ENCOUNTER
EDUCATION FOR MEANING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Editorial

Words, Words, Words

Many child-development experts urge parents to talk as much as possible to their babies and toddlers. In this way, the experts say, parents can increase their children's vocabularies in the first three years of life, and these vocabulary gains seem to be associated with elevated IQ and reading test scores in elementary school (Hart and Risley 2003).

Inspired by such reports, popular books instruct parents on the variety of ways to talk to their young children (see, for example, Dougherty 1999). Even the prestigious American Academy of Pediatrics has joined the bandwagon. The Academy is promoting a "Bright Beginnings" program to help parents boost their toddlers' word power (Camp 2002).

I find these initiatives (which are part of the general early-literacy movement) quite worrisome. As we emphasize children's verbal skills, we overlook their needs for physical movement and sensory investigations.

Consider the toddler's natural urge to move about and explore. Given the chance, toddlers energetically march along the sidewalk or across the grass, elated by their ability to move upright. If they spot something interesting, such as a leaf or a puddle of water, they stop and intently examine it, perhaps touching it. Then they venture off again. They often stumble and fall, but they bounce back up and keep moving. There's too much to investigate to worry about minor pains.

But it's my impression that today's parents have little patience with their toddlers' explorations. It's rare to see a parent just walking along with a toddler, giving the child a chance to investigate the world in her own way.

Part of the explanation is that parents are in too much of a hurry to adapt to the toddler's meandering pace. But another reason is that parents place a much higher value on children's verbal skills. After all, verbal skills will be critical to future test taking and academic achievement. Who cares if a child walks enthusiastically or explores things through her senses? Such capacities don't appear on standardized achievement tests. So parents routinely push their children in strollers, and as they go they frequently quiz their children with vocabulary questions such as, "Today is Friday, what day comes after Friday…?"

Even on the rare occasions when adults dispense with the strollers, they feel a great need to improve their children's verbal skills. I recently saw a girl about two years old walking with her mother, when the girl suddenly stopped and stared in fascination at the two puppies at play. After a while the girl said, "Two dogs," and she kept staring, totally absorbed. The mother, however, saw a teachable moment and coaxed her daughter into a "Two's song": "Two dogs, two cows, two horses…." The child reluctantly joined in, and the mother pulled her along. The mother might have strengthened the child's vocabulary, but we will never know what the child missed in the experience that fascinated her.

A day later I saw a boy, a little over a year old, in a store. He reached for a small wooden horse, saying "Ooooh" and tried to handle it. But his father said, "Use your words," and pulled his hand away.

Words are important, of course. Toddlers themselves want to know what things are named. But in the first few years of life, the richest experiences are nonverbal. Young children experience a wealth of sensations—the feel of water or a wooden toy, the excitement of puppies at play—that even poets have difficulty putting into words. But poets, artists, and other creative adults try to recapture such impressions. Something about them seems to open one to the mysteries of life. Shouldn't we let children experience them?

To keep today's preoccupation with verbal skills in perspective, a valuable book is Ernest Schachtel's (1959) *Metamorphosis*. Schachtel described how language can close us off from the world. Up to the age

of about six, children experience things openly and freshly, using their senses fully. But after that time, we increasingly structure our experience through language, relying on conventional words and labels. The culture's shared labels give us a sense of being "in the know" and protect us from feeling alone, odd, or different. But much of our experience becomes a cultural cliché. To fully experience the world, we need to transcend linguistic categories and dare to encounter the world in all its fullness. Great poets and writers, Schachtel emphasized, know that even the most evocative words fail to capture aspects of our sensory experience—the kinds of experience that is particularly intense in the early childhood years.

Physical Activity

Just as we tend to minimize children's sensory experiences, we also overlook the importance of physical activity. We forget how important it is for children to run, jump, skip, and throw. Schools, to be sure, do try to find time for children to run about and "let off steam," typically during recess. But in today's high-pressured, test-dominated atmosphere, many schools devote so much time to test-prep that they are eliminating recess.

Ironically, physical activity may be intimately related to the child's expressive language. This, at least, was the observation of the Russian poet and scholar, Kornei Chukovsky (1963), who said that young children usually think up rhymes as they run and jump about. For example, as children "blow bubbles and see them soar, it is natural for them to jump after them, crying out not once but many times, "How high ai ai ai / In the sky, ai, ai, ai" (p. 65).

"To become a poet," Chukovsky (p. 65) said,

> the child must be full of animal spirits. In the early spring, on the fresh green grass, when children become pixilated from the wind and the sun, they could go on and on pouring forth verse to express their exhilaration. Often these rhymes grow out of ecstatic, rhythmic movement…. When children get tired and stop their running, jumping, and skipping, their composing of rhymes also comes to an end.

Mathematical Thinking

Jean Piaget, history's greatest developmental psychologist, understood the value of physical action. But it has become fashionable to find fault with Piaget, and psychologists are especially critical of his emphasis on action. For example, researchers try to show that Piaget underestimated infants' knowledge about hidden objects because he assessed their knowledge through physical actions such as reaching. These investigators generally assume that such motor skills, which develop rather slowly, are trivial and obscure infants' true mental capacities (see Flavell, Miller, and Miller 2002).

But Piaget's critics overlook his powerful insight that all logical and mathematical thought emerges from physical action. Piaget (1954) described, for example, how babies often place objects in different positions during their spontaneous play. A baby might put a doll on a high shelf, bring it down to a lower position, bring it near her face, move it farther away, hide it, bring it out again, and so forth. In this process, Piaget showed, infants develop a physical and intuitive sense of mathematical space. As they grow, children increasingly conceptualize space on more mental, theoretical planes, eventually using symbolic mathematical notation. But even the most advanced concepts, Piaget held, begin with physical activities, and this foundation cannot be short-circuited.

Social Disparities

Many of the scholars who seek to improve children's vocabularies are concerned about the relatively low vocabularies among children in low-income families. These vocabulary proponents want adults to talk more to poor children in order to reduce their socio-economic disparities.

Such steps hold promise, but we also need to keep the topic of vocabulary in perspective. The work of Noam Chomsky and his followers has made it clear that every normal child's acquisition of language is a stunning accomplishment (Crain 2000). What is most amazing is not the growth of vocabulary, although children learn many new words per day. What is truly astonishing is the child's grasp of grammar or syntax—the rules for understanding and producing sentences. These rules are so complex and abstract

that linguists are still trying to make them explicit, but children master nearly all of them by the time they are five or six years old. What's more, if the young child is brought to a new country, she rapidly picks up the complex grammar of this new language too, usually off the streets, from her peers, without any formal instruction.

In light of every child's grasp of a highly abstract syntax, differences in vocabulary are rather minor. Upper middle class society, to be sure, emphasizes vocabulary, as do the standardized tests on which upper middle class children excel. But the acquisition of a large vocabulary pales in comparison to the syntactic accomplishments of all children. Indeed, it is often the immigrant child, living in a poor, urban neighborhood, who has mastered not only the abstract syntax of one language, but of two.

So, while there are benefits to enriching children's vocabularies, especially in low-income neighborhoods, it would be very wrong to make any child feel that he has a linguistic deficit or is linguistically inferior. On the contrary, every normal child, whether from a high- or low-income family, is a linguistic genius. Every child deserves every adult's admiration.

Moreover, we must remember that children not only wish to learn words and verbal skills. They also have a deep urge to move about, play, and explore the world through their senses. These non-verbal activities deserve much greater attention. To sacrifice them for the sake of vocabulary is to stifle the child's full development.

—William Crain, *Editor*

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The Geography of Privilege

Peter Sacks

Test scores, while exceedingly good at boosting the college admissions opportunities of the affluent and well educated, are vastly overrated as predictors of later academic achievement.

Some of America's best public universities are in the midst of a small revolution, trying to find broader and fairer definitions of merit in deciding who gets admitted to top colleges. The relatively privileged classes who have long benefitted from the old rules of the game, governed by gatekeeping tests like the SAT, are reacting to this transformation in predictable ways.

The looming scandal over the new undergraduate admissions process at the University of California at Berkeley typifies the backlash. John J. Moores, the chairman of the UC Board of Regents and owner of the San Diego Padres, completed a 159-page "confidential" report (that he apparently leaked to the *Los Angeles Times*), in which he found that nearly 400 students admitted to Berkeley in 2002 had scored between 600 and 1000 on the SAT I, which, as the newspaper put it, was "far below" the 1337 average SAT I score for those admitted last year. "It is outrageous," Moores said. "They don't have any business going to Berkeley."

What's worse, according to Moores, Berkeley rejected hundreds of applicants with very high SAT scores of 1500 and above. Saying he completed the report after hearing many complaints from "parents" about Berkeley's new admissions policy, Moores was described in the *Los Angeles Times* (2003) as being "shocked" by these findings. "I just don't see any objective standards," he told the newspaper, which conveyed the smell of scandal under the headline: "Study finds hundreds of highly qualified applicants were rejected in favor of freshmen who were 'marginally academically qualified' "

The Backlash

The supposed villain in all this is what's known as "Comprehensive Review," the new admissions policy that the UC system adopted in 2001 in the wake of Proposition 209, which prohibited state universities

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from using race as a factor in college admissions. Unlike the old admissions system that relied on a numerical index of test scores and grades to rather mechanically sort applicants, admissions officials now consider a full range of factors that paint a portrait of a young person's academic promise.

