



# 2006 LEADING EDGE PROGRAM



## *Profiles of Excellence in Independent Education*

### CURRICULUM INNOVATION

Hamilton School at  
Wheeler (RI)

Westover School (CT)

Latin School of Chicago (IL)

### EQUITY AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Purnell School (NJ)

Marin Academy (CA)

University School of  
Nashville (TN)

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Montessori School of Maui (HI)

Kimball Union Academy (NH)

Phillips Exeter Academy (NH)

### GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

St. Timothy's School (MD)

Glen Urquhart School (MA)

La Jolla Country Day  
School (CA)



America's independent Schools: Learning, Leading, Achieving.

[www.nais.org/go/leadingedge](http://www.nais.org/go/leadingedge)

# NAIS HONORS LEADING EDGE PROGRAMS FOR 2006



*"We believe independent schools are innovative in a whole host of ways. NAIS has developed the Leading Edge Program to help tell the 'independent school story' to a wider public and to recognize schools that have done exceptionally imaginative things."*

Patrick F. Bassett  
President  
National Association of  
Independent Schools

## Recognizing Excellence in Independent Schools

NAIS introduced the Leading Edge Program in 2003 to provide a forum for independent schools to share their best practices and creative ideas. Leading Edge recognizes NAIS member schools that experiment with new ideas and create model programs. These programs can be adapted and customized by other schools to build successful, sustainable learning environments.

For 2006, NAIS is proud to recognize 12 member schools (at three enrollment levels) for their achievements in these four categories:

- Curriculum Innovation
- Environmental Sustainability
- Equity and Justice Initiatives
- Global Understanding

We have profiled each of the honored schools in these pages, and will highlight their programs at the NAIS Annual Conference, March 1-4, 2006, in Boston, MA. Information about all the programs that have been recognized by The Leading Edge Program also can be found on the NAIS website, [www.nais.org/go/leadingedge](http://www.nais.org/go/leadingedge).

The Leading Edge program is intended to inspire and motivate NAIS member schools to think of new ways to enhance their mission and achieve their goals. We encourage you to contact these innovative schools directly to learn how you can expand upon their ideas and benefit from their experiences.

### *NAIS is looking for more Leading Edge programs to honor in 2007*

What is your school doing to enhance curriculum, promote equity and justice, and integrate environmental sustainability and global education into the classroom? Share your best ideas and you could receive Leading Edge recognition in 2007!

All full and provisional NAIS member schools, new school subscribers, and international subscriber schools are eligible to apply. Applications are open at [www.nais.org/go/leadingedge](http://www.nais.org/go/leadingedge) from August through October 20, 2006.

## Hamilton School at Wheeler

Providence, Rhode Island

Jon Green, Hamilton Director

Dan B. Miller, Head of Wheeler School

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### A SCHOOL WITHIN A SCHOOL

Rather than close the door to students with learning differences (LDs), in 1988 the Wheeler School invested \$1 million to start the Hamilton Lower School as a “school within a school.” This unique program offers specialized instruction in academic classes while combining Hamilton and Wheeler students for art, music, and electives. This allows the program to remediate student weaknesses while simultaneously building and recognizing those areas where students excel (*i.e.* art, music, drama, athletics).

By 1996, the school realized a need to expand its services to include a middle school. Unlike the lower school, which is in a separate building from the Wheeler Lower School, Hamilton Middle School (HMS) is both physically and philosophically in the Wheeler Middle School program and building. The inclusive environment fosters a larger social milieu for all students, as well as better preparing HMS students for the transition to high school.

Though Hamilton (69 students) has its own faculty, the school is completely integrated within Wheeler (800 students). The director of Hamilton reports to the Wheeler head of school and is part of Wheeler’s administrative team. Wheeler prides itself on its innovative teaching style and all faculty — and therefore students — benefit from modeling creative teaching concepts found at Hamilton. And classes at Hamilton, which average eight students per class, closely parallel the curriculum at Wheeler.

So what’s the secret to Hamilton’s success? Certainly, a philosophy that maintains high expectations and holds students accountable for what they have learned is crucial. Cutting-edge approaches such as Orton-Gillingham and Project Read teach to all types of learners: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Focusing on the structure of language, students gradually learn to read and write as they receive immediate feedback. Students use computers and iBooks to help with dyslexia, graphomotor deficits, or slower processing speeds.

