Here are the comments educators shared with the Institute about the overall quality and usefulness of the first annual SIDE conference on Saturday, November 16, 2002 at the Tulane University Center in New Orleans, La.

“A wonderful day spent with wonderful people. I rarely have an opportunity to meet and interact with such a diverse group of educators—from different disciplines, from different states—with only an interest in tolerance education to unite them—and that is a powerful unifier. You must continue to do this. I don’t feel so alone, and I feel like I have something to contribute—and I also felt I learned much—great ideas to use, to build on. Next time I want to bring a friend (maybe that’s a way to broaden the base—bring a roommate or a friend).”

Mary Anne McClelland, Neville High School, Monroe, LA

“This conference was wonderful. I had lots of ‘light bulb’ moments. I feel renewed in my efforts to teach diversity to my students. Please continue to provide this type of information for all teachers.”

Kim Ryals, North Forest High School, Hattiesburg, MS

“Southern Institute’s workshops and conferences are always so refreshing to me. After a hectic and exhausting week, the ideas and information energize me and want me to become a better teacher. I’m always so impressed with the teachers—the educators from the lowest performing states! If they only knew what we do. The materials from the Southern Institute are like my Bible—they work so well in the classroom.”

Alice Couvillion, Mandeville High School, Mandeville, LA

“Good dialogue. Let’s look for solutions. Align these ideas to curriculum. A wonderful ground-breaking conference to begin the dialogue and gauge teachers’ sentiments about the dynamics of the classroom regarding these issues.”

Maria Winters, Rowan Center, Hattiesburg, MS

“Small size was a plus—good for networking and building a community of educators with similar focus—gave ample time to respond and share. Choice of breakout sessions allowed us to pursue specific interests and selection was varied—another plus for the participants. The conference was a productive one in refueling participants with resources and strategies to take into our work. I was both inspired and awed!”

Sandy LaBry, Layfette Parish Schools, Lafayette, LA
“Enjoyed all the sessions: great materials, great strategies, great ideas. This was a Saturday that was well spent. Working with educators makes me proud to be a teacher! Thanks! I particularly enjoyed the sessions in the afternoon on diversity [clubs] and the Holocaust.”

*Jamie F. Staub, Grace King High School, Metairie, LA*

“Excellent! I got so much from all the presenters and discussions. The whole day was very energizing and affirming. I don’t feel so alone.”

*Brad Campbell, Youree Drive Middle School, Shreveport, LA*

“It had been quite useful. It would be nice if handouts are made available. I don’t want to miss something good from other sessions. Overall excellent! Thanks, Southern Institute!”

*DeAnna Anderson, Gulfport High School, Gulfport, MS*

“The strength of the conference was in the intelligence, creativity, generosity, and good will of its participants. I loved hearing the insights and perspectives of everyone. The brainstorming session at the end was an excellent idea. It allowed for some of our issues to have a channel. Thank you for being a lighthouse for this floundering ship looking for safe harbor and help for it’s leaking hull.”

*Paul VanZandt, Rowan Center, Hattiesburg, MS*

“This has been a fine beginning for the SIDE conference. Every planning session and workshop yielded some new and worthwhile activity or strategy that I know that I can use with my students. The handouts are varied and I plan to make copies to share with members of the English Department. Also, I have gained some new insights into myself.”

*Pat Ward, Eleanor McMain Secondary Magnet School, New Orleans, LA*

“There were some wonderful presenters and some inspiring ideas. I think this is a forum that needs to be expanded. Meeting other teachers who have the same ideas and the same content responsibilities and the same restrictions was a shot in the arm for me. I loved the idea of the diversity club. My mind is reeling with the possibilities.”

*Caroline Ancelet, Acadiana High School, Lafayette, LA*
“It was invigorating. I wanted more time in the whole group session and discussion groups, though! The session on the Diversity Teams in and among schools was incredible, and made me want to get started in our community.”

Nancy Romero, W.D. South Career Club, Lafayette, LA

“I am always impressed with the quality of workshop given by the Southern Institute. I received many resource ideas—books, film, websites, which I will incorporate into my teaching.”

Dorothy Najarian, Warrington Middle School, Pensacola, FL