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AMY GRIFFIN, ADI

## ADI Awards Given

One of the important roles ADI fills is the fostering of a “DI community.” The Board of Directors develops this community through various activities, among them a recognition program for practitioners of Direct Instruction. Each year at the National Direct Instruction Conference there is an awards dinner celebrating the achievements not only of DI users but also students and entire schools. Following is a summary of the recipients of the ADI awards for the year 2000.

### Excellence in Education Awards

Anayezuka Ahidiana is one of four recipients of an Excellence in Education Award for teaching and teacher/training. It is a shared feeling when Ed Schaefer of Educational Resources, Inc. says that, “Anayezuka has dedicated her life to improving the educational opportunities of children and their teachers.” Ahidiana has

used the various DI programs as primary tools in improving the lives of students, teachers, and administrators. Schaefer feels so strongly about the impact Ahidiana has on students lives he says, “Given the students she taught so well, the teachers she has trained so thoroughly, and the schools she has lead so competently; there are or will be literally thousands of men and women whose life’s realizations may now match the expectations of their dreams and the promise of this country.”

The phrases “total commitment,” “tireless energy,” “devoted,” and “on task” appear repeatedly in the recommendations from her colleagues and Bernice Welchel, Principal of City Springs Elementary in Baltimore, MD says that, “Anayezuka has helped to change the entire culture of our school from one that did not believe that students can and should learn to their maximum potential to a school that beams with pride when students move

from one mastery program to another.”

Ahidiana not only transforms the lives of students she teaches but as her nominator Paul McKinney says, “I have personally watched her turn the attitudes and beliefs of many ‘hard to teach’ teachers around. Because she believes that learning is a lifelong habit, Anayezuka continues to hone her teaching and training expertise by attending many of the DI conferences and training sessions conducted by ADI and SRA.”

In sum, the words of the team of coaches at City Springs Elementary perhaps most clearly express the extent of the gratitude felt by those who work with and benefit from the spirit of Ahidiana. “She serves as a mentor to all of the coaches—a constant source of inspiration, support, encouragement, and motivation. She is an excellent trainer; she is thorough. The level of respect that our school family has for Ms. Ahidiana



Anayezuka Ahidiana

speaks volumes about the type of person that she is.”

Angelica Fazio was recognized as an Excellent Teacher, and she has asked that her nominator, Patricia Contreras be awarded as well because of what she refers to as “*truly* a joint project.” “Everything we have done with her class, has been *totally* a team effort!” says Fazio.

Contreras describes Fazio as an “indefatigable fighter both for literacy and for Direct Instruction” and has been so for almost two decades. Both Fazio and Contreras work within Central Elementary in San Diego, CA. Contreras met Fazio when Fazio was working as an ESL Adult Family Literacy Teacher teaching English learning adults how to speak and read English so they might read to their children. But Fazio had a higher goal; she used *Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons* so that the non-English speaking adults were learning a method with which they could teach their own children to read—which many did.

Thus began a relationship between Fazio and Contreras as Fazio responded to the request of Contreras to come to her classroom to teach her to teach the DI program and assist with students. Fazio continued as an adult education teacher while she volunteered extra time in Contreras’ k-1 class, and together they taught their students to read far above grade level. Contreras describes Fazio as a strong advocate of DI and also of inner city, impoverished and less privileged multi-lingual, multi-cultural children. Fazio continues to be a tireless inspiration to Contreras and also to the many students whose lives she changes by the donation of her time and energy to the cause of literacy and the personal empowerment which comes thereof.

Of Contreras, Fazio says that she is “totally committed to her students and remains many hours after school each day helping students and preparing her lessons.” After facing difficulty acquiring the needed DI materials, Mrs. Contreras purchased the materials with her own money, exemplifying

her serious dedication. Together Fazio and Contreras are changing the lives of both students and teachers as they raise standards through the implementation of DI.

Ann Fumiko Watanabe of The Waihee School in Maui, HI was recognized as an excellent Teacher Trainer. Watanabe is known for an uncompromising dedication to education and reading and to the training of teachers to enhance their teaching skills and productivity. In a letter of recommendation, Lawrence T. Joyo, principal of Waihee School, said that, “Ann inspires and motivates teachers to teach better. She is actually a classroom practitioner who epitomizes qualities of educational leadership and support.” “Watanabe generates enthusiasm and motivation through her skills in training fellow teachers in DI and beginning reading strategies as well as in effectively teaching low functioning students to read,” said Personnel Specialist II, Michael G. Suzaki.