The hardest part of the program may be turning students away. Last year, Hamilton received 47 applications for 10 openings. To further help the community, Wheeler founded The Bradford L. Dunn Institute, which, through outreach programs, has trained more than 300 parents, teachers, and students about learning differences.

Today, Hamilton graduates have achieved great academic success: 60 percent have attended non-LD high schools and all but one have matriculated to college.

*“Using the school-within-a-school model, Hamilton is able to remediate student weaknesses, while simultaneously helping students to develop those areas where they can excel.”*

Jon Green,  
Hamilton Director





*“Everything at Westover is about empowering women, so exposing them to nontraditional fields and giving them a place at the table forwards the mission of the school.”*

Ann Pollina, Head of School

## Westover School

Middlebury, Connecticut

Ann Pollina, Head of School

Program Contact: Ellen Twomey, [etwomey@westoverschool.org](mailto:etwomey@westoverschool.org)

## WISE WOMEN

Realizing the dearth of women in the fields of computer science and engineering, the faculty and administration at the Westover School decided to do something proactive about it. Twelve years ago, teachers from the math and science departments coordinated their curricula to create WISE: Women in Science and Engineering. In addition to the rigorous college preparatory program all girls complete at Westover, students in the WISE program engage in hands-on engineering problem-solving strategies and projects, study JavaScript to prepare for the AP computer science exam, and create an independent research project (IRP).

WISE skillfully utilizes two computer labs (one Mac and one PC), as well as electronic, chemical, mechanical, and structural equipment, materials, and tools. Students learn by simulating real-life applications. Full-time director of WISE, Ellen Twomey, runs and teaches the WISE program, which incorporates extracurricular activities, field trips, elective courses, guest speakers, and program mentors.

Westover’s mission can be summed up in the words “empowering women for the future.”

WISE adeptly cultivates important skills for girls to succeed in the traditionally male-dominated fields of computer science and engineering. Beyond the tangible computing skills that can be tested for mastery, WISE includes an interactive dimension with female mentors who work in these fields.

The girls gain confidence, mentor younger girls, and strengthen community ties with “computer deconstructions.” WISE students attend expos for the Girls in Technology Network, a Connecticut statewide effort, largely based in public schools. Here they disassemble a computer to teach middle school girls how a computer functions. Due to the popularity of these computer deconstructions, WISE now trains girls from public magnet schools and other teachers in the process.

Examples of computing and engineering prowess like this have gained the attention of higher education. Students who successfully complete the WISE program are granted automatic admission to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Westover’s strategic partner in engineering education. WISE graduates who pursued higher education in technical fields have already entered the workforce in computer science; industrial design; environmental studies; and nuclear, biomedical, electrical, chemical, and civil engineering.



## Latin School of Chicago

Chicago, Illinois

Linda Hennelly, Lower School Director

Program Contact: Linda Hennelly, [lhennelly@latinschool.org](mailto:lhennelly@latinschool.org)

### COUNSELING WITH CLASS

At the Latin School of Chicago, two lower school counselors actively engage all junior kindergarten through fifth-grade students. Meeting with each class weekly, there is a comprehensive, multidimensional, preventive mental health curriculum. By getting to know every child, the counselors are able to promote healthy social and emotional development, provide a forum for expression and connectedness, and respond to particular needs by offering affinity groups for children and parents.

Cathy Gruber, who has a teaching background, and Aveva Yufit, who trained as a counselor, bring different perspectives to the classroom. With younger children, they read and discuss stories, addressing feelings and developmentally relevant social and emotional issues. Older children consider such issues as peer group dynamics, popularity, moral dilemmas, human sexuality, and making good decisions regarding the use of drugs and alcohol.

Because of their weekly Children's Roundtable meetings, all students know the counselors, and vice versa. This facilitates the counselors' individual work with children and parents. Children feel comfortable requesting meetings with a counselor during lunch or recess. Similarly, when parents call with questions or concerns, they know that the counselor is already well acquainted with their child. In turn, these individual consultations enlighten counselors' Children's Roundtable curriculum planning.

Counselors also plan discussion groups for parents and small groups for children in situations of particular vulnerability. Currently there are groups for children whose parents have divorced and for children dealing with the death of a parent. In addition, short-term friendship groups provide the opportunity to talk with one another about social concerns and to bolster social skills.

