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COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Newsletter of the Core Knowledge® Foundation
Volume 16, Number 2, June/July 2003

Welcome to the first electronic issue of the Core Knowledge Foundation's newsletter. You have been sent this newsletter because you have signed up for it, attended workshops and/or conferences, purchased materials, or are in some other way a friend of Core Knowledge. If for any reason you do not wish to receive this newsletter simply click the "Unsubscribe" link at the bottom of this email. If you wish to continue receiving this newsletter, please tell us about yourself by clicking on the "Update Your Interests" link, also located at the bottom of this email.

Feature Articles

- **New K-8 Director in Arkansas**
- **Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge--of Words and the World**, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
- **National Conference in Phoenix Draws 2,300**
- **The Vocabulary Deficit**, by Andrew Wolf
- **We're Surveying Our Teachers**

Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge--of Words and the World



While educators have made good progress in teaching children to decode (that is, turn print into speech sounds), it's disheartening that we still have not overcome the "fourth-grade slump" in reading comprehension. We're finding that even though the vast majority of our youngest readers can manage simple texts, many students--particularly those from low-income families--struggle when it comes time in grade four to tackle

more advanced academic texts.

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National Conference in Phoenix Draws 2,300

Educators and policymakers from school districts and government agencies throughout the United States attended the 12th Core Knowledge Conference in Phoenix, Arizona on March 6-8, 2003.

"What an awesome experience it was to be able to learn more about Core Knowledge with 2,300 other



New K-8 Director in Arkansas



The Core Knowledge Foundation has recently created a new position: K-8 Project Director for the Arkansas Delta.

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teachers and administrators!" said Anastasia Mitchell, third-grade teacher at St. John's Lutheran School in Bakersfield, California.

[Bookstore: Price Changes](#)

[More on the National Conference. . . »](#)

The Vocabulary Deficit



Why do poor children have so much trouble learning to read? One of our nation's great educational theorists, E.D. Hirsch Jr., and a number of other researchers, writing in the current edition of *American Educator*, the magazine of the American Federation of Teachers, have an answer. They present a compelling argument that the primary reason these children fall behind is a huge

vocabulary deficit. This deficit puts them at an increasing disadvantage as they get older and the material they must read becomes more complex. Mr. Hirsch is the author of "The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them," the book I generously purchased for the schools chancellor, Joel Klein, when he assumed his job last summer. Unfortunately, Mr. Klein seems to have lost his copy. None of the educational decisions he has made so far reflect an understanding of Mr. Hirsch's sound ideas.

[Full Story »](#)

We're Surveying Our Teachers

Teachers, let us know what textbooks have or have not helped you! Please take a moment to fill in our survey.



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New K-8 Director in Arkansas

The Core Knowledge Foundation has recently created a new position: K-8 Project Director for the Arkansas Delta. Joining Susan Smith in her work as Arkansas Delta Preschool Director will be Judy Sisson. Judy's responsibilities will include aligning Core Knowledge with Arkansas state standards, helping teachers create day-by-day lesson plans, and assisting teachers' efforts to raise test scores in the Delta region for grades K-8.



The Delta region is known not only for its rich history, but also for its enduring poverty. It is therefore an ideal location to implement Core Knowledge, a curriculum designed to ensure that even the most disadvantaged students receive a rich education. The Core Knowledge preschool program, first introduced to the Delta five years ago, has been highly successful. Presently, over 62 Delta preschool classes are implementing the *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence* with the guidance of Preschool Director, Susan Smith.

Sisson, an Arkansas native, currently lives in Little Rock with her husband and their three daughters. She has extensive experience in the Arkansas school system, having taught grades K, 3, and 4. She is also experienced with Core Knowledge, having written and presented units at several National Conferences.

Sisson is enthusiastic and excited about her new undertaking, as are the members of the Core Knowledge staff who have witnessed the positive outcomes of Susan Smith's work at the preschool level. When asked how she felt about becoming the Project Director Sisson said, "I am extremely honored that I was chosen from so many qualified candidates and I am extremely excited. I have seen first hand what the Core Knowledge curriculum can do and I can't wait to share it with others."

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Dr. Hirsch's Article was originally published in *American Educator*. You can download the full text version in Adobe Acrobat by clicking [here](#).

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For updates on the 13th National Conference in At

National Conference in Phoenix Draws 2,300



Educators and policymakers from school districts and government agencies throughout the United States attended the 12th Core Knowledge Conference in Phoenix, Arizona on March 6-8, 2003.