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*T**he backlash against comprehensive review brings together an unlikely but potent coalition of comprehensive review bashers.***

In fact, GPAs and test scores still top the list of 14 criteria in the new process, but the difficulty of high school courses, one's talents and achievements on real-world projects, and the obstacles of poverty and social class one overcomes are now integral to the new selection method. Still, nobody is admitted to the highly selective Berkeley campus or to any of the other eight UC undergraduate campuses who isn't "UC-eligible"; that is, academically among the top 12.5% of California high school students, as required by UC policy.

No matter, though. The widespread impression conveyed by Moores's report and its subsequent coverage in the media is that comprehensive review is a sham, allowing "unqualified" students, particularly students of color, to gain admission to California's most prestigious public university.

The backlash against comprehensive review brings together an unlikely but potent coalition of comprehensive review bashers. For UC Regent Ward Connerly and other foes of affirmative action, who note that most of the nearly 400 "unqualified" students were minorities, comprehensive review amounts to a bureaucratic attempt to circumvent the state's ban on affirmative action. For the upper-middle class parents who've complained to Moores about their high-scoring kids not getting into UC Berkeley, comprehensive review is a challenge to a virtual entitlement.

For both constituencies, the evolving views about merit at UC Berkeley and other University of Califor-

nia campuses represent an unprecedented attack on academic standards. While not perfect, they believe, selection methods that put much faith in test scores were objective and fair. Comprehensive review, its critics say, is a fancy name for mushy standards and subjectivity and patently unfair to the clearly more qualified students who clearly do better than others on clearly unquestionable measures like standardized tests.

Thus, on its myopic face, the case against comprehensive review at the University of California and other top public universities reflects the prevailing zeitgeist about merit. And that's the problem. Critics of admissions reform at UC Berkeley and other selective public universities are tapping into an entrenched ideology about merit going back to the invention the IQ testing and the SAT itself. As a direct descendent of intelligence tests developed at the turn of the last century, the first "Scholastic Aptitude Test" would purportedly allow the society's intellectual cream to rise and be identified for selection to the best colleges.

It so happened then—and continues to this day—that the lion's share of society's academic elite selected on this self-serving basis emerge from affluent and highly educated families. In the days of Lewis Terman and Charles Brigham, early American mental testers who paved the way for widespread use of intelligence testing and aptitude testing for college study, that era's recent American immigrants such as Italians, Jews and Poles were labeled feeble minded idiots due to their poor performance on the IQ tests of the day. Now, in these slightly more polite times, their counterparts in poor urban neighborhoods and the rough edges of suburbia "don't have any business going to Berkeley," as Moores would say.

Entrenched Ideology

In fact, affluence and privilege rule in the American "meritocracy." Consider the relationship between SAT scores and parent education levels. A high school senior bound for college in 2002 whose parents did not graduate from high school could expect to score fully 170 points below the national average on the SAT, according to the College Board. By contrast, a student whose mother or father had a graduate degree could expect to outscore the na-

tional average by 106 points (College Board 2002). Affluent students with family incomes of $100,000 or more are likely to outscore those of modest means (family incomes of $30,000-$40,000) by nearly 160 points on the SAT.

A widespread cultural belief in mental test scores as a proxy for real-world merit, combined with such powerful relationships between SAT scores and social class, have only served to reproduce harsh class disparities to educational access. The Century Foundation, for instance, released a report in 2003 concluding that just 3% of students admitted to the nation's most selective 146 colleges came from families of modest social and economic backgrounds. By contrast, fully 74% of students admitted to these highly competitive colleges came from the top quarter of the nation's social and economic strata (Carnevale and Rose 2003, 11).

Like elite colleges nationally, access to the public University of California has also been highly dependent on students' class backgrounds, according to a new study by UC Berkeley sociologists Isaac Martin, Jerome Karabel, and Los Angeles attorney Sean Jaquez (2003). Indeed, the researchers found that class appeared even to trump race and ethnicity with respect to one's changes of being admitted to the prestigious UC system.

For example, a single high school measure—the proportion of a school's parents with graduate degrees—accounted for almost 70% of the differences in the rates that California schools sent graduates to the UC system in 1999, the study found. Similarly, the percentage of high school parents with only a high school diploma was strongly negatively associated with schools' admission rates to UC. This measure, in fact, accounted for more than 40% of the differences in schools' admission rates to the UC system.

The geography of privilege and access to California's most desired public university is equally pronounced. Affluent, well-educated parents congregate in certain top public and private "feeder" schools that send disproportionate numbers of graduates to the UC system. Among the state's top 50 public and private feeder schools, predominately in affluent suburbs of Los Angeles and San Francisco, admission rates to UC ranged from a highly respectable 40% to an eye-popping 80%, according to

Karabel and his co-authors. But even those statistics under-represent the advantages accorded to privilege because many graduates of these schools are admitted to even more elite colleges and universities beyond California. In contrast, the bottom 25 public schools that sent graduates to UC in

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1999—schools heavily stacked with low-income and minority students—saw UC admission rates of no higher than 2.3% of their graduates (Martin, Karabel, and Jaquez 2003, 140).

Overrated Predictors

Even a cursory glance at the research literature on testing suggests it's a canard for Moores and his allies to assert that diminishing the importance of test scores will lead to the academic ruin of our great public universities. Consider another selective public institution, the University of Texas at Austin. For all the critics' suggested faults of the State of Texas's "Top 10 Percent Plan" (and similar ones in other states), which guarantees admission to state colleges for those graduating in the top 10% of his or her high school class regardless of test scores, academic quality has continued to thrive under the Texas plan.

How? For the simple reason that test scores, while exceedingly good at boosting the opportunities of the affluent and well educated, are vastly overrated as predictors of later academic achievement. For example, consider a recent cohort of University of Texas at Austin freshmen admitted under the top 10 Percent law who earned first-year GPAs of 2.87 and had SAT scores averaging about 1000. Their GPAs equalled the academic performance of non-Top 10 Percent students with SAT scores averaging 200

points higher. As University of Texas researchers have found repeatedly in five years of analyzing the law's impact, the same relationships hold for virtually all SAT and GPA intervals.

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*I*t's a neat and tidy world in which young people are easily categorized and sorted by a numerical index of their SAT scores and GPAs.

The University of California's own research has shown that the SAT I—the widely used "reasoning" test of math and verbal abilities—was the least predictive indicator of freshman academic success, ranking behind high school grades and scores on the so-called "SAT II" achievement tests in various academic subjects. An even more compelling finding in support of comprehensive review, the UC researchers found that the predictive power of high school grades actually improved after family income and education were factored in, while the predictive power of SAT I scores declined sharply when socio-economic factors were considered (Geiser and Studley 2001, 9).

Opening Access

All of this explains why comprehensive review is providing University of California admissions officials with the tools to open up the nation's most selective public university to a far broader number of residents than the old rules would permit. The University of California at San Diego is a remarkable example. In 2001, about one-quarter of the campus's admitted class were the first in their families to attend college. Now, fully one-third are first-generation college students. Two years ago, 15 percent of those admitted to UC San Diego came from low-income families; now, almost 20 percent do. Even more remarkable, just 12 percent of students two years ago attended "low-performing" high schools, most often in poor neighborhoods. Now, fully 17% of the admitted class at UC-San Diego attended such schools (University of California 2003, 7).

While Moores suggests his research has uncovered a scandalous system that must be fixed, in reality the University of California and other selective public universities may have little choice but to continue down the current path of admissions reform. In the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's 6-3 ruling in June 2003 striking down the undergraduate admissions policy at the University of Michigan, the University of California and similar universities must make their admissions systems even less formulaic than the numbers-driven schemes of the past. Recalling Justice Powell's language in the 1978 Bakke decision, the Court's latest majority opinion emphasized "the importance of considering each particular applicant as an individual, assessing all of the qualities that individual possesses, and in turn, evaluating that individual's ability to contribute to the unique setting of higher education."

Further, UC Berkeley has the additional burden of adhering to the terms of a recently settled class-action lawsuit filed by several civil rights organizations, including the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the ACLU, on behalf of several minority applicants who were denied admission to Berkeley, despite their stellar performance in and out of the classroom. The suit, which has gone largely under the radar since it was filed 1999 (Castaneda et al. v. Regents of the University of California et al. 2003), alleged that UC Berkeley admitted nearly half of white applicants with GPAs of 4.0 and higher but less than 40% of Black and Hispanic applicants with those grades—owing to Berkeley's excessive reliance on SAT scores. Berkeley's recent admissions reforms, including comprehensive review, resolved most issues of the suit, but according to the settlement, the civil rights groups will be closely monitoring UC Berkeley's progress.