Counselors' presence in the classroom enhances teacher-counselor relationships as well. Because counselors experience the dynamics of each classroom first hand, they are better able to appreciate the teachers' experience and thus address classroom and individual issues with a deeper understanding. A real benefit of the Children's Roundtable program is the extent to which counselors and teachers work together to address children's social, emotional, and moral development. It is truly a group effort!



*"The issues we discuss with children don't typically come up in normal school curricula."*

Cathy Gruber,  
Lower School Counselor



## Purnell School

Pottersville, New Jersey

Jenifer Fox, Head of School

Program Contact: Jenifer Fox, [jfox@purnell.org](mailto:jfox@purnell.org)

## BUILDING ON STRENGTHS AND TALENTS

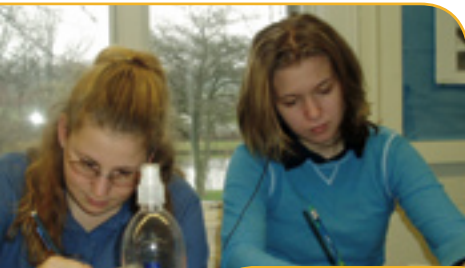
Each Wednesday, the Purnell School places a different student in the spotlight. On these “Affinities Wednesdays,” LCDs project a student profile highlighting the student’s interests, strengths, and talents to the entire school. Then the school community — teachers, students, administrators — has the opportunity to brainstorm ideas to help this girl and her teachers find ways to connect her interests and passions to her learning. And this kind of positive attention has each girl excited to find herself in the spotlight sharing her unique abilities, while simultaneously building a sense of community.

“You could ask anyone at the school what is a particular girl’s talent, and they’ll tell you,” says Jenifer Fox, Head of School.

Purnell was founded with the mission of preparing girls with learning or social differences for college, the central philosophy being that different does not mean “less than.” Three years ago, the school decided to further the message that by rejecting labels such as “learning disabled” and focusing on strengths and passions, they could help all students go further than anyone imagined. After consulting with All Kinds of Minds, Purnell developed its own Affinities Program. There’s now an affinities coordinator who observes students to devise creative ways to leverage a student’s strengths. Students look forward to taking part in their own “demystification”: a process where every student at Purnell is involved in giving input and receiving feedback about her learning challenges and strengths.

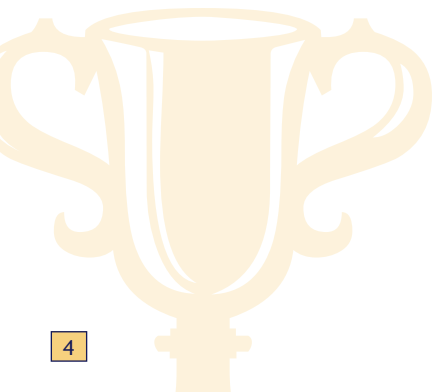
Earmarking a \$1.1 million McCord Grauer endowment to advance the program, Purnell has committed to building on the talents of its students and advancing the professional development of its faculty. Teachers use differentiated instruction within the established curriculum to reach every student.

And the results speak for themselves. Students and parents express high degrees of satisfaction with the program. One hundred percent of graduates gain admission to higher education — some to Ivy League schools — many who were told earlier in life they should not plan on going to college. SAT scores have risen, on average, 100 points per student. Faculty retention has increased, and student retention has jumped 19 percent. Purnell has witnessed a 30 percent gain in enrollment since the program began.



*“What makes this program work is that the whole school is equally invested in this program, from teachers to admission officers to students to the school nurse.”*

Jenifer Fox, Head of School



## Marin Academy

San Rafael, California

Bodie Brizendine, Head of School

Program Contact: John Grennan, [jgrennan@ma.org](mailto:jgrennan@ma.org)

## CONFERENCE ON DEMOCRACY

It all began in the spring of 2004 with a conversation in the lunch line between a history teacher and a science teacher. Wouldn't it be great to look at the upcoming national election through a cross-curricular lens? Let's bring in major speakers and involve the whole school in examining political and social justice issues.

What resulted is the two-day Conference on Democracy, first held in October 2004, and now an annual event at Marin Academy. Focusing on equity and social justice issues, it includes eight sessions; at least one all-school assembly with a keynote speaker; and an event at night, such as a film. Planning lasts all year. It's more than just an extended part of the curriculum; it furthers the school's mission to challenge "each person to accept the responsibilities posed by education in a democratic society."