"What an awesome experience it was to be able to learn more about Core Knowledge with 2,300 other teachers and administrators!" said Anastasia Mitchell, third-grade teacher at St. John's Lutheran School in Bakersfield, California.

"Although they were still somewhat tired and dazed at the amount of information they had been exposed to in the three days of the conference," reported the community newsletter of Franklin School in Corvallis, Oregon, teachers Jennifer England (fourth grade), Stacey Free (second grade), Lisa Tyrrell (first grade), and Nancy Stouder (sixth grade) said their

impressions were: "It was great! Very good—very beneficial. Exciting and useful!"

All four teachers agreed that Dennis Denenberg's "Hooray for Heroes!" was their favorite session. Denenberg, a former school teacher, elementary school principal, and assistant superintendent, is the author of three books and numerous articles on heroes. Denenberg was one of over 30 nationally known educators, researchers, and authors who presented sessions geared to deepen the background knowledge of classroom teachers.

J. Rufus Fears, professor of classics at the University of Oklahoma, spoke on "The Last Days of Pompeii"; Louis Bloomfield, professor of physics at the University of Virginia, explained "The Physics of Everyday Life." And Diane Cumming Persellin, professor of music education at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, presented "Infusing More Rhythm and Melody into Your Teaching: The Elements of Music Across the Curriculum."

Also, nearly 80 teachers shared units and lesson plans for their colleagues, such as "The Civil War and African-American Spirituals"; "Poetry Power"; "A Cross-Sectional View of the Earth"; and "Picasso: Artist Extraordinaire."

School administrators hosted sessions on "Sustaining Core Knowledge: A 3-Point Plan"; "Parents as Full Partners"; "Positive Recognition: Whose Job Is It?"; and others.

In the exhibit area, 43 exhibitors and vendors from the Great Books Foundation Cricket Magazine, SRA/McGraw-Hill, Pearson Learning, and many others welcomed conference attendees to their booths.

The keynote speaker for this year's conference was renowned educator Jaime Escalante. Mr. Escalante, a native of Bolivia and a math teacher for 46 years, shared his experiences working with disadvantaged minority students in California. Escalante's success as a teacher is the subject of the acclaimed 1988 film *Stand and Deliver*, as well as the book *Escalante: The Best Teacher in America*. He was inducted into the National Teacher's Hall of Fame in 1999.

Core Knowledge Founder E.D. Hirsch, Jr., shared his ideas about what the country needs to do to improve reading comprehension in young children. For a synopsis of those ideas, click [here](#).

The conference kicked off with one- and two-day Preschool Institutes on March 3-5. Topics included "Autonomy, Social Skills, and Work Habits"; "Building Children's Oral Language Skills"; "Mathematics and Number Sense"; and "Scientific Reasoning and Knowledge"; among others.

PreK-8 sessions began on Thursday, March 6. Thursday's sessions are always of special interest to educators who are considering implementing Core Knowledge, are about to implement, or have recently implemented.

At the Preschool level, an introduction to the Core Knowledge Preschool program began the day, followed by more preschool sessions on topics including a typical day in a Core Knowledge preschool classroom, lesson planning, assessment, strategies for mentoring preschool teachers, and parent involvement programs.

Other Thursday sessions were divided into three strands: "Introduction to the Core Knowledge Program"; "Sustaining Core Knowledge"; and "Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)."

Some 200 educators boarded chartered buses waiting near the conference hall on Thursday morning and visited Core Knowledge schools in the area: Grayhawk and Pinnacle Peak Elementary Schools, Mountain Trail Middle School, and Challenge Charter School.

Friday featured a full slate of content sessions on Core Knowledge topics conducted by specialists, scholars, and authors. These content sessions are designed to broaden teachers' knowledge of topics found in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, leading to increased teacher confidence and enhanced effectiveness in the classroom.

On Friday afternoon, at the start of the General Session, students from Challenge Charter School in Phoenix sang under the direction of fifth-grade teacher, Kim Ruckh. Their songs described the accomplishments of inventors and scientists in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*.

"I walked into the ballroom where our students were to perform for the first time on Thursday afternoon," Ruckh said. "I took one look around and said, 'Wow, this room is huge!' I knew right then that we had a huge task in front of us."

