



# Families & Schools

The Newsletter of the Academic Development Institute

Spring 2006

## NCLB Educational Summit for Parent Advocates Families, Communities, and Schools: Working Together to Make No Child Left Behind a Reality

On March 9, 2006, a summit was held at the Chicago City Centre, co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Academic Development Institute (IL Parent Information Resource Center), Illinois State Board of Education, and Chicago Public Schools. Nearly 200 attendees learned more about No Child Left Behind throughout the day. The keynote address was given by Charles Hokanson of the U.S. Department of Education on "Understanding the System: Parental Involvement at the Federal, State, and Local Levels." Other presenters included Sam Redding of the Academic Development

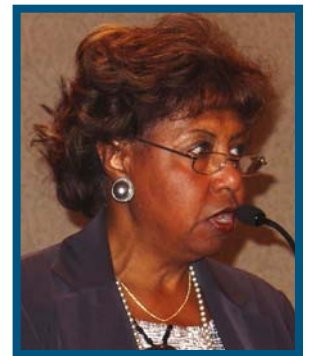


*Keynote Charles Hokanson of the U. S. Department of Education*

Institute, Kristine Cohn, the Secretary's Regional Representative for the U.S. Department of Education, Cleo A. Boswell of the Illinois State Board of Education, and Beverly Butler of Chicago Public Schools.

Breakout sessions were offered during the day on various subjects. Rosemary Fennell of the U.S. Department of Education and Bob Witherspoon of RMC Research Corporation presented "Title I Parent Involvement Requirements." This session provided an overview of essential parent involvement components of Title I at the community, school, and district/regional levels. Kristine Cohn of the U.S. Department of Education, Sharryon Dunbar of the Illinois State Board of Education, and Bernadette Anderson of ADI led "Understanding Your School's Report Card," which gave insight into the basic elements of a school report card as well as

the terminology needed to interpret this information. Todd Zollick of the U.S. Department of Education, Gary Greene and Cheryl Bradley, both of the Illinois State Board of Education, presented "School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services." This session gave an overview of school choice and SES options, with "how to" guidance for speaking with parents about these options.



*Cleo Boswell of the Illinois State Board of Education, Chicago Office*

The day also included time for attendees to brainstorm together and begin their own plan for action and next steps to help them put to use the information gathered during the summit. Participants' responses to the summit included: "I'm so lucky to have been here." "The conference was very well organized; the sessions, the rotation, the materials—everything." "The parent-friendly structure was refreshing."



*Summit attendees brainstorm and create action plans.*

# ADI: Past, Present, and Future

ADI began in 1984 with a summer camp to teach study skills to junior high students and courses for parents to help them support their children's success in school. Foundations and corporations supported ADI's work in Chicago, and then in rural areas of Illinois and Indiana. ADI soon learned that the number of students and families it could directly reach was limited, and that its efforts could be magnified by building the "community of the school," helping schools connect students, parents, and teachers around common goals for students, such as self-directed learning, reading, and respectful, responsible behavior. Alliance for Achievement (AFA), a model for building a strong, value-based school community, was born in 1989. By 1991, ADI had created a network of AFA schools and was publishing *The School Community Journal*, gathering and disseminating the best scholarship on schools that functioned as communities.

In 1995, ADI began its association with the Laboratory for Student Success, a federal education laboratory based at Temple University in Philadelphia. Alliance for Achievement took root in the mid-Atlantic states, and ADI continued to refine and improve the model. ADI's field-research project began to focus on developing data analysis systems, instruments, and decision-making procedures to enable schools to internalize improvement processes and strive for better outcomes for their students.

In 1997, ADI won a grant from the U. S. Department of Education to become the first Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) in Illinois. With this support, ADI assumed the role of state leader for Parents as Teachers, providing technical assistance to the PAT programs serving Illinois families with children from prenatal to 5 years old. ADI expanded its parent education programs to include courses for parents of children with disabilities. Community Leadership Institutes, held regionally throughout the state, and state conferences enabled ADI to reach families, schools, and agencies throughout Illinois. In 1999, ADI began working with 32 elementary schools in the high-poverty area of East St. Louis. A year later, ADI was awarded a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education to extend its program, Solid Foundation, to 200 high-poverty schools throughout the state. In 2004, ADI published a study that showed that schools implementing Solid Foundation over a two-year period improved their scores on the state assessments by nearly twice the gain of a control group of schools with identical beginning scores.

During the 1990s, design teams around the nation created "models" for school reform to address concerns about the effectiveness of many public schools. In 1997, Congress made funds available for low-performing schools to adopt research-based models. The Center for Research in Human Development and Education at Temple University had a model, and that model included Alliance for Achievement as its component for engaging parents. The model's classroom management component, based on the research of Dr. Margaret C. Wang, was strong in areas that appealed to ADI's individualized instruction, student accountability for learning, and student-directed learning. By 2000, ADI was training school staff in the model, and by 2001 ADI was overseeing the implementation of the model in 42 schools in 8 states while studying the effectiveness of the model in 82 schools.