The faculty and administration (and parents) cultivate the entire community for guest speakers to discuss such issues as voter rights and participatory democracy; the impact of educational inequity on democracy; youth involvement in political activism; and the intersection of sustainable ecology, social justice, and the economy. Panelists have included former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Hass; leading anti-nuclear activist Helen Caldicott; Ronald Takaki, National Book Award-winning author known for his multicultural history of the United States; professors; journalists; and community leaders. Students get a look at important issues affecting day-to-day decisions of local officials, as well as challenges confronting global leaders.

Students have served as expert panelists, too, inspiring their peers to further activism. Other students question the panelists, relating large-scale issues directly to what can be done at the school. Several students have interviewed the guest speakers and written articles for the school's annual report and magazine.

In addition to devoting class time to the Conference, the faculty has supported it by assigning their students articles from guest speakers and tying them into class work. Once they started this open discourse, faculty and students realized how the natural poetry of Hass relates to biology, and found themes of equity and justice woven throughout the works of Shakespeare.

*"This goes beyond interdisciplinary. It's a whole school vision."*

Bodie Brizendine, Head of School



## University School of Nashville

Nashville, Tennessee

Vincent W. Durnan Jr., Director of University School of Nashville

Jeff Greenfield, Head of the Middle School

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### LITTLE ROCK HEROES: A FIFTH-GRADE JOURNEY



Dee Hicks was a high school student at the University School of Nashville (USN) in 1957 when the “Little Rock Nine” integrated Central High School in nearby Arkansas. Today she is the fifth-grade social studies team leader for her alma mater, working with Susan Cavitch and other colleagues to create a dynamic English/social studies program that invites students to experience this defining moment in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.



The Little Rock Heroes project grew out of a fifth-grade “heroes” unit. Students wanted to know more than the one-sentence description in their textbooks about the Little Rock Nine, the nine African-American students who enrolled at the previously segregated Central High School just four years after the monumental 1953 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education*. As a result, the teachers combined the study of the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Era with the heroes unit.

*“That’s what the best curriculum is — seeds of it exist within the kids’ minds.*

Jeff Greenfield,  
Head of the Middle School

The primary goal of the program is for each student to experience the era as if he or she were actually there, to create a richer context for history. Students examine archived newspapers, view video clips, and study the progression of U.S. laws.

Twelfth-graders work with the younger students to present mock Supreme Court cases. They read *Watsons Go to Birmingham 1963* and *Warriors Don’t Cry*, written by Melba Pattillo Beals, one of the Little Rock Nine. In addition to discussion, in-class journaling and poetry writing is a way for students to reflect during the project. Members of the entire school community, parents included, flock to hear Minnijean Brown, one of the Little Rock Nine, speak at USN. Using digital cameras, the fifth-graders document Ms. Brown’s visit and post it on a website.

The cornerstone of this experience is a trip to Central High School’s museum, a National Historic Site, and across the street to the steps of Central High School, where troops once guarded the brave, pioneering nine students. About one-third of the students’ parents journey with the team. In near-deafening silence, students perch on the steps, chronicling their personal reactions to the event. One year, the visit occurred just as Central High classes were dismissed, jolting USN fifth-graders back to present day, where the Central student body is thoroughly integrated and rather diverse. A study in contrast.

Creators of the program say, “The hope is to pass on the torch of social conscience to a new generation of active learners by showing how young people can effect significant change in society.”

## Montessori School of Maui

*Makawao, Hawaii*

Cynthia Winans-Burns, Head of School

Program Contact: Heather Hardcastle, [cwburns@momi.org](mailto:cwburns@momi.org)

### THE LIVING CLASSROOM

What began with the construction of a simple community garden and the head of school encouraging teachers to look beyond the confines of the classroom to the entire campus has become an all-encompassing theme of sustainability for the Montessori School of Maui (MOMI). For nine years, the Earth Education and Living Classroom program has guided students, faculty, and administration to live in harmony with environmental sustainability.

MOMI follows the mission set forth by Dr. Maria Montessori, which includes the goal “. . . to foster the development of a complete human being, oriented to the environment, and adapted to his or her time, place, and culture.” Viewing environmental sustainability as one of the most salient topics of our time, the school developed the Living Classroom program in an effort to educate its entire learning community. With help from grants, the school has hired a part-time naturalist, a master gardener, and a sustainability coordinator.