Despite great resistance by her superiors in utilizing the DI strategies, Watanabe never ceased to infuse DI in her special education training modules. Watanabe is often requested to train other teachers who are frustrated with ineffective methods, and she has trained hundreds of teachers throughout her career. Watanabe follows up with workshop participants in the schools by doing classroom demonstrations and providing technical assistance to teachers and administrators.

It is Watanabe’s belief that all children can learn to read successfully that motivates her tireless efforts, that helps other teachers to teach better, and that ultimately gives children the gift of literacy.

### *Excellent Administrator Award*

Sarah Martin-Elam received an Excellence in Education Award for her work as principal at Siefert Elementary School in Milwaukee, WI. Ms. Martin-Elam was a pioneer for the

implementation of DI within the Milwaukee Public School System, and that was not a simple operation. Ms. Martin-Elam is such a strong believer in DI and its effectiveness and importance that she put her reputation and job on the line to fight for this program she knew would be so beneficial to the students and staff not only at Siefert, but city and statewide. Ms. Martin-Elam faced opposition of DI from the MPS central office administrators as well as from some teachers within Siefert, and she fought “to be able to use money earmarked by central office to be spent on an ineffective reading program to purchase DI materials instead,” said Sue Owens, who nominated Ms. Martin-Elam.

Siefert School was once one of the lowest performing schools in the Milwaukee Public School district. It had very few students reading at grade level and the school performed poorly on local and state assessments. DI was introduced to Siefert during the 94–95 school year and since then most Siefert students are reading at least on grade level with many reading above grade level, and the state test scores have risen significantly. Not only are the Siefert students boasting such accomplishments, but the entire school is reaping the benefits in that teacher stability has improved, student attendance has improved and these and other such improvements have “generated and sustained a school culture in which



*Angelica Fazio*



*Patricia Contreras*



*Ann Fumiko Watanabe*



*Sarah Martin-Elam*

these results are benchmarks for continued improvement, not platforms on which to rest," according to John S. Gardner, the at-large Director for MPS.

Steven Huffman, Leadership Specialist for MPS, states that, "Improvements at Siefert go beyond achievement tests. A walk through the halls quickly produces a sense of the dedication and commitment to excellence that Ms. Martin-Elam has engendered. All adults are on task and professional in their behaviors. Students appear serious, dedicated and knowledgeable. There is a perceptible pursuit of excellence that cannot be missed. It is my belief that this enviable environment that I have described is because of the building wide dedication to DI. That dedication is directly attributable to the leadership of Ms. Sarah Martin-Elam."

Because of Ms. Martin-Elam's efforts, perseverance, dedication, and uncompromising set of standards, Siefert Elementary is operating on an unprecedented high level and the staff and students have caught on to that. The school will continue to succeed, thanks to the powerful example set by Ms. Martin-Elam.

### *Excellent School Award*

Woodbridge Fundamental School in Roseville, CA is the Excellent School for 2000. Woodbridge utilizes DI's *Reading Mastery*, *Distar Language, Reasoning and Writing*, and *Expressive Writing*. Woodbridge has been using DI curricula for twenty-eight years, since its introduction to the school by Mollie Gelder. *Reading Mastery* has remained a constant throughout the school because of Mollie's belief in the curriculum as well as her determination to utilize a system so beneficial to the Woodbridge School System.

Woodbridge employs schoolwide reading that enables the children to progress quickly and confidently in a small group at their instructional level. Student progress is monitored and charted monthly and instructional aides assist the neediest groups.

One-on-one tutoring, trained volunteers and an extended school day are some of the intervention strategies in place at Woodbridge, ensuring high success rates for students. All teachers, aides, student teachers and volunteers receive training and all student groups are monitored for excellence.

Student teachers working at Woodbridge have expressed gratitude for the training and the experience of "teaching a sequential, systematic phonics program that filled a void from their college teacher training," said Audrey Nobori, the nominator of Woodbridge. The *Reading Mastery* program has helped these student teachers to bridge the gap between the study of teaching reading to the actual practice thereof.

