

Chais Teacher Institute Report

A record 500 Excellence 2000 (E2K) teachers from more than 200 schools participated in the Chais Teacher Institute (CTI) this summer. They gathered in Jerusalem on the Schusterman Campus of the Israel Arts and Science Academy for twelve separate two or three day courses. E2K teachers are all veteran teachers, but the E2K program equips them with new and interesting teaching skills in the spheres of mathematical thinking and experimental science. There are separate programs for teachers just beginning the E2K program, teachers who have been in the program 2 years or less and teachers who have more than 2 years experience. There is a further division between teachers of science and those teaching mathematical thinking. Finally, the elementary and middle schools are in separate courses.

In addition, teachers who are in the highly successful pilot program for advanced physics in high school (14 schools participating) gathered for a three day session which included didactics and new material. Another new



program was held for principals of schools that have just joined E2K. The principal is the CEO of a school and SEE has found that by involving principals at the earliest stage of bringing E2K to a school, the principals become invested in E2K, just as the teachers do. Sixteen

principals gathered for an orientation and review of the logistics involved in E2K.

The Chais Teacher Institute has an excellent reputation as a premier professional teacher training program. Teachers come to the program during vacation time and receive no compensation for coming. Traditionally, teachers not in E2K have come to these programs because of their outstanding quality. This year, due to the size of the group, CTI had to restrict the program to E2K teachers only. Even so, non-E2K teachers tried to “sneak in” via the electronic registration system on our official site. SEE, anticipating that this may happen, included a cross-check in the system for registration verifying the registrant as an E2K teacher and the system rejected those applications from teachers not in the program. This vividly demonstrates the demand for CTI training beyond E2K.

The Israel Arts and Science Academy’s campus was buzzing with activity throughout the seminars. Classrooms were the setting for dynamic, animated teaching sessions, didactic discussions, laughter and the sharing of experiences. The classrooms were also the launching pads for new E2K study units created by the CTI staff and the embodiment of the special techniques comprising the distinctive E2K philosophy and methodology.



For these E2K teachers, participation in the Chais Teacher Institute summer training programs means a serious, long-term commitment: Attendance at three half- or full-day regional training sessions during *Succoth*, *Chanukah*

and *Passover* school vacations is mandatory. Rarely does a teacher who registered for the summer classes not attend the regional programs.

Dr. Avi Poleg, Director of the Chais Teacher Institute, explains the unique ethos underlying excellence teaching which asks teachers to surpass the pure relaying of information and instead enable students to take a major, active part in the responsibility of the learning process. ***“We aim to develop students’ creative thinking abilities to enable them to work on their own, to foster a love of learning and heighten their curiosity. This process increases their motivation and brings about a “shift” in the students’ cognitive and emotional levels, boosting their self-confidence.”***

Dr. Poleg outlines how the training aims to fundamentally alter the teachers’ relationship to the students. Rather than experts on a topic, they are guides facilitating students’ discovery process. ***“Students need to know how to work to find answers – to draw comparisons and compare research. Anyone can look on the Net – but our system can’t be found on Google!”***

As a special guest of the CTI program, Mr. Avraham Infeld, Director of the Chais Family Foundation was invited to address approximately 200 E2K teachers in the IASA auditorium. Mr. Infeld inspired these teachers with his concept of educational values in the modern era in which we live. He then shared the vision of the Chais Family Foundation regarding enhancing excellence in education primarily in Israel. He outlined for the teachers the path to achieving this goal through in-service teacher training and via strengthened educational frameworks.

A highlight of this round of teacher training, especially for the new teachers, was orientation to SEE's virtual activity. The virtual activities are very popular with both E2K teachers and their high potential students. Virtual activities are conducted via computer over SEE's website. A special broadcasting suite has been built in the special section of SEE's administrative offices which are dedicated to CTI. Competitions take place in 'real time' and offer students the chance to exercise team spirit and challenge themselves. Classes of matching levels participate simultaneously. A SEE virtual learning coordinator processes answers and offers feedback to the participating classes. Simulated virtual competitions during this summer's training sessions were a springboard to exciting and challenging activities that will be held through the school year. ***"Our virtual training is in its fourth year and we are delighted that the demand and coverage have grown annually,"*** explains Anat Cohen, the Society's Virtual Project Coordinator.

The Chais Teacher Institute sessions held during these past few weeks have been an astonishing success. A spirit of enthusiasm continued to build throughout the sessions. Despite the fall term being more than a month away, the teachers were eager to utilize their newly acquired skills immediately. They found a renewal of the reason that they entered the teaching profession in the first place and developed the self-confidence that is needed to educate young people. As the CTI staff interacted with the teachers, they, in return, were reinvigorated and the summation for both teachers and staff was a sense of participation in a program that will improve the future of Israel.

CH AIS TEACHER INSTITUTE

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