"Friday came and everyone was nervous. Anticipation was in the air. The music started and our students took the stage. The result was amazing! Not only did our students not 'freeze' in front of the crowd, but they stood up on that stage and really shone!" Ruckh said.

"Throughout Friday and Saturday, we had numerous people approach us and tell us how impressed they were with our presentation and our students," said Ruckh. "Several Core Knowledge staff members congratulated us on our performance, including E. D. Hirsch. He autographed one of our props with the words, 'Great Performance.'"

On Saturday, teachers from across the country shared their lessons on selected Core Knowledge topics from all grade levels.

Many schools make attending the National Conference an annual event. Said Holly Hultgren, principal of Superior Elementary School in Superior, Colorado, "Every year Superior Elementary School attempts to help send Core Knowledge teachers to attend the annual National Core Knowledge Conference by paying for all of the conference costs including purchase of teaching materials. All of our teachers who have attended the conference felt the knowledge and experience gained directly enhanced their teaching and student learning."

Next year's conference is slated for March 4-6, 2004 in Atlanta at the Marriot Marquis. The main conference will be preceded by the Pre-Conference Preschool Institutes, March 1-3. The theme of the conference is "The Power of Words: Bridging the Knowledge Gap." More information is available on the Foundation's web site at www.coreknowledge.org or by calling (434) 977-7550.

Move your cursor over the image below to see and hear Janice Campbell, Lorraine Rice, Georgette Douglas, and Sandra Benavides of Holt Elementary in Durham, NC give a presentation entitled "Music in Words."



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The Vocabulary Deficit

by Andrew Wolf, *The New York Sun*

May 2, 2003

Why do poor children have so much trouble learning to read? One of our nation's great educational theorists, E.D. Hirsch Jr., and a number of other researchers, writing in the current edition of *American Educator*, the magazine of the American Federation of Teachers, have an answer. They present a compelling argument that the primary reason these children fall behind is a huge vocabulary deficit. This deficit puts them at an increasing disadvantage as they get older and the material they must read becomes more complex. Mr. Hirsch is the author of "The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them," the book I generously purchased for the schools chancellor, Joel Klein, when he assumed his job last summer. Unfortunately, Mr. Klein seems to have lost his copy. None of the educational decisions he has made so far reflect an understanding of Mr. Hirsch's sound ideas.



According to Mr. Hirsch, "A 12th grade student who scores well enough on the verbal portion of the SAT to get into a selective college knows between 60,000 and 100,000 words." If we average this out to 80,000 words, and assume that the period of vocabulary acquisition of our high school senior is the 15 years between age 2 and 17, our student needs to learn an average of fifteen words a day. This is not going to happen in school alone. "Most vocabulary words," Mr. Hirsch argues, result "incidentally, from massive immersion in the world of language and knowledge."

The shortfall in vocabulary is easy enough to explain. A study by well-regarded researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley, which also appears in the current issue of *American Educator*, concludes that the number of words children hear addressed to them increases dramatically with family income. A child of professionals is likely to hear as many as 50 million words by age 4. The child of a welfare parent may be exposed to just a quarter of that number.

This is an oversimplification, though. The situation is actually worse. Children in higher-income homes hear words of higher quality, and many more of those words are designed to give encouragement. By age 3, a child from a poor household can face a 30 million word gap compared to children from better-off homes. This deficit severely hampers poor children's potential for academic success.

Unfortunately, the reading programs in place and those being implemented later this year in New York City don't address the issue of vocabulary. So, what can be done to remedy the situation? A number of strategies are discussed by Mr. Hirsch and his colleagues, but the most promising is a return to content in the classroom.

In many American schools, two or more hours are devoted each day to "literacy." Most of this time goes to waste. Children are taught "reading strategies," such as "inferencing," predicting, classifying, and "looking for the main idea." These are devices designed not to increase specific knowledge, but to increase test scores, independent of real knowledge.

Mr. Hirsch advises that most of this period be devoted to activities that "foster vocabulary, domain knowledge and fluency." He writes, "Such knowledge could be conveyed through read-alouds, well-conceived vocabulary instruction, and a variety of cumulative activities that immerse children in word and world knowledge."

"Domain knowledge" is the threshold level of knowledge needed to understand a topic. Mr. Hirsch uses the example of a newspaper article on baseball. If you know nothing of the game, you can't comprehend a sentence such as: "Jones sacrificed and knocked in a run." The more domain knowledge acquired, the easier it becomes to read and understand a wider variety of material.