But these experts do not operate in a vacuum. The entire community gets involved, learning, contemplating, and assessing sustainability. There is now an official MOMI Environmental Policy, a student-led Recycling Committee, and student-run gardens devoted to a farmers’ market. Collaboration with parents, neighbors, and local architects, engineers, and energy experts led to the founding of a Sustainable Campus Design Committee and the Guidelines of Sustainability and Curriculum. These guidelines now steer the current campus expansion, using all phases of construction as teachable moments for the school community.

When it designed the Community Garden, MOMI sought to honor its host culture. After consulting with Hawaiian *kumu* (“teachers”), it built an *‘auwai* (“ditch”) with lava rocks to constantly circulate water and slowly flood the *lo`i* (“patch”) of *kalo* (“taro”) root. It also implemented energy-saving tools like a wind-powered generator to pump water for this pesticide-free campus. The four new classrooms in the expansion will each open completely to a large lanai, thus drastically reducing dependence on electricity.

Children at the school rave about the program. Almost unanimously, they call the garden their favorite place. Here students participate in projects like caring for worms inside the vermiculture bin and collecting more than 30,000 seeds from the native wiliwili trees, which are threatened by a parasitic wasp. They build birdhouses from recycled materials and study the lifecycle of ladybugs.

One six-year-old summed up the success of the Living Classroom:  
“I will love nature forever.”



*“There should be recognition that the whole campus environment is your classroom.”*

Cynthia Winans-Burns,  
Head of School



*“We try to open everyone’s eyes... environmental sustainability is not just science—you can write a story, read a book, play music, perform theater, or study the history of it.”*

Dean Goodwin, Director of Environmental Education



## Kimball Union Academy

Meriden, New Hampshire

Michael J. Schafer, Head of School

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## SUSTAINABILITY IN DAILY LIFE

Kimball Union Academy launched its environmental education program in 1995 to provide students with the scientific principles, concepts, and methodologies essential to understanding the interrelationships of the natural world. An inquiry-based approach encourages students to think for themselves and invest in outcomes relevant to the environment. Working across the curriculum and with other academic departments, Director of Environmental Education Dean Goodwin, who started this program when he came to KUA 10 years ago, has developed classes in marine science, environmental studies, AP environmental science, environmental literature, and current environmental issues.

After Dr. Goodwin began teaching advanced environmental science, student demand for the course increased so much that the department hired an additional teacher. Goodwin credits the success of this program to its relevance to students’ everyday lives. Students hear about the importance of the environment on a daily basis in the news, especially with the recent spate of natural disasters around the globe.

Guest speakers for the program have included award-winning authors and Grammy-winning musicians. Students collaborated with a visiting scholar to write, produce, and perform a play focused on environmental sustainability. Students really tune into the topic that is not only threaded throughout the KUA curriculum, but also throughout their daily lives.

With the motto “No one can do everything, but everyone can do something,” Goodwin focuses not only on major environmental issues, but also on ways each member of the community can make a difference.

“Students are amazed that something as simple as turning off the water when they brush their teeth can have an impact,” says Goodwin. “Understanding that they really can make a difference, even by starting with something that simple, empowers and encourages them.”

Plans for the future include establishing a base camp up on Snow Mountain, a pristine 800-acre tract of land donated by a friend of the school. A base camp would enable students to live on the mountain for days at a time, cooking their own food, building fires, observing the stars, learning to track, and more. During the summer 2006, KUA will host an integrated environmental studies program for students and teachers focusing on “Stewardship for Sustainability: Leadership for the Future.” The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration awarded a nearly \$750,000 appropriation for the summer institute.

## Phillips Exeter Academy

*Exeter, New Hampshire*

Thomas E. Hassan, Acting Principal

Program contact: Thomas E. Hassan, [thassan@exeter.edu](mailto:thassan@exeter.edu)

### SHARING THE LOAD

Four years ago, there were only a handful of individuals actively promoting environmental sustainability at Phillips Exeter Academy. This group decided to approach the schools' leaders about making a greater difference. Rather than a few committed environmentalists doing the bulk of the work, why not make sustainability a truly shared effort?

Today, 80 student environmental proctors oversee recycling and conservation in dorms and classrooms. Fourteen faculty members participated in a week-long environmental education colloquium in 2005. An environmental education fellow now coordinates sustainability efforts. Exeter's dining services started purchasing locally grown and organic foods. A Campus Environmental Task Force (ETF) has spearheaded such efforts as installing energy-efficient light bulbs across campus, working with the custodial staff to fine-tune recycling procedures, and coordinating education outreach.