As most progressive policymakers in public higher education are beginning to understand, the alternative to comprehensive review, or something akin to it, is to permit high-speed computers to do the work of admissions professionals. It's a neat and tidy world in which young people are easily categorized and sorted by a numerical index of their SAT scores and GPAs. When critics lash out against the "unqualified," i.e., the unwashed hordes with low SAT scores getting into prestigious UC Berkeley

and other selective public colleges, that's the world they wish a return to. It's certainly the world that a young man from Los Angeles named Daniel Wurangian encountered when he wanted to apply for admission to the U. S. Naval Academy. As a student in Granada Hills, Wurangian achieved a class ranking of 24th of 500 graduates, earning a GPA of 3.64. And he'd demonstrated a remarkable affinity for military leadership, in four years advancing to the highest-ranking officer in his junior ROTC program. Based on his real-world accomplishments, Wurangian earned his Congressman's nomination to the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Nevertheless, Wurangian's dream of becoming a Naval aviator was quashed when the Naval Academy informed him that it would not consider his application because his SAT score of 1000 fell 100 points below the Academy's minimum cut-off score of 1100—a difference so small as to be statistically and academically meaningless. Bureaucratically convenient, without question. But when dreams are ruined for 100-point differences on standardized tests—the sorting tool of choice for the privileged classes—a return to such formulas seems a crummy way to run meritocracy.

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The Push for Early Academic Instruction

A View from Europe

Christopher Clouder

European educational research indicates that there is no benefit to starting formal instruction prior to the age of six.

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"Can you do Addition?" the White Queen asked. "What's one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?"

"I don't know," said Alice. "I lost count."

"She can't do Addition," the Red Queen interrupted. "Can you do subtraction? Take nine from eight."

"Nine from eight I can't, you know," Alice replied readily: "but...."

"She can't do Subtraction," said the White Queen. "Can you do Division? Divide a loaf by a knife—what's the answer to that?"

In this passage from *Through the Looking Glass* neither of the two queens shows particular pedagogical aptitude, or at least an approach that patiently encourages Alice to find the correct answers. Although it would be unfair to use the above to satirize policy makers and educators who are sincerely concerned with improving children's learning, the present tendency to promote early formal learning also presents dangers that are amusingly encapsulated in this imaginary discourse.

In December 2000, Britain's House of Commons Education Select Committee issued a report, which concluded that children under five years of age should learn mainly through creative play in classes of no more than 15 for each teacher. It also concluded that there was "no conclusive evidence that children gained from being taught the 3 R's before the age of six." After a thorough investigation of papers and witnesses the chairman, Barry Sherman MP, forth-

rightly stated that "if you start formal learning early on, you can actually damage formal learning later on." He went on to say that

> Some people believe that the earlier you start children reading and writing and doing formal instruction the better. All the evidence we took, from every side, goes against that argument.

As reported by the BBC Online News on January 11, 2001, Tricia David of the Professional Association of Nursery Nurses commented,

> Over emphasis on formal education and abstract concepts of literacy and innumeracy before the age five can result in a sense of failure. Early failure can lead to long-term underachievement, disaffection and even truancy…. We could learn from some of our European neighbours, where children start school later than in the UK but still achieve better academic results.

The memoranda submitted to the committee from the British Association for Early Childhood Education underscored this point of view:

> Comparison with other countries suggest there is no benefit in starting formal instruction before six. The majority of other European countries admit children to school at six or seven following a three year period of pre-school education which focuses on social and physical development. Yet standards in literacy and numeracy are generally higher in those countries than in the UK despite our earlier starting age.

The committee recommended keeping the school entry age at five, but that the young children should receive the style of education appropriate to their stage of development. The report then goes on to highlight concerns given in evidence in this area:

> The current focus on targets for older children in reading and writing inevitably tends to limit the vision and confidence of early childhood educators. Such downward pressure risks undermining children's motivation and their disposition to learn, thus lowering rather than raising levels of achievement in the long term…. Inappropriate formalised assessment of children at an early age currently results in too many chil-
> dren being labelled as failures, when the failure, in fact, lies with the system. (House of Commons 2000)

Classic Concerns

This is one contemporary phase in struggle that has been waged since the beginning of the 19th century and at its heart is our conception of childhood. The manner in which we receive our children into this world influences whom they eventually become and, whether nature or nurture proves the short-term victor in any conceptual battles, the fact remains that the early years are vitally important. The

Children are born into a culture that, with all its assumptions, history and aspirations, will have a profound effect on how they experience their childhood and indeed their adult lives.

basic assumption is that the child should be welcome, but how that welcome is expressed can vary according to the times and the social fabric around the child. A report from the Swedish Family Aid Commission (1981) touches elements that confront us as citizens of the world's affluent minority:

> Basic to a good society is that children are welcome, are given a good environment during childhood and are the concern of the whole society. Children have a right to secure living conditions that enhance their development. Preschool has an important function in children's lives. It offers a comprehensive programme and is the source of stimulation in the children's development. It gives them a chance to meet other children and adults and to be part of an experience of fellowship and friendship. It is a complement to the upbringing a child gets at home.

In other words, children are born into a culture that, with all its assumptions, history and aspirations,

will have a profound effect on how they experience their childhood and indeed their adult lives. Human cultures vary enormously in their approaches to the rearing of children and no one culture can claim to be the template of good practice for all.

Yet there is the factor of our common humanity and something that can be recognized as universal

*T*he age at which children began reading was associated with a gender gap in literacy.

childhood. In the present roller-coaster plethora of advice, research, and increasing polarization of views, we must look for deeper aspects of childhood so that as parents, caregivers and educators we also do not become restricted to a particular one-sided approach or dogma. The interests of young children are the interests of the whole of society, and their importance should be of primary concern if we are to find solutions to the many social and ethical challenges facing us.

> How quality in early childhood education and care is defined and evaluated will be a concern not only for politicians, experts, administrators and professionals, but will also be a matter for a broader citizenry…. It becomes important to create forums or arenas for discussion and reflection where people can engage with devotion and vision…. Within these arenas a lively dialogue can take place in which early childhood education and care are placed within larger societal context and where questions concerning children's position are made vivid. (Dahlberg and Åsen 1994)

Being concerned about the early years of human life also has the capability to draw out what is best in us as adults. If we wish to help our children develop devotion and vision, we also have to strive for them ourselves, since in our world they are no longer just a given fact of life. So we should welcome the fact that the role and content of education in the early years is a matter of such a wide and intense debate as evidence that its importance is unquestioned.

The Cross-National Data

Of all the countries in Europe only Northern Ireland starts compulsory schooling at age four; five countries (the Netherlands, Malta, England, Scotland and Wales) begin at five; a further nineteen countries at six; and eight at seven. Interestingly one of the latter, namely Finland, scored very well in the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (2001 PISA) study which assessed a quarter of a million children in 32 countries. In this survey by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on skills in literacy, numeracy, and scientific understanding, Finland scored significantly better than any other European country. There may be other imponderables at work here, but what this does show is that starting later need not necessarily be a disadvantage. A few years ago there was a national debate in Finland about reducing the school starting age from the traditional age of seven. However, in light of both common-sense arguments and scientific evidence regarding children's neurological development, it was decided not to lower the school starting age.

The countries that scored less well are less likely to follow this aspect of Finnish educational policy. Germany's low ranking has been claimed to be analogous to the "sputnik shock" in the USA, and one result of this is growing pressure to start formal learning earlier. In spite of anecdotal evidence of numerous discrete summer pilgrimages by officials and policy makers to Finland during the summer, it seems they are rather inclined to adopt what Lillian Katz calls the "push-down phenomenon." In her Royal Society of Arts lecture in London she pointed out that there is evidence of short-term advantage if three-, four- and five-year-olds are put in formal instruction but there is also evidence of some noticeable disadvantages in the long term. "There are two important points to note here," she writes (2000),

> First, it's only in the long term that you can see the disadvantages of early formal instruction. Second, early formal instruction is particularly damaging to boys…. My favourite theory is that, on the whole, early learning damages the disposition to learn.

In fact a 1992 International Association for the Evaluation for Educational Achievement (IEA) study of reading literacy in 32 countries showed that the age at which children began reading was associated with a gender gap in literacy. The ten top scoring countries had a later starting age with an average of 6.3. The study concludes:

> It is clearly a plausible hypothesis that boys are too immature to begin reading formally at the age of five, and that their difficulties are represented in low achievement, relative to girls, at both the age of nine and fourteen.

The, as yet, unpublished reworking of the IEA data for 27 of these countries has also showed that in only four countries did children start reading before the age of five. Yet it was in all these four countries (and only these) that there was a distinct gender gap at the age of nine (Mills and Mills 1998).

