

AWSNA Representatives Attend NAIS 2008 National Conference

Several staff and committee members from AWSNA's office of Outreach and Development joined 6700 other educators and administrators from around the country to hear about trends and the state of independent education in the United States and to share experiences. The keynote speaker was Sir Ken Robinson, who spoke with both wit and wisdom about the need for creative thinking in solving cultural and economic challenges.

NAIS president Patrick F. Bassett expressed his conviction of the vital importance of a *Right-Brained Future Curriculum for the 21st. Century*. The significance of "right-brained" creativity, rooted in Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind*, explored the implications for teaching and learning in 21st Century schools. In his talk, Mr. Pink charted the value of right-brain thinking in modern economies and expatiated on these six abilities individuals and organizations must master in an outsourced and automated world: design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning.

Other highlights included a thoughtful presentation about education in the 21st century by an inspiring duo: Malcolm Gladwell and Adam Gopnik. Malcolm Gladwell the author of two New York Times #1 best sellers, *The Tipping Point* and *Blink* was joined by New Yorker author Adam Gopnik and bestselling author of *Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York*. Mr. Gladwell spoke passionately about the need for diversity in education, and the importance of supporting students from all socio-economic backgrounds. Mr. Gopnik's main thrust was his gratitude for the independent schools that made it possible for children to be educated in right brain skills of empathy, creativity, and imagination.

One of the inspiring figures invited by NAIS to lend heart to the talks of the weekend was Mariane Pearl. In sharing the story of the frantic search for and ultimate death of her husband, reporter Daniel Pearl, at the hand of Islamic terrorists, she gave a picture of her experience that, when faced with such a threat to one's humanity and positive world view, she found the will to challenge the violence with courage, love, and optimism. She is now a spokesperson for fighting violence with dialogue.

There was a wide range of workshops that our AWSNA participants were able to cover, providing them with a plethora of ideas to share, including:

Introduction to Education for Sustainability

Take a Break from Traditional Problem-Solving – Discover Appreciative Inquiry

How Can Schools Help All Their Constituents Embrace Change?

Developing "A Whole New Mind" at Your School

Connecting with Young Alumni through New Technologies

Environmental Sustainability: Best Practices and Start-Up Strategies

Greening the Campus and Curriculum: Next Steps

A generous gift from a donor made attendance at this invaluable conference possible.