The central thesis of Mr. Hirsch's philosophy is that in today's schools, the teaching of the kind of specific knowledge you need to become a fully literate individual is woefully inadequate. The texts and literature used in most American elementary schools are, for the most part, of a trivial nature. There is no shortage of material on topics like pets and sharing, but little on history, geography, and science.

One solution is to vastly increase the amount of non-fiction reading material available to children in our classrooms. There is no reason why content knowledge can't be integrated into the language-arts curriculum. Putting content back into the classroom just might bring an end to the horror stories of children who can't locate the Pacific Ocean on a map or identify the combatants in World War II.

Unfortunately, we have heard nothing from Mr. Klein, the deputy chancellor for instruction, Diana Lam, the 10 regional superintendents, or anyone else in the new Tweed Ring, about restoring content-based curriculum.

It is significant that this dialogue is emanating from the AFT. Exploring these issues is in the best tradition of the former head of the AFT, the late Albert Shanker, a union leader who took the task of advancing his profession as seriously as protecting the interests of his members. Mr. Shanker was an enthusiastic supporter of Mr. Hirsch, and served on the board of directors of Mr. Hirsch's Core Knowledge Foundation. The current AFT president, Sandra Feldman, occupies that seat today. Any organization that has room on its board for Ms. Feldman and the astute educational historian Diane Ravitch must be on the right track.

That a teachers union is willing to challenge the progressive orthodoxy that currently drives instruction is a hopeful sign. Those who view the unions as implacable defenders of the status quo ought to carefully study the contents of *American Educator*, which is available online, at the AFT's Web site. This could well be the middle ground on which to base the movement for real reform of our schools—from the classroom on up, rather than from the Tweed Courthouse on down.



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How compatible are your textbooks (and other resources) with the *Core Knowledge[®]* Sequence?

ALL ITEMS IN RED ARE REQUIRED! YOUR SURVEY WILL NOT TRANSMIT IF ALL REQUIRED FIELDS ARE NOT FILLED IN.

Name

School

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E-mail

Subject Area *Example: Science*

Title of textbook and/or resource *Example: Windows On Science*

Grade Levels *Example 1-5*

Publisher *Example: Optical Data Corporation*

Rating (1=low, 5=high) *Example: 4*

Comments:

You may submit the Textbook Survey as often as you like. We hope to receive

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NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

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National Review 5/5/03

Reviewer Cites Core Knowledge as Prime Example of True Educational Progress

In his lengthy review of *Getting It Wrong from the Beginning: Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget*, by Kieran Egan, M. D. Aeschliman (Professor Of Education at Boston University) agrees with the author in decrying the influence of progressive and naturalistic thought on American educational theory and practice. He notes, however, the book's regrettable omission of such forceful voices of reform as E. D. Hirsch, Jeanne Chall, and Diane Ravitch. He describes the Core Knowledge curriculum as the serious beginning of genuine improvement and a "classic example of individual initiative and grassroots reform."

American Academy for Liberal Education Press Release 5/5/03

The American Academy for a Liberal Education announced the accreditation of two new charter schools, adding to a member base of five. The new schools include the Core Knowledge Classical Academy of Colorado Springs. In describing the program at the school, AALE's Jeffrey Wallin commented, "Their example shows the huge public appeal of an academically demanding school. As fine as

this school is, none of us was prepared for the fact that with a current enrollment of 1200 it still has a waiting list of 440." The accreditation program is intended to foster both high education standards and education reform.

ALABAMA

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Decatur Daily (Decatur, AL) 4/24/03

Revised *What Your Third Grader Needs to Know* Gets Positive Review

"Whether a parent or a teacher, if you want the best supplemental materials for your child, then pick up a copy of this book," says reviewer John Michael Hampton.

Arizona

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Fountain Hills Times (Fountain Hills, AZ) 4/30/03

District Approves New Core Knowledge Charter School

Fountain Hills School District announced that a new choice charter school, Discovery Academy, will open its doors next Aug. 11 and plans to use the Core Knowledge curriculum.