Caroline Sharp's paper "School Starting Age: European Policy and Recent Research" (2002) produced for the National Foundation for Educational Research gives a very balanced view of the whole issue of whether teaching literacy and numeracy can cause damage to young child's development. She mentions that the early school starting age in the UK was not established for any particular educational reason; it was enacted into law in 1870 partly out of concerns for protection of young children from exploitation and partly to appease employers by enabling an early school leaving age. In any case, six is the most common starting age worldwide. Sharp's conclusions regarding academic achievement are that that there is no conclusive evidence about starting school at different ages. The best available evidence suggests that starting teaching more formal skills early gives children an initial academic advantage, but that this advantage is not sustained in the long term. There are some suggestions that an early introduction of formal curriculum may increase anxiety and have a negative impact on children's self-esteem and motivation to learn. Top performing counties in the Third International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) 1996 survey had a school starting age of six, although the factors for this need further research. "What we can say," the survey concluded,

is that a later start does not appear to hold back children's progress…. Certainly, there would appear to be no compelling educational rationale for a statuary school age of five or for the practice of admitting four year olds to school reception classes.

In June 2001 the OECD issued its long anticipated and highly regarded thematic review of early childhood education and care policy (ECEC) for twelve countries. It is significant that for the OECD, early childhood extends until the age of eight and that "education" and "care" are conjoined. It is explicitly stated in the report that flexible curricula, built on the inputs of children, teachers and parents are more suitable in early childhood than detailed, expert driven curricula.

> Contemporary research suggests … that the curricula should be broad and holistic with greater emphasis on developmental outcomes rather than subject outcomes … more process-related and co-constructive … defined by the vital interests and needs of the children, families and communities … and more in tune with socio-cultural contexts. (OECD 2001)

This was an international call for flexible frameworks that give freedom for adaptation, experimentation, and cultural inputs.

The testing regime that accompanies the pressure for early learning is also under scrutiny. The London University Institute of Education's systematic review of the available evidence made a wide-ranging search of studies of assessment for summative purposes in schools for students between the ages of four and eighteen. After searching through 183 studies, nineteen of which they identified as providing sound and valid empirical evidence, the researchers concluded that

> what emerges is strong evidence of negative impact of testing on pupils motivation, though this varied in degree with the pupils, characteristics and with the conditions of their learning…. Lower achieving pupils are doubly disadvantaged by the tests. Being labelled as failures has an impact on how they feel about their ability to learn. (Harlen and Crick 2003)

The researchers suggestion is, therefore, that new forms of testing will be developed that will make it possible to assess all valued outcomes of education including, for example, creativity and problem solving, not just literacy and numeracy, and that, furthermore, such assessments should only be one element in a more broadly based judgement. However the researchers also found that

> when passing tests in high stakes, teachers adopt a teaching style which emphasises transmission teaching of knowledge, thereby favouring those students who prefer to learn in this way and disadvantaging and lowering the self-esteem of those who prefer more active and creative learning experiences.

Although this paper is more concerned with older student's reactions, we should not overlook the fact that four-year-olds can also feel that they are failures and the sense that they are letting their parents down can be devastating and lasting. It also begs the question of what is developmentally appropriate for young child's learning that is in harmony with their natural need for "active and creative learning experiences" as expressed in play.

Play

Play is vital to human learning. It can consolidate and support learning in an infinite variety of situations. It assists the development of cognitive and social skills; encourages problem solving skills; supports language development and the expression of emotions; and provides opportunities for exercise and coordination. It also needs space and time, which are the very factors the "hurried curriculum" threatens to efface.

> We know that we can teach children to read at four if we wanted to but we wanted them to spend those years playing. Here you teach them to give the right answers. We want them to solve problems, cooperate with others and cope with life. (in Karpf 2001)

It could be argued children have the fundamental right to be prepared for school in such a way that the impact of their individuality does not become a handicap. The Hungarian educational sociologist, József Nagy, found enormous differentiation in children's capabilities:

> Children with a calendar age of six can demonstrate a biological difference of plus or minus one year, a difference in mental development of plus or minus two and a half years and a difference of plus or minus three years in social development.

In the 1980s, after researching school-based attempts to overcome this variation, he concluded that schools were incapable of doing so, "The result is that the school career of those entering is predetermined by their stage of development at entry" (Mills and Mills 1998). Because such a wide variation of capacities and personal development is unsuitable for a setting in which formal learning can successfully take place for all children, the view that the purpose of preschool provision is to prepare children for formal learning gains greater credence. Whole class teaching requires the children to be capable of receiving and benefiting from it, which requires a certain stage of readiness. This is, in fact, the child's right.

Perhaps at this point we should turn to the evidence of the poets who have an instinctive, rather than an analytical, approach to childhood that should not be disregarded just because of its lack of academic rigor. Poets are often able to retain their closeness to the qualities of childhood that the rest of us lose. Miroslav Holub (1992), himself a distinguished biologist, remembers his own Czech childhood and the need to inwardly breath.

> Ten million years
> from the Miocene
> to the primary school in Jecnà Street.
>
> We know everything
> from a to z.
>
> But sometimes the finger stops
> in the empty space between a and b,
> empty as the prairie at night,
>
> between g and h,
> deep as the eyes of the sea,
>
> between m and n,
> long as man's birth,
>
> sometimes it stops
> in the galactic cold

after the letter z,
at the beginning and the end,

trembling a little
like some strange bird.

Not from despair.
Just like that.

If this space is so vital, where is there evidence that there is a greater good in losing it? What do we destroy if we fill up all the space in a child's imaginative and emotional life? Lowering the age at which children start formal learning is, in fact, a small revolution with little debate or serious consideration of the consequences.

> The precise educational rationale for the school environment being offered to four year old children has either been given inadequate attention or overlooked altogether. (Woodhead 1997)

A change of such significance and consequence surely needs careful and deep consideration, especially as its effects impinge on everyone and could be lifelong.

The Child's Rights

Beginning in the 19th century pre-school education in Europe had humanitarian roots in catering to children from working class families. It was said of Margaret McMillan (1860-1931), a great pioneer in this work, that "her anger burned at the violation of the lives of little children. She fought as one inspired to prevent their misuse" (Lowndes 1960). A similar romantic notion was shared by Ellen Key, the Swedish educational reformer, whose influential book *The Century of the Child* was published in 1900.

> The next century will be the century of the child just as the last century has been the woman's century. When the child gets his rights, morality will be perfect.

Perhaps we do not have to be so romantically inclined or so passionately engaged to notice that children and the quality of childhood face new threats in the 21st Century. We have to take to heart such warnings as

> What has become clear from this short analysis of international educational research is that the drive of successive English governments to introduce formal scholastic teaching at ever earlier ages serves merely to create the failure it seeks to avoid. Until our first phase of education—for our three-, four- and five-year-olds—has goals, curriculum content and appropriate teaching strategies to *prepare* children for formal schooling … our educational "beginnings" will not be as "sound" as we might hope. (Aubrey, Ray, and Thompson 2000)

We should also applaud when a brave politician, such as Jane Davidson, the new Minister of Education for Wales, stands up to the prevailing trend and ends the formal educational testing of seven-year-old children so that Wales can be a place "where our children get the best start in life" in favor of a curriculum that is less formal and more child centered. Or when the Swedish government takes pride in its Early Years curriculum because it is the shortest and least prescriptive in Europe. As R. S. Thomas (1955), speaking for children, wrote,

> We live in our world,
> A world that is too small
> For you to enter
> Even on hands and knees,
> The adult subterfuge.
> And though you probe and pry
> With analytic eye,
> And eavesdrop all our talk
> With an amused look,
> You cannot find our centre
> Where we dance, where we play,
> Where life is still asleep
> Under the closed flower,
> Under the smooth shell
> Of eggs in the cupped nest
> That mock the faded blue
> Of your remoter heaven.

Our analytical approach has its limitations; because we are working and caring for children we should allow our feelings to participate in this debate. Children have the gift of "becoming" in the sense used by Walt Whitman.

> There was a child went forth every day,
> And the first object he looked upon,
>   that object he became
> And that object became part of him for the day
>   or a certain part of the day,
> Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

In this gift of "becoming" we can find the roots of our humanity, our compassion, empathy and tolerance. Do we really need to squander these because of short-term goals and a lack of foresight and due attention? Listening to the children themselves would be a good start.

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Philosophically Based Alternatives in Education

Robin Ann Martin

Information about the varied universe of child-centered, progressive, and holistic educational opportunities is now available.

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Too often, teachers, parents, and researchers know little about the diversity of educational choices available to them. This article provides an overview of the commonalties and differences among child-centered, progressive, and holistic alternatives. Exploring educational alternatives that fall "between the cracks" of mainstream education and culture, I present a summary of a number of schools and learning centers. It is not a conclusive survey or an in-depth study of any single alternative; rather, it provides a backdrop for anyone who wishes to examine the diversity of educational alternatives available today.

While the sources of data for this article include over five years of informal interviews and observations with persons, the primary sources were written materials (books, journals, dissertations, etc.) that describe and investigate unique schools and other learning options. Beginning with a summary of what these kinds of schools have in common as philosophical alternatives to traditional or conventional education, I then describe each type of school as a particular philosophically based alternative. This article is also intended as a "starting place" with an array of references from which educators and researchers can engage in their own explorations.

Commonalities

Generally speaking, in terms of their commonalties, philosophically based alternatives should be distinguished from at-risk, special-needs, and subject-matter alternatives. Although philosophically based alternatives may serve special populations or may focus on particular subject matters (such as the arts or music), their most essential features are their

overall perspectives on and approaches to education.

