commented, "This is where we come to remember why we became teachers in the first place."