Arizona Daily Sun (Flagstaff, AZ) 5/5/03

Peak School Gets High Marks

An article on Charter Schools Week in Flagstaff noted that the city's 11 charter schools are consistently operating near capacity, despite greater funding challenges than apply to regular public schools. Flagstaff has one of the highest percentages of children served by charter schools in the country and author Ron Drosman uses Peak School as an example of the kind of innovation that appeals to parents. He describes the Core Knowledge curriculum used at Peak as a research-based curriculum, which focuses on "giving every student a content rich background," and further notes its approval by State Superintendent of Schools, Tom Horne.

Colorado

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Greeley Tribune (Greeley, CO) 5/7/03

Core Knowledge Charter Schools Score High

Frontier School received a near perfect score on the third grade reading assessment, a 93%. School officials claim not to be surprised by this result nor by any of the Colorado Student Assessment Program results. Knowledge Quest Academy in Milliken received the highest rating countywide with 94% reading above proficiency. Windsor Charter Academy reported an 88%, and all charter school officials attribute the high scores to the "strong Core Knowledge curriculum which allows teachers to work with students on basic concepts at an early age and build on those ideas throughout the school year and in future years."

Coloraddan (Ft. Collins, CO) 4/20/03

Core Knowledge Expanding to O'Dea

O'Dea Elementary School will become the fourth elementary school in the Poudre School District to adopt Core Knowledge. Principal Ruth Herron claims that the existing schools, Zach, Traut, and Moore, cannot accommodate the demand for the program. Joe Hendrickson, PSD assistant superintendent of elementary school services, noted that Core Knowledge has been in place long enough to allow officials to track its effectiveness. The change is expected to attract enough new students to replace the ones lost by O'Dea when Zach Elementary opened at the beginning of this year.

Georgia

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The Macon Telegraph (Macon, GA) 5/1/03

Article on Standards of Success Cites Core Knowledge Curriculum

Standards for Success is a project undertaken by a group of university presidents in the Association of American Universities and funded by the Pew Charitable Trust that attempts to identify a set of high school standards that determine success in college. The writer, Larry Fennelly, Chair of Learning Support at Macon State College, asserts that these standards are more useful than SAT scores because they refer to students' knowledge base rather than to their testing skills. Used as the basis for the reform of high school curriculum, they will, he claims, dovetail nicely with the Core Knowledge curriculum, which he sees as being used with great success in a number of Georgia schools including Miller Magnet Middle School.

Catoosa County News 3/26/03

Graysville Elementary Earns Core Knowledge Designation

Article shows picture from the national conference with Core Knowledge Founder E.D. Hirsch, Jr. surrounded by seven teachers from the school. "Graysville teachers, students, and parents," the article states, "have experienced dramatic changes since becoming a Core Knowledge School. Increased parental involvement and excitement about learning are evident each day."

Minnesota

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Rochester Post Bulletin (Rochester, MN) 4/29/03

Washington School Heralded

A front page story about the success of Washington School. It included details about the school board meeting in which member Fred Daly said "that if the Core Knowledge program is to be expanded, he would like to see higher test scores at Washington." Board member Brenna Bly challenged his notion that the scores weren't high enough and talked about the high level of parent satisfaction.

KTTC-TV Channel 10 (Rochester, MN) 5/1/03

More on Washington School

In reporting about school choice, reporter Nikki Rudd visited Washington Elementary School, one of four "choice" schools in Rochester, and one that sponsors the Core Knowledge Curriculum. Currently there are 380 students enrolled at Washington and nearly 300 waiting to get in. She interviewed school board member, Chris Fischer, who claims that far from cutting back on choice schools, the board was actually thinking of expanding them and seeing what they could "do for the core knowledge piece" when they build a new school in about three years.

New York

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The New York Times 4/29/03

New Book by Core Knowledge Board Member Diane Ravitch Garners Outstanding NYT Review

Michiko Kakutani's positive review of Diane Ravitch's new book, *The Language Police* describes Ravitch's recommendations for stopping "politically correct" censorship of textbooks and adds one recommendation of her own: reading the *Language Police*.

Pennsylvania

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The Phoenix and *The Times Weekly* 5/10/03

Op-ed piece by Jeanne Allen Lauds Core Knowledge

We received two clippings, one printed in the Phoenixville, PA paper, *The Phoenix*, and one in the Joliet, IL *Times Weekly* in which Jeanne Allen, President of the Center for Education Reform, talks about the need for schools to provide context so that students can make informed judgments about current events, i.e. the past events which led to our current dilemma in Iraq. In the piece, she lauds the Core Knowledge curriculum for insisting on the need for content knowledge and quotes E.D. Hirsch's recent work at length.