Avoiding many levels of school bureaucracies, these alternatives strive to be flexible, caring communities where people come before procedures, rules, or technology.

Within both free and democratic schools, the children's role is to learn, with the expectation that they will follow their own interests.

At the same time, these alternative schools are *not* distinguished by an absence of conflict. Students disagree with teachers; teachers disagree with parents; and so forth. Alternative schools are often unique, though, by the ways in which conflict is approached and resolved. Sometimes alternative schools even welcome conflict as a learning experience, or at the very least they see it as a valuable opportunity for observing themselves in more challenging situations, and out of which new solutions can emerge.

Philosophically based alternatives also tend not to be rooted in an overly objective or solely rational way of knowing. The learner is seen as a whole person, which includes the emotional, spiritual, physical, social, and intellectual aspects of the personality. Learners are engaged in the world as it presents itself, not the world as divided into the separate categories or disciplines by our abstract intelligence.

Another quality that distinguishes these alternatives from conventional schools is the premium that alternative schools place on human development. They focus more on the interests and capacities of the developing child than on adults' own standards and expectations—or on the adults' views of what children need to know and be able to do (Crain 2003). The developmental perspective has deep historical roots. As educational historian Ron Miller explains:

> Throughout the 200-year history of public schooling, a widely scattered group of critics have pointed out that the education of young human beings should involve much more than simply molding them into future workers or cit-

izens. The Swiss humanitarian Johann Pestalozzi, the American Transcendentalists (Thoreau, Emerson, and Alcott), the founders of "progressive" education (Francis Parker and John Dewey) and pioneers such as Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, among others, all insisted that education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child. (Miller 1999)

Within the developmental perspective, alternative schools emphasize that learners are individuals. Conventional schools may talk about "individual needs," but they are dominated by the standards movement in which all children are expected to meet measurable goals at specified dates. Alternative schools resist the standards movement's one size fits all approach.

Aside from their philosophical underpinnings, alternative schools often have a common commitment to keeping learning environments small and personal, usually ranging in size from about 10 to 400 students, with the larger schools divided into smaller groupings. Many of the longer-lasting alternatives seem to maintain a population of 30 to 100 students, increasing in size as students move from elementary to middle and high school levels. These numbers match the considerable research on small schools (see <www.ael.org/eric/small.htm>) that indicates advantages of maintaining a small size, regardless of philosophy. Similarly, many person-centered alternatives maintain a student/staff ratio that is far lower than average. Schools with 5 to 15 students per teacher are not uncommon among philosophical alternatives.

Democratic and Free Schools

Many educators have heard of Summerhill, the radical "free school" in England, founded by A. S. Neill in 1921. Fewer know about the many other schools that have developed similar approaches or modified Neill's premises to fit their own needs and community. From Play Mountain Place in Los Angeles to the Albany Free School to the Children's Village School in Thailand, *free schools* have not withered away but continue to flourish with records of long-term success. Their primary purpose is to create

a safe environment in which children can learn *freely*; that is, without the use of force or coercion, drawing on children's curiosity to lead their own learning. In a recent historical account of the free school movement that emerged from the 1960s, Miller describes free schools as

> small groups (generally twenty to forty people) of families and idealistic young educators who, in the spirit of the time, believed that learning should be intimate, spontaneous, and joyful—specifically not controlled by textbooks, curricula, instructional methods, or rigid rules of behavior" (Miller 2002, 3).

Many *free schools* are structured in ways that lead them to be *democratic* schools as well, where staff and students have an equal vote. Some schools allow votes on all matters, including financial, conflict resolution, staffing, and minor administrative decisions. Other schools divide into committees, or sometimes the director retains the power to make some administrative decisions. Voting in democratic schools is usually done in weekly all-school meetings. At the Albany Free School, whenever a child or adult feels their rights have been infringed upon by another, they may call an all-school meeting at any time to resolve the conflict immediately (Mercogliano 1997). The leader of an all-school meeting is generally elected at each meeting and is usually a student rather than an adult. Rules and procedures agreed upon by the whole community via a democratic vote have a tendency to be honored by community members young and old, with everyone understanding the procedures necessary for overturning a decision.

Within both free and democratic schools, the children's role is to learn, with the expectation that they will follow their own interests. In addition, students are expected to serve as responsible community members, following the rules of the community or facing the consequences. The role of teachers and parents varies from school to school. In some schools, teachers offer classes for students who wish to take them; in other schools, teachers are cautious even about teaching or offering any classes until students request a lesson.

Like Summerhill, the Sudbury Valley School (SVS) believes that parents tend toward the unnecessary use of authority and external compulsion to educate children, which SVS tries to avoid. Thus at SVS, the school community is primarily composed of students and staff; however, some schools modeled after SVS are so small that parents often serve as staff to get the schools started. In contrast, at Play Mountain Place (PMP), the role of the parents has been significant from the get-go in the 1950s because the PMP philosophy considers everyone to be a teacher, so they strive to involve parents in the daily activities of the school. For more information about PMP and other free schools, visit *Paths of Learning*'s online library at <www.PathsOfLearning.net/library/freeschools.cfm>.

Folk Education

Folk education is a grassroots movement whose history began in Scandinavia in the 1800s. Unlike other alternatives described in this article, which are mostly for youth and K-12 education, folk education is more concerned with the political empowerment of adults. As we move into the new millennium adults might be more familiar with folk education through experiences with voluntary simplicity, eco-teams, or other informal grassroots movements.

Within academia, this type of learning is sometimes called "*radical adult education*" as it aims to get at the roots of education for social change. Danish Folk High Schools were started in the middle of the 19th century, with N. F. S. Grundtvig envisioning how these self-governing residential institutions could provide a place

> where the peasant and the citizen can obtain knowledge and guidance for use and pleasure not so much in regard to his livelihood but in regard to his situation as … a citizen. (in Smith 2002)

In 1925, over 300,000 young Danes attended folk schools, which were free of government control, a place having nothing to do with grades, tests, or even diplomas, but having everything to do with emotionally charged issues directly relevant to the lives of participants. American social activist Myles Horton, who visited these Danish folk schools in

1931, found that the most successful folk schools dealt as much with feelings and will as with memory and logic (Adams 1975).

Also called *people's education*, this movement aims to provide education that is of, for, and by the people. Its power is such that governments or corporations in political power tend not to like it because it stirs people to think and act in ways that disturb the status quo. Educational activist Paulo Freire was exiled from Brazil from 1964 to 1979 for teaching his fellow citizens to read in ways that made them more aware of their own disenfranchisement.

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*A*voiding many levels of school bureaucracies, these alternatives strive to be flexible, caring communities where people come before procedures, rules, or technology.

Today the movement of folk education in the United States is facilitated by the Folk and People's Education Association of America. Through its newsletter and quarterly journal as well as its annual conference, the FPEAA supports radical adult education in many forms from simplicity circles to participatory action research to other grassroots groups in cultural work, environmental work, economic work, and community leadership.

Friends (Quaker) Schools

Quakers (members of the Religious Society of Friends) have contributed to social and educational reform in American culture since the seventeenth century. Friends schools are distinct from many other religious alternatives in the extent of their person-centered practices. Known for their academic rigor, Friends schools also pride themselves on the development of a caring community within and beyond the walls of the school.

Examining the missions of schools at the Friends Council on Education (FCE) website <http://friendscouncil.org>, several themes stand out. The goals tend not to separate the end of education from the process of learning. Both the purpose and process of education involve treating each person with dignity and respect, and understanding that different people learn in different ways. They sometimes describe the goal of self-direction as helping students to "uncover their own leadings." Personal and individual responsibility within the community are essential for success. In addition, lifelong learning, social justice, and challenging human oppression are often supplementary goals of the Friends schools. At the global level, Quakers like to think of it as "creating the world that ought to be." Many Friends schools emphasize "simplicity, honesty, the peaceful resolution of conflict, the dignity of physical labor, mutual trust and respect, and care for each other and the earth" (The Meeting School web site, <www.mv.com/ipusers/tms>).

Quaker schools tend to be organized in somewhat conventional ways, within classrooms where teachers tend to use traditional methods to facilitate discussions around common academic subjects. They often use grades and grade levels for student advancement as well. Their use of meetings, silence, queries, and conflict resolution techniques are some of the ways by which they enliven their educational goals and philosophies. It is felt that these processes give a more heartfelt flavor to decision making within the schools. For conflict resolution, they engage in "clearness committees." Parker Palmer describes these committees as "a communal approach to discernment" that is designed to protect "individual identity and integrity while drawing on the wisdom of other people" (Palmer 2000). You will also find a useful listing of peace and conflict resolution education resources for different age groups on the FCE website <http://friendscouncil.org>.

The student's role in Quaker schools is to serve as a responsible learner and community member. Among other responsibilities, the teacher's role is "to make daily space for the inward journey of every student." For a brief list of sixteen characteristics of teachers identified by the FCE, visit its website, and click on "Best Practices." Parents are not mentioned much in the Quakers' online educational literature and some Quaker schools in the U. S. are boarding schools which obviously limits the involvement of parents. Nonetheless, I have heard

Quaker educators describe parents as "partners and allies" with the school.