A parallel ETF made up of trustees ensures that sustainability is part of broader institutional policy. The Environmental Mission Statement drafted in 2004 demonstrates this commitment. In a two-pronged approach, the Warner Fund helps underwrite better planning and management of Exeter's own environment, and the Niebling Fund requires students to evaluate environmental proposals and make funding decisions. Guided by this vision, the school has drilled wells on campus and installed a condenser at the heating station to reduce its impact on the town water supply. The school has saved 1.5 million gallons of water and with its energy savings has earned a \$30,355 rebate from its public utility company's energy conservation program.

Students play an active role in sustainability. Madison Condon, as a senior at Exeter, designed a sample process to produce biodiesel fuel (nontoxic and completely biodegradable) using waste cooking oil from dining halls. This winter, students in the chemistry of the environment course will study this process.

Each winter, students compete in the Green Cup Challenge. In past years, the Challenge had 10 dorms on campus vie to see which dorm could reduce energy consumption the most. For 2006, there's an added twist: The entire Exeter community will compete with The Lawrenceville School (NJ) and Northfield Mount Hermon School (MA). This healthy "competition" will allow the schools to share best practices. The outcome—saving energy locally and globally—aligns with an Exeter core value: "not for oneself."



*"Our program is not a top-down approach and it's not strictly grassroots. The combination of the two is the key to our success."*

Thomas E. Hassan, Acting Principal



*“International education is critical to our ability to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring leaders — leaders who help create a better and more peaceful world through global understanding and respect.”*

Randy Stevens, Head of School



St. Timothy's School  
Stevenson, Maryland

Randy Stevens, Head of School

Program Contact: Randy Stevens, [rstevens@sttims-school.org](mailto:rstevens@sttims-school.org)

## GLOBAL IMMERSION PROGRAM

Educating global citizens is nothing new to St. Timothy's: In the 1960s, juniors traveled across borders in the school's Latin American Summer Program. In the 21st century, the board of trustees' strategic plan focused on international education, leading to the creation of the Global Immersion Program (GIP) as a stepping-stone to implement the International Baccalaureate Program (IB) in fall 2006.

Today, the GIP integrates the school's curriculum with experiential learning. In 2004, after the girls read *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, author Azar Nafisi visited the school to talk about human rights, political freedom, and imagination. In the spring, Sheila Sisulu, deputy director of the World Food Programme, visited the campus to speak about poverty and AIDS. Next, students embarked on a South African Sojourn, where they carefully considered the impacts of poverty, AIDS, women and leadership, and sustainability (and discussed these issues with Archbishop Desmond Tutu!). A scholarship program ensured that any student interested could participate.

The visit didn't end once the girls stepped off the airplane onto U.S. soil; St. Timothy's students used the school computers to continue to talk with students in South Africa as they collaborated on the NAIS Challenge 20/20 Program.

Students also visited a local public middle school to help educate students about South Africa.

Currently, students are preparing a presentation for the entire school regarding the genocide in Rwanda. Paul Rusesabagina, inspiration for the movie *Hotel Rwanda*, will then speak at the school in February 2006 about how the heroic actions of one person can make a difference.

The success of the program is contagious. The number of students who want to travel to Peru this summer has doubled since the initial trip to South Africa. Students have attended summits and educational sessions at the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund. In addition, students have visited various missions of the UN to learn about different countries. Students now regularly participate in a Model UN and an Amnesty International Club. Together with the Cathedral of Incarnation in Baltimore, the girls have spearheaded a fund-raising project to support an orphanage they visited in South Africa.

The GIP helps prepare students for the IB program, but it's much more than that. It's a way to fulfill St. Timothy's mission: "to prepare girls to assume positions of leadership with moral focus and courage, intellectual honesty and acumen, and the confidence to act as responsible and ethical global citizens."