Having worked with comprehensive school reform for five years, ADI put forth its own model in 2003. It kept the name Alliance for Achievement for the model that combined the community-building and parent engagement aspects of the predecessor AFA with classroom management techniques that were the central strength of the Temple model. Alliance for Achievement added to these two research-based and field tested components a strong system of curriculum alignment and instructional planning.

*continued on page 6*

## About ADI

The Academic Development Institute (ADI) works with families, schools, and communities so that all children may become self-directed learners, avid readers, and responsible citizens, respecting themselves and those around them. ADI's vision is of an American landscape filled with distinct school communities reflecting the hopes and dreams of the people intimately attached to them. To learn more about the work of ADI, please visit our website: [www.adi.org](http://www.adi.org)

The Academic Development Institute is the Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) for Illinois, funded by the U.S. Department of Education (Office of Innovation and Improvement). Learn more about PIRCs at [www.pirc-info.net](http://www.pirc-info.net) and about No Child Left Behind at [www.ed.gov/nclb](http://www.ed.gov/nclb).

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# 4th Annual Research Dinner

## Featuring Dr. Joyce Epstein



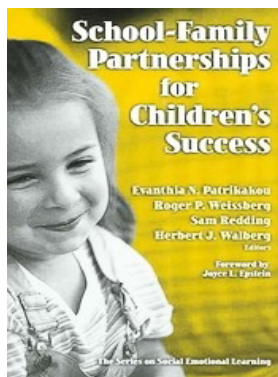
Featured speaker,  
Dr. Joyce Epstein

On Tuesday, April 25, 2006, a group of approximately 140 people gathered at the Hotel Monaco Chicago to enjoy networking, a dinner buffet, and the insights of researcher Dr. Joyce Epstein. Dr. Epstein is Professor and Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at the Johns Hopkins University. She reflected on the progress of school, family, and community partnerships over the past 20 years, and what she and other researchers have seen as growing trends in elementary, middle, and high schools. She highlighted the importance of the integration of comprehensive programs for partnership into the school's improvement plan. Also during the evening, a surprise tribute to Sam Redding, ADI's Executive Director, was presented by Catherine Petersen, and Valerie Halston sang a tribute to Sam and all who give selflessly for children.

Attendees at the dinner included School Community Council representatives, principals, and facilitators, university researchers, community and early childhood agency personnel, government agency representatives, and members of other organizations promoting collaboration for the benefit of children. Several members of the National Advisory Council for *The School Community Journal* were also in attendance. Guests came from around Illinois, and as far away as Corpus Christi, Texas and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Three schools were recognized for their outstanding achievement in forming a school community, receiving plaques designating them as Certified School Communities: Grover Cleveland School, Otis Elementary School, and Columbus West Elementary School (see also pp. 4-5).



Teacher Valerie Halston sings  
"Teach Me How to Grow," a tribute to  
those influential to children.



On hand before the dinner to sign their recently released book, *School-Family Partnerships for Children's Success*, were editors Evanthia ("Eva") Patrikakou, Roger P. Weissberg, Sam Redding, and Herbert J. Walberg. The evening's featured researcher, Joyce L. Epstein, wrote the foreword to the book. Available from Teacher's College Press, this book provides essential information to better understand and improve the nature and quality of school-family

partnerships. Experts examine the various aspects and effects of parental involvement not only on children's academic achievement, but also on social and emotional development.



Book editors and School Community Journal Advisory board members, from left, Eva Patrikakou, Sam Redding, Joyce Epstein, and Roger Weissberg

# Certified School Communities

## Columbus West Elementary School, Cicero, Illinois

Columbus West is located in Cicero, a primarily Hispanic community near Chicago. Their School Community Council (SCC) is very active in meeting regularly. Their Family Resource Library is a wonderful resource the parents enjoy, offered twice a week by parent volunteers. It consists of two cabinets by the main entrance with books, games, movies, and puzzles. The district donated canvas bags for the parents to use to carry their items to and from the library.

Columbus West partnered with another local model school to hold a Working Together for Student Success workshop. The SCC arranged all the details including childcare and refreshments; they were great hosts. It was a big hit! Family nights have been very successful and included topics such as reading, games, and math; they used a rotation model so families could learn through different mediums.

Although there was some apprehension about holding Home Gatherings, the principal's support and determination prevailed. Their first Home Gathering produced a lively conversation about responsible behavior on the playground and in the school. In planning for home visits, 10 teachers, the principal, facilitator, and 5 parents all received training, and they successfully completed 65 visits. The SCC also planned a "parents' coffee" for each grade level at the start of the new school year. They offered coffee and donuts to parents after the children were brought to school. Parents had the opportunity to meet other parents, learn about the school, and to encourage connections and best practices. Congratulations to this hard-working team!