Homeschooling, Unschooling, and Deschooling

Perhaps the largest school alternative in the 1990s, the numbers of homeschoolers in the United States grew from an estimated 0.8 to 1.4% of the K-12 student population from 1994 to 1996. While these figures are estimates, it is quite certain that between 345,000 to 636,000 children between the ages of 6 and 17 participated in home education during those years.[1]

The goals of homeschooling vary as widely as the goals and purposes of schools around the world. Like other educational alternatives, homeschooling expands well beyond traditional modes of teaching and learning. Of particular interest for parents thinking outside the mainstream approaches are the "unschooling" and "de-schooling" movements within home education. (It should also be noted that homeschooling approaches also exist in affiliation with Montessori, Waldorf, and many other educational philosophies.)

Unschooling is a form of homeschooling that was popularized by educator and author John Holt in the 1970s. Today, the unschooling philosophy is perhaps best expressed in popular books by Grace Llewellyn and Linda Dobson. In 1997, Llewellyn's *Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School & Get a Real Life and Education* was published as a practical guide for teenagers (and parents) who were fed up with traditional learning where students remained hidden inside classrooms and textbooks. Her purpose was to illustrate the means and resources for learning through community and personal experiences (e.g., apprenticeships). She showed how homeschooling could be a fulfilling use of time while also providing the necessary social interactions beyond what is available in most traditional schools.

A complementary trend in homeschooling is called *deschooling*, which began with the publication of Ivan Illich's famous book, *Deschooling Society* (1971). A lesser-known book entitled *Deschooling Our Lives* followed a quarter of a century later with practical examples "about people, individuals, families, and communities taking control of the direction and shape of their lives … and homelearning as a funda-

mentally cooperative social project" (in Hern 1996). In the book's foreword, Illich reflects on changes in his own thinking about these matters:

> If people are seriously to think about deschooling lives, and not just escape from the corrosive effects of compulsory schooling, they could do no better than to develop the habit of setting a mental question mark beside all discourse on young people's "educational needs" or "learning needs," or about their need for a "preparation for life." I would like them to reflect on the historicity of these very ideas. Such reflection would take the new crop of deschoolers a step further from where the younger and somewhat naïve Ivan was situated, back when talk of "deschooling" was born. (in Hern 1996, ix-x)

Often when liberal-minded parents hear about such homeschooling trends, the first reaction is that it's a good idea—in theory. Yet, the fears of "what if…?" often lead parents to use less child-centered methods when educating their own children. For more evidence and "fear-relieving" facts and stories about how unschooling really works, a good place to start is Holt Associates' "Q & A on Homeschooling" (www.holtgws.com/FAQ.htm), along with other works by John Holt. To locate national and local networks of unschoolers, try <www.unschooling.org> (The Family Unschoolers Network), as well as <www.unschooling.com> (sponsored by Home Education Magazine). In addition, Karl Bunday's "Learn in Freedom" website <http://learninfreedom.org> provides evidence on how students can and do learn on their own with great success and with greater freedoms than ever. Bunday also shows that despite this nontraditional approach, homeschoolers are admitted into many highly selective colleges.

Krishnamurti Schools

How do we move beyond our own conditioning? How do we create schools for the young that do not instill in them our own fears and prejudices? According to J. Krishnamurti, we must create an education that is not a "system" but is built around the human

qualities of the teacher and child and how they relate to one another.

What exactly constitutes a Krishnamurti School? What are the intentions and aims of these schools? These questions, along with important implications about the roles of teachers, were addressed by Krishnamurti in 1984 in a statement made at a school in Ojai, California, based on his teachings.

> It is becoming more and more important in a world that is destructive and degenerating that there should be a place, an oasis, where one can learn a way of living that is whole, sane and intelligent. Education in the modern world has been concerned with the cultivation not of intelligence, but of intellect, of memory and its skills. In this process little occurs beyond passing information from the teacher to the taught, the leader to the follower, bringing about a superficial and mechanical way of life. In this there is little human relationship.
>
> Surely a school is a place where one learns about the totality, the wholeness of life. Academic excellence is absolutely necessary, but a school includes much more than that. It is a place where both the teacher and the taught explore not only the outer world, the world of knowledge, but also their own thinking, their own behaviour. From this they begin to discover their own conditioning and how it distorts their thinking. This conditioning is the self to which such tremendous and cruel importance is given. Freedom from conditioning and its misery begins with this awareness. It is only in such freedom that true learning can take place. In this school it is the responsibility of the teacher to sustain with the student a careful exploration into the implications of conditioning and thus end it. (Krishnamurti 1984)

Each Krishnamurti school is unique as it endeavors to evolve from a "methodless" or "pathless" approach. Some have evolved with an academic focus, others with a spiritual emphasis, and others with a more psychological foundation for student development. As far as I know, there is not yet any formal research about Krishnamurti schools that has been published; however, the doctoral research of Scott H.

Forbes is based, in large part, on his personal synthesis of 20 years of work in one of the Krishnamurti schools where "Krishnaji" spent about half of every year. This research has recently been distilled into a book that describes the intellectual precedents for the field of holistic education (Forbes 2003). Although Forbes examines the work of six authors other than Krishnamurti, his analysis could be considered an intellectual presentation of the philosophy of education in Krishnamurti's work, through its discussion of "sagacious competences" that are deemed important for learning in holistic education.

More information about specific schools, foundations, or educational centers inspired by Krishnamurti can be found on the Krishnamurti Information Network's Community web pages at <www.kinfonet.org/Community>.

Montessori Schools

Montessori schools are in principle based on the philosophy and methodologies developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, the first woman to become a medical doctor in Italy and a respected pioneer in education as well. Montessori was one of the few developmental theorists who devoted her life to the actual teaching of young children. Examining her approach from the perspective of holistic education, Ron Miller (1997, 160) writes that

> Montessori's central concern was the natural development of the child, the healthy formation of the physical, mental, and spiritual qualities that are latent in the human being and which unfold, she believed, according to a purposeful, even divine, life force (for which she used the word *hormé*).... Given the proper nurturing environment, *hormé* impels the child to unfold his or her potential personality, to expand his powers, assert his independence, and create an adult identity.

William Crain emphasizes that the goal of education in Montessori schools is not for the teacher to direct, drill, or instruct; rather, it is to give children opportunities for independent mastery. Montessori education is based on the premise that children will work on their own—and with intense concentration-on tasks and activities that allow them to develop their

potentials at different phases of their lives. Montessori education was developed as an environment that would "correspond to the children's inner needs at various sensitive periods"(Crain 2000, 71-72).

Montessori's work developed primarily through direct observations of young children. Thus, the strength of the Montessori method is working within and building on the developmental needs of young children. As of 1997, there were over 3,000 Montessori schools in the United States. These are primarily private schools, but some are public, and Montessori charter schools may continue to appear. Leaders in the Montessori movement like to point out that Montessori also wrote about older children and adolescents (even though these writings are less known), and schools and classrooms serving children beyond the preschool and primary years continue to emerge.

The Montessori teacher's role is to develop learning environments that are age-appropriate and aligned with Montessori's philosophy and methodology. Teachers in the International Montessori Society follow Montessori's own methods closely, while teachers in the American Montessori Society more often depart from them. Crain (2000) observes that although Montessori schools are known for their indoor materials, the schools value children's explorations of the natural world. In all Montessori schools, families are considered partners, an integral part of each child's total development, with parents being the first teachers.

For more details on the philosophies and structures of Montessori schools, consult these growing organizations: International Montessori Society <www.wdn.com/trust/ims>; American Montessori Society <www.amshq.org>; and North American Montessori Teachers' Association <www.montessori-namta.org>

Progressive Education

Progressive education, as initially developed by Francis Parker and John Dewey, has been the topic of an enormous amount of writing and discussion. It was inspired by efforts to remove the deadening quality of the traditional fare of textbooks, tests, and lectures. Observing that children take a lively interest in activities outside of school, Dewey wanted to make schools places where children also find learning exciting and meaningful (Dewey 1959, 53).

One of the key aspects of progressive education is the projects approach. Dewey emphasized children's active engagement in projects such as gardening, cooking, writing plays and newsletters, building things, painting murals, and conducting experiments. He also pointed out that children learn a great deal of conceptual material through such projects. For example, they can learn geometry through the design of a garden plot or a kite (Dewey 1916, 199-202). And whereas they find the lessons contained in textbooks dry and irrelevant, they value the concepts learned in their constructive activities because the concepts enable them to fulfill their creative impulses.

A second theme in progressive education is cooperation and democratic community life. Dewey (1959, 39) thought of school as an instrument of reform, of which democratic participation and community-mindedness would become an essential part. He thought of the best social organization as a cooperative workplace, in which students work together on projects that have real meaning to them.