## Glen Urquhart School

Beverly Farms, Massachusetts

Raymond Nance, Head of School

Program Contact: Barbara Kelley, [bkelly@gus.org](mailto:bkelly@gus.org)

## CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

When the opportunity arose for students at the Glen Urquhart School to immerse themselves in a different culture and provide services to children in a developing nation, the faculty and staff quickly embraced it. One parent, a pediatrician, had visited the Rancho Santa Fe orphanage in rural Honduras and told the school of his experience. So in the fall of 2004, Glen Urquhart began a project to aid the children in the orphanage and to teach its own students invaluable lessons along the way. Now, an all-year project culminates with an eighth-grade trip to the Rancho Santa Fe orphanage over spring break each year.

All Glen Urquhart students study Spanish from kindergarten through fifth grade, and may choose to continue study in sixth through eighth grades. In all the Spanish classes, students learn about Honduras, keep abreast of the eighth-graders' trip plans, and create letters and art to be hand delivered to the children. Under the supervision of Spanish teacher and program coordinator, Barbara Kelley, participating students organize a school-wide collection of materials needed by the orphanage. Last year, shoes and sheets topped the list; this year, the children require necessities like underwear, socks, pajamas, sneakers, and money for medicine.

The program has created new motivation for language mastery in Spanish class; none of the children in the orphanage speak English. Once the students reach the orphanage after witnessing first-hand the poverty from which these children come, they experience the unexpected joys of simple living. No TV, computer games, or consumerism. Working hard, the students spend nine days helping to cook three meals a day for more than 600 people, making 3,000 tortillas from scratch daily, working on the farm, performing maintenance work, helping in the medical clinic, and volunteering in the preschool.

It's a brand new world for these students. They come with their own sense of family to this non-adoptive Honduran orphanage committed to educating and raising the orphans, and then witness a tremendous community of 600 very happy children who are physically and emotionally safe, despite conditions of abject poverty. The students return to campus with a commitment to helping others and an understanding of their own privilege.



*“This is an opportunity for middle school students to forget about their daily problems and step into a completely different world. They’re empowered.”*

Barbara Kelley, Spanish Teacher and Program Coordinator



## La Jolla Country Day School

La Jolla, California

Judith Glickman, Head of School

Program Contact: Susan Nordenger, [snordenger@ljcds.org](mailto:snordenger@ljcds.org)

### KIDS TO KIDS

In a program designed to instill in students a strong sense of volunteerism and philanthropy, La Jolla Country Day School (LJCDS) has more than accomplished its mission to prepare students for a lifetime of intellectual exploration, personal growth, and social responsibility.

To create K2K (Kids to Kids), LJCDS teamed up with Project Concern International (PCI), an international nonprofit health and development agency that saves the lives of children by preventing disease and providing access to clean water and nutritious food. The partnership has turned a simple trip to Nicaragua into an all-encompassing experience for the entire school.

K2K links classes in the United States with PCI's school feeding project in rural Nicaragua that supports 20,000 students in 230 schools and surrounding communities. LJCDS sophomores met weekly for six months to prepare for their October 2004 trip to Jinotega, Nicaragua. Over the summer, they read poetry by Ruben Dario, a book by the founder of PCI, and a cultural guidebook. The entire school pitched in to sew 200 book bags to give to Nicaraguan school children and bought \$500 worth of school supplies to fill the bags. Demonstrating commitment and initiative, students spearheaded fund-raising efforts to donate \$900 to one school to make improvements.

The cornerstone of K2K was the trip to Jinotega, where students witnessed first-hand the importance of development agencies and how they work to create sustainable change. LJCDS students visited a well baby clinic, helped with a school feeding program, and worked with teachers and parents to rebuild a school. When LJCDS students installed a water system for a school, they shared the uncontainable joy of the children splashing running water on their faces—a simple pleasure we might normally take for granted.

The globetrotters have shared their invaluable experiences through presentations to the PCI Board of Directors and at the 2005 NAIS Annual Conference in San Diego. They have started fund raising for a return trip in May 2007 for their senior project and are mentoring the new group of travelers who depart for Jinotega in March 2006.