## Otis Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois

Otis is one of the oldest schools in Chicago, built in 1878. It is nestled in a primarily Hispanic neighborhood that is currently undergoing regentrification. They have a Peace Garden on the school grounds, as well as the Field House that is actively used for many parent education programs. The Resource Library housed there is open every Friday morning after the reading club program. Despite its age and other challenges, Otis is a tightly knit school community providing innovative programs and activities that enhance learning for all.

The SCC at Otis has been very dedicated to the implementation of Reading School-Home Links, and the teachers put forth great effort to reinforce their



*Otis Elementary's SCC and ADI Staff: Front row: Helia Tenorio; Barbara Conner; (Facilitator) Martha Herrera-Kowalski; Guadalupe Zavala; Herlinda Macias (ADI); Marja Lawrecki; Jaime Sanchez; Back row: Dr. Sam Redding; Catherine Petersen (ADI)*

# Awarded April 25, 2006

*Otis School, continued from p. 4*

use. Parents help organize the counting every week and report to the facilitator. At the end of the school year, the SCC presented a plaque to the teacher that used all 100 links. Otis organized their first ever Reading Field Day last year. Primary grade students, parents, and teachers were invited to participate in reading activities and games out-of-doors and enjoy lunch together. It was a beautiful day filled with Reading Fun! Home Gatherings were creatively planned for half days. Teachers volunteered to provide childcare for students whose parents were participating. A hot topic at one of the Home Gatherings was the roles of parents and teachers in establishing reading habits. All enjoyed a healthy conversation about reading! Otis' SCC, despite some adversity, prevailed with their eyes on the prize of becoming a Certified School Community. Congratulations Otis School!

## Grover Cleveland School, Erie, Pennsylvania



*Pictured, from left: Bea Habursky, Principal; Kathy Kurpeikis, ADI; Sharon Ferringer, Co-Parent Education Facilitator; Andrea Loeffler, Co-Parent Education Facilitator, and Sam Redding, ADI. Not pictured: Debbie Brasington, AFA Facilitator*

The Grover Cleveland School in the School District of the City of Erie, Pennsylvania has achieved the award of Certified School Community in Solid Foundation while overcoming challenges that often halt productive community building in schools. Since their School Community Council was trained in December, 2003, they have had major school staff changes including a change of principal, and in the past two school years half of the teaching staff has been changed due to turnover and retirement. Also, in the past two years this school has grown from a K-6<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school to include 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels. Despite these challenges, the focus toward their school-family partnership has remained steady and strong. The SCC members have continued in their positions, except for one change when a parent member moved from the area. The current Council members are: Bea Habursky, Principal; Sharon Ferringer and Andrea Loeffler, Co-Parent Education Facilitators; Debbie Brasington, AFA Facilitator; Tracy Lecker, Counselor; Linda Fatica, Melissa Collins, Mary Trostle, and Debbie Carl, Parents.

Grover Cleveland's School Community Council approached every planning guide agenda with focus and creativity. Each activity they derived from the guide was given thoughtful production. As the school community has grown from serving elementary students to also nurturing young adolescents, the Council worked to reflect the new dynamics in their planned activities. The most recent Family Night provided families and students with age-appropriate content from the primary youngsters to the junior high group. Home Visits are celebrated in the spring (2<sup>nd</sup> graders) and early fall (incoming Kindergarteners) with 8x10 individual pictures of visited students adorning the main hall bulletin board. The Parent Resource Library was created in the only spot in the building remaining from the ever-growing student enrollment, a small room next to the stage in the all-purpose gymnasium/lunch room. Many Friday evenings found SCC parent members with their children and spouses at the school cleaning, arranging, and organizing this special place. Today it is not only a resourceful, comfortable place to find books and learning materials for parents and students, but stands as an embellished "Cougar Cave" with murals that were hand-painted by parents and children. Each morning, one of the older students manages the filing and checking out of new materials. This room symbolizes the heart of this school-family partnership. While these are only a few examples of the rich and vibrant community found at Grover Cleveland School, it is warming to know that despite any challenges on the road ahead, they will remain committed to their purpose in building an ever-stronger and lasting school community for children, parents, and educators.

By 2005, 16 schools in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin had adopted Alliance for Achievement as their model for comprehensive school improvement. Studying various models of comprehensive school reform, and implementing Temple's model, ADI learned that three important aspects of sustained school improvement were missing or were weak in most models:

- 1) structures and processes for shared decision-making and use of student learning data;
- 2) alignment of standards-based, curricular objectives with the instructional plan for each student; and
- 3) practical methods for engaging parents in their children's learning.