Dewey's ideas had an enormous impact on American education in the first half of the 20th Century, and his ideas continue to be implemented and debated. Unfortunately, mainstream education often adopted progressive education in diluted and misunderstood forms, so an evaluation of them has been difficult. Still, progressive education was the focus on one of history's outstanding evaluations of educational reform. In 1942, the Commission on the Relation of School and College of the Progressive Education Association completed one of the most thorough and rigorous longitudinal studies ever. Across eight years, the Commission examined thousands of graduates from 30 large and small school systems around the country who received waivers from traditional college entrance requirements. The graduates were systematically matched with graduates in traditional programs, and characteristics from specific aspects of thinking to social sensitivity were closely tracked and evaluated. The results showed that

> graduates of the Thirty Schools did as well as the comparison group in every measure of scholastic competence, and in many aspects of development, which are more important than

marks, they did better. The further a school departed from the traditional college preparatory program, the better was the record of its graduates. (Aiken 1942, 5: xvii)

Non-academic areas in which students in progressive schools outperformed those in conventional schools included intellectual curiosity, drive, and resourcefulness. More recent research addressing projects-based learning (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 1998), as well as research with respect to open schools that share much of the progressive philosophy (Glines 1995), point in the same directions.

Unfortunately, the fate of progressive schools-their survival or discontinuation—seems less related to their demonstrated success than to "the temper of the times" (Semel and Sadovnik 1999, 356). In the current era of standards and testing, many progressive schools, like most philosophical alternatives, are having difficulty keeping their heads above water.

Still, the progressive philosophy guides several of today's most prestigious schools, such as the Ethical Culture School, the Bank Street School, the Manhattan Country School, and the Calhoun School in New York City. In addition, projects-based learning continues to be explored in highly regarded books such as Lillian Katz and Sylvia Chard's *Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach* (1992).

Moreover, Dewey's own writings continue to be of enormous theoretical importance. Especially influential is Dewey's view that the highest aim of education is growth. Dewey (1959, 29) observed that the first signs of a child's newly emerging powers are the child's interests in an activity; then, aided by teachers, children develop these powers through energetic inquiry and work. Dewey's theoretical writing informs the work of a number of important contemporary educators and scholars, from Alfie Kohn (1999) to Vito Perrone (1991)

Open Schools (and Classrooms)

In *The Open Classroom: A Practical Guide to a New Way of Teaching*, author and New York City teacher Herb Kohl (1969) defined a radical alternative that came to be used in public schools in the 1970s. This book was a direct response to working in an authoritative school environment that was more about controlling students than teaching them. Kohl describes the struggles, problems, failures, and successes of teachers trying to create non-authoritarian classrooms amidst the "battles with self and system" that teachers encounter in public schools (Kohl 1969, 15).

Open education was actually a British import, brought to the U.S. by Lillian Weber and others as variations on the British Infant Schools (which served children from the ages of about 5 to 8). A critical feature of open education is freedom, including children's freedom to move about the classroom and open access to materials of their choosing. Teachers, too, have freedom to innovate in the experiences they provide the pupils. Open education has adopted many of the methods and theoretical perspectives of progressive education; indeed, it is not always easy to know if a particular school is better categorized as one or the other. In any case, today The Coalition of Essential Schools continues the legacy of both open classrooms and progressive education.

> In theory, the open classrooms were designed based on student participation rather than compulsion; they were intended to validate and honor students' sincere desires to learn. In practice, the patience needed to make such a school or classroom work effectively often exceeded what most school districts were willing to endure. Many teachers now look back on open classrooms as merely another fad of the seventies. However, today many of the over 1,000 members of Coalition of Essential Schools continue to focus on such progressive ideals and the use of non-authoritarian practices originally exemplified by open classrooms. Essential School principles emphasize the "values of unanxious expectation ('I won't threaten you but I expect much of you'), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance)." <www.essentialschools.org>

Several *open schools* developed well-documented track records, including the Mankato Wilson Campus School, Mountain Open School (now called Jefferson County Open School), and St. Paul Open School. Don Glines's book *Creating Educational Futures: Continuous Mankato Wilson Alternatives* describes 69 specific and radical changes implemented at a year-round open school that operated for ten

years in Minnesota (Glines 1995). The Mountain Open School is described in Tom Gregory's book *Making High School Work: Lessons from the Open School* (1993). The Saint Paul Open School was studied along with nine other free and open schools in a qualitative research study by Robert Skenes entitled *Free Forming: Greater Personal Fulfillment Through Living Democracy* (1978). In describing the early days of one school, Skenes writes:

> The St. Paul Open School pioneered student-centered, community-based learning in the public school arena. With no bells, no grade levels, no course grades or credits, the Open School demonstrated that students could successfully learn through making choices and pursuing their interests with the help of supportive, facilitative adults both within the community of the school and in the broader community beyond the school's walls. At the time of this "snapshot," there were over 1,000 students on the waiting list to get into the school. (Skenes 2000, 53)

One of the best resources documenting the successful practices of open classrooms, open schools, and related humanistic endeavors in public education is Dorothy Fadiman's video "Why Do These Kids Love School?" (1990). This video profiles eight progressive public schools in the United States with high standards that are "met through mutual trust" within each school community. Three features noted as being shared by the schools profiled were: (1) innovative curricula, with teachers free to be creative, (2) non-competitive environments, and (3) shared responsibility for the school among all school members: students, teachers, and administrators.

Waldorf (or Steiner) Schools

The growing phenomenon of spiritually based Waldorf education is based on the "anthroposophical" (human wisdom) teachings of Rudolf Steiner in the early 20th century. This approach aims to educate children to "become free, responsible, and active human beings, able to create a just and peaceful society" (Koetzsch 1997, 216). Many Waldorf educators consider themselves to be "child-centered;" one of their hallmarks is focusing on the needs of the whole child. Paradoxically, however, in an important sense they are teacher-centered in that they are clearly led by teachers. Waldorf teachers aim to help children in learning the life rhythms for creating an inner balance to help prepare them for creating lives of outward balance.

Structurally, Waldorf schools are similar in some

In a society that values pluralism and diversity for the creation of a more sustainable world and a more just democracy, the diversity of philosophical perspectives in education needs greater recognition.

ways to Montessori schools. Both tend to be private schools, with some venturing into the public realm as charter schools. Both Montessori and Waldorf are primarily small schools for younger students, with a focus on the developmental needs of students. At the same time, both are expanding into the upper grades.

However, the core philosophies are quite different. Montessori did significant research into natural learning and the unfolding needs of the whole child. Although Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919, overall he was more involved with the development of his own spiritual philosophy of human wisdom than with researching education or children. Nonetheless, his approach has holistic elements that appeal to increasing numbers of parents as well as teachers. Steiner schools (as they are called in Europe) focus on integrating the inner rhythms of nature and child through music, art, and dance. Waldorf schools also emphasize the development of the senses and handiwork and crafts, with pupils making and binding their own books in the middle school years. Perhaps more than any other educational system, Waldorf schools recognize that full and healthy development takes time. Waldorf schools have resisted pressures to hurry it. In his book *Reclaiming Childhood* (2003), William Crain

credits Waldorf education for meaningful resistance to the premature transmission of abstract thought via high-speed digital computers.

It may be worth noting that both Montessori and Waldorf schools have their own special teacher credentialing programs. Further, both types of education have rarely been studied by outside educators or researchers who are not already committed to the school philosophies and structures. One well-documented qualitative study by Mary Henry compares a Waldorf school to a private Catholic school by examining the details of their cultures in terms of myths, curricula, rituals, and relationships. This study is described in the book *School Cultures: Universes of Meaning in Private Schools* (Henry 1993). In another independent study, David Marshak compares the philosophies and daily practices of schools based on the educational principles of Rudolf Steiner, Sri Aurobindo, and Inayat Khan, described in *The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness* (Marshak 1997). More recently, Doralice Lange DeSouza Rocha (2003) compared three schools that practice holistic approaches to education, with a Waldorf school being one of them. Most other detailed descriptions of Waldorf schools come from organizations such as the Association for Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) <www.waldorfeducation.org>; Rudolf Steiner Library <www.anthroposophy.org>; or Rudolf Steiner Press <www.rudolfsteinerpress.com>.

Concluding Remarks

This summary of nine types of schools indicates the breadth of educational alternatives as they now exist, and shows that when we speak of "alternatives," it is not one or two small trends, but a growing number of child-centered, progressive, and holistic approaches to education. These summaries are but a small sample of the array of educational stories told by over 500 resources in the Paths of Learning Education Clearinghouse, representing hundreds of schools, programs, and projects. Other types of schools and educational approaches—such as the Reggio Emelia approach to early childhood education (Edwards et al. 1998), the emerging and lesser-known Enki Education, or learning traditions within many ancient and native cultures—would provide an even fuller picture of the diversity of philosophical alternatives.

For a more complete summary and discussion of these and other types of alternatives, I recommend Ronald Koetzsch's book, *The Parents' Guide to Alternatives in Education* (1997). In addition, the Informal Education Homepage <www.infed.org> is an excellent source for historic descriptions of core educational philosophers and activists who are associated with many alternatives. For those interested particularly in holistic approaches to education and the foundational ideas of core authors associated with this diverse movement, Scott H. Forbes's new book *Holistic Education: An Analysis of Its Ideas and Nature* (2003) provides a good intellectual summary that suggests a solid conceptual framework for further research in the field.