*“It’s not something you can teach in the classroom... You just have to experience it to know what sustainable development work is and the power of it.”*

Judith Glickman,  
Head of School



# NAIS LEADING EDGE HONOREES

## 2003

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Norman Howard School (NY)  
Louise S. McGehee School (LA)  
Mounds Park Academy (MN)

### CURRICULUM INNOVATION

The Caedmon School (NY)  
The Madeira School (VA)  
Dwight-Englewood School (NJ)

### EQUITY AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES

The Chestnut Hill School (MA)  
San Francisco University High School (CA)  
Germantown Friends School (PA)

### TECHNOLOGY

Cold Spring School (CT)  
St. Matthew's Parish School (CA)  
Northfield Mount Hermon School (MA)

## 2004

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Ransom Everglades School (FL)  
St. Paul's Episcopal School (CA)  
The Unquowa School (CT)

### CURRICULUM INNOVATION

Atlanta International School (GA)  
Brooklyn Heights Montessori School (NY)  
Hyde School (ME)

### EQUITY AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Georgetown Day School (DC)  
Gordon School (RI)  
Atrium School (MA)

### TECHNOLOGY

Montclair Kimberley Academy (NJ)  
The Urban School of San Francisco (CA)  
The Children's School (CT)

## 2005

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS

La Salle College High School (PA)  
Wildwood School (CA)  
Sonoma Academy (CA)

### CURRICULUM INNOVATION

Kentucky Country Day School (KY)  
Cincinnati Country Day School (OH)  
Darrow School (NY)

### EQUITY AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES

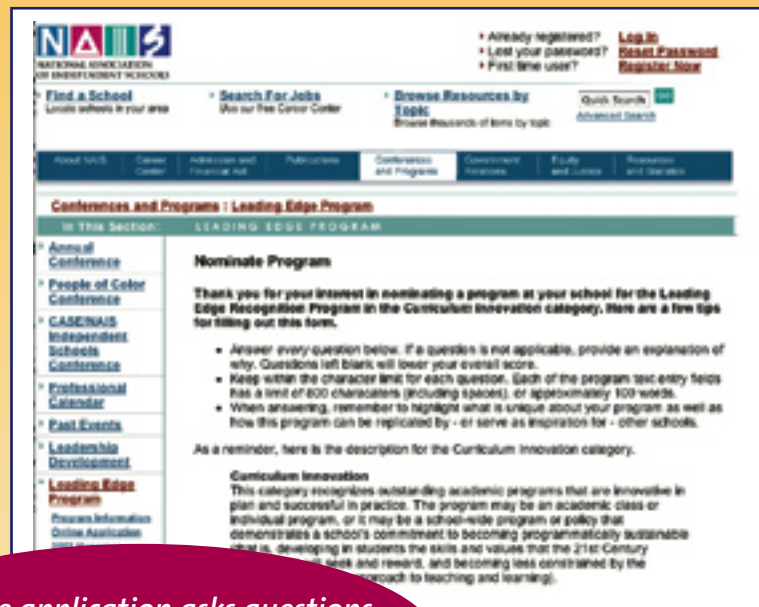
Sidwell Friends School (DC)  
The Doane Stuart School (NY)  
Lesley Ellis School (MA)

### TECHNOLOGY

Pace Academy (GA)  
Kent Place School (NJ)  
Saint Mark's School (CA)  
The Gillispie School (CA)

# IS YOUR SCHOOL ON THE LEADING EDGE?

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The screenshot shows the NAIIS website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the NAIIS logo and links for 'Already registered?', 'Lost your password?', and 'First time user?'. Below this is a search bar with options to 'Find a School', 'Search For Jobs', and 'Browse Resources by Topic'. The main content area is titled 'Conferences and Programs: Leading Edge Program'. On the left, there is a sidebar with a list of conferences and programs, including 'Annual Conference', 'People of Color Conference', 'CASENIAIS Independent Schools Conference', 'Professional Calendar', 'Fall Events', 'Leadership Development', and 'Leading Edge Program'. The main content area is titled 'Nominate Program' and contains a thank you message and a list of instructions for nominating a program. The instructions include: 'Answer every question below. If a question is not applicable, provide an explanation of why. Questions left blank will lower your overall score.', 'Keep within the character limit for each question. Each of the program text entry fields has a limit of 800 characters (including spaces), or approximately 100 words.', and 'When answering, remember to highlight what is unique about your program, as well as how this program can be replicated by - or serve as inspiration for - other schools.' Below the instructions, there is a reminder and a description of the 'Curriculum Innovation' category: 'This category recognizes outstanding academic programs that are innovative in plan and successful in practice. The program may be an academic class or individual program, or it may be a school-wide program or policy that demonstrates a school's commitment to becoming programmatically sustainable (that is, developing in students the skills and values that the 21st Century work and reward, and becoming less constrained by the research to teaching and learning).'

*A simple application asks questions about the program goals, implementation, and results.*



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