

**EDUCATORS AND ACADEMICS CONFERENCE EMPHASIZES
THE 'POWER OF ONE'
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The inter-connectedness of oneself and nature and the importance of the single individual—the “majority of one”—were two themes prevalent and richly exemplified in this year’s Educators and Academics Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, held from June 28 through July 1.

Attended by 135 members from the educators and academics division, including an international representative from Panama, 10 youth division members and one retired educator, the conference was filled with meaningful dialogue, important field trips and an exhilarating talent show.

The goal for this year was how to put the theories of Soka education into practice. SGI President Ikeda’s recent education proposal, entitled “Building a Society that Serves the Essential Needs of Education,” was used as the foundation for the conference, wherein he emphasized the human revolution of each teacher as the key component to revolutionizing education.

Kathleen Dockett, co-coordinator of the conference, devised the acronym PEACCCE GAP (Passion, Endurance, Affection, Courage, Compassion, Confidence, Effort and Glowing Appealing Personality) to help everyone capture the spirit of the conference; and the participants selected the one quality they most wanted to develop in their lives.

There were five sessions and several experiences. Session 1, a panel discussion by Washington, D.C., members entitled “What is Soka Education?,” emphasized its essential five points: happiness of the learner; developing wisdom from understanding the inter-relationships in life; deep respect for the learner; the importance of learners becoming global citizens; and the importance of becoming truly humanistic educators. This was followed by a lecture by Masao Yokota, president of the Boston Research Center and senior advisor of the Culture Department.

Mr. Yokota reported at length about the activities and bonds developing between SGI President Ikeda and the Thoreau Society as part of a global vision for the next 200 years.

“Thoreau’s idea of self-reliance was to rely on the divine power within oneself,” Mr. Yokota said. “This for us means Buddhahood. We need to deeply examine the self that exists in the depths of our lives. ‘The Majority of One’ means one person awakening to the meaning of life.”

Session 2, entitled “Trailblazing Soka Education,” by SGI-USA Educators Division Leader Monte Joffe, was followed by various breakout groups where in-depth discussions ensued. Sessions included school violence; flight from learning; restoring human bonds; alienation from nature; technology; testing; and bureaucracy.

Session 3, “Soka Educators as Change Agents,” allowed the participants to have a healthy exchange of experiences by splitting into affinity groups: academics; new teachers; high school; middle school; elementary education, early childhood; special ed/TESL; and community and family.

Session 4 gave in-depth glimpses of Soka Education and was entitled, “Soka Education: Models and Theories: Honing our Capability as Soka Educators.”

Session 5, “Creating Soka Education,” included workshops that demonstrated Soka education in action, and focussed on issues of diversity, nature, and the community. One

workshop showed how Makiguchian principles are effectively being employed to generate excitement in the SGI-USA Boys and Girls Group.

This conference not only brought educators and academics significantly closer to permeating and infusing their own lives and society with the ideals of Soka education, it also clearly demonstrated that the dream to realize a Makiguchi-based educational system is quite attainable.

—*Monte Joffe contributed to this article.*