The story of the *Reading Mastery* program in the Woodbridge School is one of pride and success as the students express pride in their own reading abilities and the faculty express confidence in the utilization of such an effective tool.

### *Wayne Carnine Student Improvement Award*

Four students were awarded with The Wayne Carnine Student Improvement Award for the year 2000. Students received a \$100 cash award along with the recognition of their efforts and personal achievements. Most Improved can refer to academic or behavioral changes, or both.

Matthew Akonom attends Hampstead Hill Elementary in Baltimore, MD and was nominated by his social worker, Sara Schmerling. Matthew entered Hampstead Hill with a history of aggressive and destructive behavior. He "refused to complete class work, disrupted the class, and was defiant and threatening," said Schmerling. With the combination of love and support from his grandmother and commitment from his teachers he has made significant improvements during his time at Hampstead Hill. Schmerling also

credits the structure of DI in helping Matthew "learn to relax and focus on his intellect rather than his external fears." He became so familiar with the sequence of lessons that he was able to assist visiting substitutes and teacher assistants. Matthew is not only a high achiever personally, but he also "helps other students in the school deal with their problems and tries to model appropriate behavior for them." Schmerling feels that Matthew exemplifies the words "outstanding improvement," and it is clear that Matthew has transformed both academically and personally.

Marti Dunn is from Central Elementary in San Diego, CA and was nominated by her k-1 teacher, Mrs. Patricia Contreras. Marti was retained by her first k-1 teacher and because of Marti's hard work and the use of the *Reading Mastery Series* by Mrs. Contreras, Marti was double promoted to third grade at the end of the school year. Now Marti is the best reader in her third grade class even though she did not attend second grade!

Although Marti is excelling in third grade, her math skills were behind those of her peers and she had not been taught cursive writing. To make up for the skills she missed by skipping second grade, Marti goes voluntarily to Mrs. Contreras classroom regularly after school so that she can continue her progression and success.

Mrs. Contreras feels that through Marti's own efforts and with the help of a good program, Marti has turned her "entire self image around and is becoming a very confident young woman."

Kalijah Hopkins of Beach Channel High School in Jamaica Queens, NY was nominated by Mrs. Daniela Greco, an Academy Coordinator and reading teacher. Kalijah was having difficulty reading in his mainstream classes and when tested it was found that he was reading at a high second grade level and was then placed into the Academy Program which is a remedial reading program.

Kalijah has courageously dealt with physical and emotional obstacles and has had difficulty with reading and spelling for many years. Kalijah has shown tremendous growth since he has been in the Academy Program. "In September 1999 his reading was at a second grade level and by April 2000, only seven months later, his reading level improved to a 7.8 grade in comprehension" and significantly in other areas as well, said Greco. Of Kalijah, Greco says, he "continually expresses a desire and willingness to learn." Kalijah often spent his lunchtime with Mrs. Greco and he has been passing all classes with high marks. Mrs. Greco predicts continued success, improvements and accomplishments for Kalijah throughout the year and expects that he will return to the mainstream classes within the next year.

Mrs. Greco is also proud of Kalijah's community involvement in sports programs and with the YMCA where twice a week he volunteers his time swimming and doing water exercises with autistic adults.

Nathan Roberts is from Beale Elementary in Gallipolis Ferry, WV and was nominated by Judith E. Browning who is a Special Educator for Beale.

As a first grader Nathan was not learning to read, and even so he was promoted to second grade. Nathan's second grade teacher reported that Nathan was having a difficult time reading and that his performance was far below grade level. His teacher was concerned because he works hard, has much family support as well as one-on-one instruction within the classroom.

Nathan was not responding to different reading formats that were introduced to him. After a psychological evaluation in which the psychologists found his profile consistent with a child with a learning disability, Nathan's parents agreed to try DI and enrolled him in Beale Elementary. In a year's time Nathan "has gone from only being able to read two or three short words to reading fluently at the third level . . .

after approximately a year in DI, he reads everything," said Browning.

Matthew, Marti, Kalijah and Nathan are four examples of what takes place when teachers, administrators and school systems utilize a program that has proven to be as effective as DI. DI has given these children the chance to excel, the chance to succeed. And it is the teachers, administrators, and school systems that have allowed DI to become a part of their curriculum, a part of their continuing story of success.