Tennessee

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Chattanooga TN Times & Press 4/16/03

First Tennessee School Earns Official Status as Core Knowledge School

Clifton Hills Elementary School was awarded official status by the Core Knowledge Foundation, the first school in Tennessee to be so designated. The article has a lengthy description of the requirements for official status with quotes from Lucien Ellington, a University of Tennessee professor who worked with the school to obtain a grant and set up the curriculum, and from Cyndi Wells, Core Knowledge Director of Teacher Development, who is quoted as saying "We (Core Knowledge) are a grass-roots organization; we spread by word of mouth." She also indicated that the Core Knowledge Foundation "is working on alignment with state standards in all 50 states."

Texas

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Avalanche Journal (Lubbock, TX) 4/23/03

Core Knowledge Coordinator of West Texas Co-Sponsors Earth Day Field Trip

Two hundred second graders from four Lubbock schools visited TreeGrace Farms to visit with the animals and to plant seeds. They will make a return visit in hopes of seeing the fruits of their labor, provided that a flood doesn't wash away the seeds as it did last year.

"Will the students' plants fare better this year?" asked a reporter. "Maybe," answered Christina, class realist.

Wisconsin

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Journal Sentinel (Milwaukee, WI) 4/16/03

St. John's Lutheran Academy Takes Stained Glass Windows and Core Knowledge to New Location

St. John's School is moving from a historic location in a downtown church to a converted commercial building in the suburbs, using the stained glass windows to form a new freestanding pillar that will grace the new entrance. The article describes the small school (24 students, K through 8) as one of "three official Core Knowledge schools in Wisconsin" and gives a paragraph description of the curriculum.

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COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Newsletter of the Core Knowledge® Foundation
Volume 16, Number 2, June/July 2003

Foundation News: New Conference Director

The Core Knowledge National Conference is a major undertaking. There is a lot of planning and teamwork involved. At the head of it all sits Karen Baggiano, newly appointed Conference Director.



Although Baggiano is new to this position she is not new to Core Knowledge. She has actually worked with Core Knowledge for seven years on both a full-time and a part-time basis as a Vendor Coordinator and an Inventory Control Specialist.

The 13th National Conference will be held on March 4-6, 2004 in Atlanta, GA at the Marriott Marquis. The Pre-Conference Preschool Institutes will be held on March 1-3, 2004. For more information on the Conference you may contact Karen Baggiano at Karen@coreknowledge.org.

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Professional Development: Coordinator & Leadership Institutes



The foundation will offer its popular Core Knowledge Coordinator & Leadership Institute three times in the next several months. This two-day institute provides guidance and assistance for key staffers at elementary and middle schools implementing Core Knowledge.

The Institute is highly recommended for all principals and Core Knowledge coordinators, in particular those who are receiving CSR grants to implement Core Knowledge. It will also appeal to those who want an increased understanding of

Core Knowledge and the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, those who believe in Core Knowledge, those who desire effective teaching strategies, those with a background in curriculum development, those with a strong knowledge of state and local requirements, and those with strong verbal and written skills.

The Institute has several objectives, which include reviewing the professional development opportunities offered by the Core Knowledge Foundation, discussing strategies for evaluating the progress of Core Knowledge in the school, and discussing strategies for sustaining school-wide implementation. Ninety percent of the Institute is informational and only ten percent interactive. Attendees will learn the skills and information they need to successfully implement Core Knowledge in their schools and will be provided with an Institute notebook to assist with campus follow-up.

The institutes will be presented three times this year: July 17-18, September 18-19, and October 23-24. Although the deadline for the July Institute has passed, there may still be an opening or two. For the the other two sessions, a registration form must be submitted six weeks prior to the workshop date. The cost is \$1000 per person and space is limited. For more information you can download the registration form in PDF format [here](#) or contact Cyndi Wells at Cyndi@coreknowledge.org or Gerald Terrell at gterrell@coreknowledge.org.

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Preschool: Baltimore Head Start Program Praised

After two years of committed, hard work focused on implementing the Core Knowledge preschool program in 19 of their classes, the Baltimore County Head Start program, under the auspices of the YMCA of Central Maryland, has reason to celebrate. The educational component of their program was singled out for high praise recently during an annual review by the federal government. The review specifically cited the use of the Core Knowledge preschool curriculum, as well as a new Core Knowledge preschool assessment tool, piloted this past year in the Baltimore County classes, as key factors contributing to Head Start's success.