ADI's revamped Alliance for Achievement included these components.

In 2003, ADI sponsored a state conference, Working Together for Student Success, with Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former lieutenant governor of Maryland, as the keynote speaker. Thirty-two state organizations and agencies participated in the conference. That same year, ADI featured Dr. Karen Mapp, then at Northeastern University in Boston, as the featured speaker at ADI's first Guest Researcher dinner, held in Chicago. In 2004, the featured speaker at the Guest Researcher dinner was Dr. Heather Weiss, director of the Harvard Family Research Project. The 2005 Guest Researcher was Dr. James Comer of the Yale Child Study Center, and Dr. Patricia Edwards of Michigan State University spoke at ADI's annual conference for Alliance for Achievement schools. The Guest Researcher for the 2006 dinner was Dr. Joyce Epstein, Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.

In 2005, ADI was awarded a competitive contract from the U. S. Department of Education to form and operate a national Center on Innovation and Improvement, one of only five national content centers. The Center provides technical assistance to regional comprehensive centers and state departments of education on school improvement and education options. See the Center website at [www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org) for more information.

With more than 20 years of service to families, schools, and communities, ADI continues to evolve, to retool, to find better ways to fulfill its purpose. ADI has always served as a conduit between research and sound practice: ADI makes things work. ADI will fulfill this engineering role to reach families, schools, and community organizations more effectively and more efficiently. True to its roots, ADI will maintain its deep respect for the human dimension in children's development. Research-based methods are only successful when they are embraced by teachers, parents, and administrators—the people who care most about the children in their midst. ADI will connect people with each other and with sound practice so they can make the best decisions about children's learning.

ADI's future goals are to:

1. **Make Alliance for Achievement's "targeted learning" instructional practices more widely available** to schools through a training center for school teams, data systems, and web-based learning.
2. **Make Solid Foundation's parent engagement strategies more widely available to schools** through Solid Foundation Academies that train school teams in the field-tested components of the program, including a documentation system that monitors their progress.
3. **Seek partnerships with districts** in order to serve more schools more efficiently.
4. **Adapt Alliance for Achievement's instructional methods (targeted learning) to preschool and for special education.**
5. **Provide standards-based technical assistance for Parents as Teachers programs** in collaboration with state and community agencies.
6. **Accelerate the development and expansion of Champions Together** and related programming for special education.
7. **Link research to practice, and researchers with practitioners**, through *The School Community Journal*, Families & Schools Newsletter, PAT News, ADI website, Illinois Parents website, Guest Researcher Dinner, and a new website devoted to resources for social and emotional learning.

## Senator Durbin Visits ADI Home Office

United States Senator Richard Durbin visited the Lincoln, Illinois office of the Academic Development Institute on Monday, February 20, 2006. Senator Durbin used this opportunity to learn about the work the Institute performs as the U.S. Dept. of Education's Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) for Illinois and as the administrator of the new national Center for Innovation and Improvement. Several ADI staff members were present, as well as parents who have been the beneficiary of ADI's work around various parts of Illinois, and school administrators who are utilizing Solid Foundation, ADI's comprehensive parent involvement program.



*Sarah McCree relates her experiences as a parent being served by Parents as Teachers for Senator Durbin and his staff*



*Dinah Toombs, a parent from Lucas Elementary School in East St. Louis, is greeted by Senator Durbin*



*Senator Durbin meets the staff of Lincoln Parents' Center, from left, Sarah Strotheide, Brittney Redding, and Cathy Huerd*

## PIWI: Parents Interacting With Infants

The Academic Development Institute has been piloting a new training program for parent educators called “PIWI,” or Parents Interacting with Infants. PIWI is an approach in working with families that promotes positive parent-child interaction. This workshop helps parent educators provide effective parent group sessions by emphasizing child development. It outlines an approach for collaborating with parents to provide a developmentally supportive environment for their children by expanding the parent’s knowledge and understanding of their children, building on natural interaction styles, and acting on parent preferences. PIWI was developed by the PIWI Projects, 61 Children’s Research Center, University of Illinois, and has been adapted for PAT use.

During PIWI workshops, parent educators:

- Learn about parent-child (dyad) interaction – shared emotion, joint attention, predictability, and reciprocity
- Explore facilitation of the parent-child interaction (triadic relationship)
- Hone observation skills – how does the child communicate? How does the parent communicate? What makes the parent an appealing partner?
- Learn strategies to promote positive interaction – Reciprocal Roles, Match and Follow, Support and Challenge
- Learn about setting up the environment to promote interaction – a careful plan, schedule, space, materials, and roles

PIWI Workshops will be available in different locations across the state beginning in the fall of 2006. For more information, contact Clare Eldredge at 217-732-6462, ext. 24, or at [celdredge@adi.org](mailto:celdredge@adi.org).