Thanks to a five-year grant by the Abell and Weinberg Foundations, the Baltimore County Head Start program has worked in conjunction with the Core Knowledge Foundation to provide extensive professional development for all staff members. Under the guidance of Project Director, Heather Callister, working closely with the Head Start administrative and educational team, teachers participate in comprehensive training in how to implement each facet of the Core Knowledge curriculum; work closely with mentor teachers who provide support and feedback in the classrooms on a regular basis; and meet monthly to network and share ideas with each other. The grant has also provided an extensive collection of educational materials for each classroom.

Of particular note this past year was the introduction and field-testing of the Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Tool (CK-PAT.) Using the CK-PAT and its associated software-tracking program, teachers have been able to monitor individual and classroom performance relative to the *Preschool Sequence* goals and objectives and the associated Head Start Performance Outcomes. The tool has proven useful in individualizing instruction for each child as well as communicating with parents.

For more details about the Core Knowledge initiative in the Baltimore County Head Start program, contact the project director, Heather Callister at hcallister@baltimorecp.org.

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Preschool: Preschool Institutes

The Core Knowledge Early Childhood Program is offering its popular Charlottesville-based Preschool Institutes July 14-17. Featured training modules are *Oral Language Skills* and *Teaching at Each Child's Level: Assessment & Planning*.



Oral Language, July 14-15, focuses on language terminology, receptive language activities, and using expressive language. Emphasis is devoted to the teacher's role in language development, techniques for building language and vocabulary, and facilitating child-to-child conversations.

A former participant commented that, "*The two day institute encouraged me to go on in my project of implementing the CK Sequence for preschoolers knowing that I'll be getting lots of support in terms of how to do at the classroom level.*"

"Information was well organized and invaluable—many new ideas, tips. Examples and activities were well planned and interspersed making the time fly by and be enjoyable."

Offered for the first time in an Institute, July 16-17, *Teaching at Each Child's Level: Assessment and Planning*, will feature foundational principles and purposes of assessment, assessment methodology, and the CK-PAT, the newly developed and tested Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Tool. This training emphasizes methods such as portfolio collection, activity probes, and direct observation. Instruction will also be given on using assessment for planning purposes, such as conducting parent-teacher conferences and establishing principles of scaffolding. Head Start programs will be pleased to find the CK-PAT aligned with Head Start outcomes.

Both trainings are strong assets to incorporating the *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence*, though not exclusive of other programs.

"Coming to a regional training, such as the workshops in Charlottesville, is a more affordable option for a number of preschools, especially smaller programs," said Mary Miller, Early Childhood Coordinator. "Teachers tell us they return to their schools and share their newly-acquired information with the rest of their staff," she added.

Participants take a wealth of new ideas back to their centers—not only what was gained in the training, but through dialogue generated with teachers from around the country. "I enjoyed this very much. It was a wonderful group of people as well as an excellent presenter," commented one attendee.

Registration deadline is July 7, 2003 . Click [here](#) for more information and to download a registration form. For more information contact Mary Miller at mmiller@coreknowledge.org or at 434-977-7550 x 234.

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"Children's Lack of Folk Song Knowledge Threatens Heritage"

University of Florida study shows that traditional children's songs are being replaced by popular songs.

"The Language Police book review"

A review of Diane Ravitch's new book, *The Language Police*, by the Richmond Dispatch Times.

"Congress Mulls Reform of Teacher Training"

A strong bid is under way on Capitol Hill to use the pending reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) to pressure universities, their professional schools of education, and state departments of education to reform how teachers are prepared and licensed to work in the nation's K-12 classrooms.

"Ten Myths of Reading Instruction"

Michael Pressley, in his excellent book, *Reading Instruction that Works*, concluded with a discussion of what he considered to be "Ten Dumb and Dangerous Claims about Reading Instruction." All of the points he made were quite compelling, but one wonders if these are his "top ten" picks for the most dangerous myths about reading instruction.

"The American Academy for Liberal Education"

AALE is an organization that accredits outstanding charter schools, including a number of Core Knowledge schools.

"The Link Institute"

The Link Institute was founded by Patricia Farnsworth in 1996 to foster "quality education through content and character." In 2001, Link published *Core Virtues*, their first character education textbook, which was created to serve as a companion to the kind of rich content published by Core Knowledge.

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