In a society that values pluralism and diversity for the creation of a more sustainable world and a more just democracy, the diversity of philosophical perspectives in education needs greater recognition. The current absence of such recognition is a serious problem. People might know the names of all the baseball teams in the major leagues, the current movies now playing in the theater, or even the political parties and their ever-changing views on different issues. But very few people in this society are aware of the different forms of education available for children's education. Such a lack of awareness, when it deters funding or involvement in the development of innovative and diverse schools, hinders the development of human potential, meaningful learning, and values such as creativity, courage, collaboration, and care.

Note

1. Statistics cited in this article are from a report entitled *Issues Related to Estimating the Home-Schooled Population in the United States with National Household Survey Data* compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics. This 110-page technical report is available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000311>.

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The Good News About Teacher Personality Disorder

Bruce Marlowe and Marilyn Page

A tongue-in-cheek look at Teacher Personality Disorder (TPD) as a major factor in teacher retention.

Traditional explanations of our national teacher shortage focus on three factors: the growing school-aged population, the increasing number of retiring teachers, and the 50% dropout rate of new teachers in their first five years of teaching. Until recently the reason for this teacher dropout rate has been a mystery. New research has uncovered a surprising culprit: A sharp decline in the prevalence of Teacher Personality Disorder (TPD).

Teacher Personality Disorder

Diagnostic Features

The essential features of Teacher Personality Disorder (TPD) are recurrent self-sacrifice (typically for the perceived benefit of others), low self-concept, and a high degree of tolerance for the contemptuous behavior of others (including, but not limited to students, their parents, administrators, state education personnel, legislators, school boards, community members, and the media). Behaviorally and historically, this disorder has been characterized by the blithe acceptance of an ever-spiraling number of indignities. It has been not uncommon, for example, for teachers afflicted with TPD to willingly assume roles professionals in other fields would regard as far too insulting even to consider. These include serving as hall monitor meanies (imagine a pediatrician being asked to supervise her waiting room between medical consul-

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tations), bathroom bullies, cafeteria heavies, insistent nannies, milk-monitors, cigarette-smoking detectors, and hat- and tee-shirt police. In fact, in its most extreme form, TPD is characterized by a lack of pleasure in the absence of exploitation.

Etiology

Preliminary findings suggest that teachers with TPD evidence marked differences in brain systems involved in the rational inhibition of acquiescence. Recent data also indicate that teachers with TPD may actually be incapable of saying "no" to unreasonable demands. One finds frequently in the literature case studies of teachers agreeing to requests on their time and energy that are both incompatible with reality and may, in extreme cases, jeopardize their mental and physical well-being. While severe symptomatology may cause impairment significant enough to qualify one to work happily in a public school system, individuals with TPD frequently struggle in their personal lives (to the extent that they have one) once they leave the confines of the school setting.

In the last few years, a new and more dangerous component of top-down oppression in the form of state mandates (especially connected to high-stakes testing and the threats of job loss following noncompliance or poor student test scores) has been unveiled and has brought to light the severe magnitude of TPD existing in school systems nationwide.

Subtypes and Specifiers

Teacher Personality Disorders manifest themselves into three distinct subtypes.

Affective Sheep Syndrome. The predominant manifestation of this subtype is an inability to think for oneself. In more extreme cases, one may see symptoms of rigid adherence to directives from above, marked docility, disordered thinking (e.g., "If I don't comply with state mandates, I must be hurting children), and even elective mutism.

Bipolar Personality. In this subtype, teachers swing between manic episodes and depression. In the past, the mania has been often characterized by working on bulletin boards until the early evening, excessive spending of one's own money on school supplies, the harboring of unrealistic expectations about student interest and engagement in academic subjects. Now, the mania manifests itself in a frenzied beating of in-

formation into students so they will do well on tests, constantly checking and even memorizing the state learning standards, and possessing a wild excitement for test scores. Depressive episodes have been and are characterized by hypersomnia, leaden paral-

Schools are becoming increasingly dysfunctional precisely because teachers with TPD are running them.

ysis (i.e., heavy feelings in arms or legs), and a strong belief that only state and local administrators understand the needs of children. Now add to these descriptors of the depressive mode the belief that if the students don't reach certain scores, it must be the teacher's fault.

Missionary Zeal. The primary symptom of this subtype is a maladaptive reaction to unreasonable or silly state mandates. Typically, this includes misplaced trust in educational bureaucrats and energetic, single-minded attempts to "win over" one's colleagues about the value of the latest teacher reform. The missionary keeps tabs on other teachers, warns them in the language of the State of dangers to students and consequences to her/himself for not complying, and evangelizes about the necessity and rewards of the state's rules, laws and administrative code.

Prognosis for Our Schools

Prior to the widespread implementation of high-stakes standardized testing, about one half of teachers showed symptoms of TPD; now most do. Why is this so? And how is this connected to the teacher shortage and dropout rate?

The good news is that current estimates indicate that this devastating psychological defect is on the decline in the teacher population at large. The bad news is that most of the teachers remaining in our public schools suffer from TPD, and, increasingly, individuals willing to enter the profession display symptoms before landing their first job. So, there are really two problems connected to the teacher shortage and dropout rate: First, those unafflicted with TPD choose professions other than teaching and

those cured have already left the building. The second problem is that schools are becoming increasingly dysfunctional precisely because teachers with TPD are running them.

Self-Diagnosis

Do you suffer or are you in danger of developing TPD? How can you tell? Answer the following questions yes or no:

- Do you do whatever your principal tells you to do without discussion or question?

- Do you do whatever your principal tells you to do, but gripe in the teachers' room?

- Do you wish you didn't have to spend so much time preparing your students for standardized tests?

- Do you run around in manic mode trying to redevelop your previously engaging teaching plans to accommodate new State mandates?

- Do you try to bring all teachers on board, no matter what the new mandate?

- Have you lost the joy in teaching and working with students?

- Have you seen a lack of engagement in your students since changing from your previous approach to teaching and learning to one of preparation for the testing?

- Do you get depressed when your students scores aren't as high as other students' scores?

If you answered "yes" to at least three of the eight questions, you are in the red hot danger zone. You probably are terminally afflicted with TPD. You are not thinking for yourself; you are afraid to let your voice be heard; you need critical attention immediately—you need to resign.

If you answered "yes" to one or two questions, you have already started the downward spiral into full blown TPD. But, there is hope. Think about why you became a teacher, about your students, about their passions, about how they truly learn. And, then, believe in your observations and impressions, and don't be afraid to share them with others. Find your voice. Speak up. Change is possible.

Choosing Healing Over Saving

Gregory A. Smith

Initiatives that promote healing require trust, attentiveness, responsiveness, and mutuality to be effective.

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The media, especially books and films directed toward children and youth, frequently feature individual characters in whose hands rests the fate of the world. *The Matrix*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and the Harry Potter series are examples that come readily to mind. It is not surprising that people concerned about the environment and social injustice put on the mantle of prophets or messiahs as they strive to alter the course of what often seems like a human-created juggernaut.

The assumption of a messianic position leads to a divisive form of self-righteousness. From personal experience, I know that this position can stop conversations and interfere with the formation of the collaborative relationships needed to address pressing environmental or social problems. People who believe they know how to "save the world" frequently seek to persuade others to adopt their ideas and understanding. Telling rather than listening comes to dominate their interpersonal relations, and when they do listen, it is to discover areas of ideological impurity rather than uncover new insights in the words of others.

Rather than that of the savior—with its heroic, single-minded, and individualistic connotations—I have found myself drawn to the image of the traditional healer. Contemporary Western physicians tend to see themselves and be seen by their patients as saviors. In many indigenous societies, however, the healer does not so much "save" his or her patient as create the conditions in which healing can occur. In traditional Navajo healing ceremonies, for example, the aim is to reconnect the sick person to the world's harmony and beauty and reassert the patient's fundamental unity with them. The healer possesses skills, particularly with medicinal agents, but what the healer primarily does is remind the pa-

tient of the world's wholeness and its capacity to heal itself (Gill 1979).

This vision of healing requires a partnership with others rather than the imposition of one's will, a vision that can be extended to the planet as well. From this perspective, the environment can then be viewed as a co-collaborator capable of telling us what it needs to become healed. Establishing the conditions that lead to healing involves placing trust in people and their capacity to develop appropriate local responses instead of imposing the generalized solutions so often encountered in the work of saviors, be they religious, ideological, or medical. Healing also requires trusting in the self-organizing and self-healing capacity of natural systems; it is rooted in a deep humility and the recognition that we do not have all the answers.

What might it look like to create the conditions that lead to healing rather than control, and to initiate needed societal changes without falling into a messianic stance? Fortunately, I have had an opportunity to become acquainted with a number of organizations that are approaching contemporary dilemmas in this way. I will describe three.

The Mattole Restoration Council

The Mattole Restoration Council is based in the small community of Petrolia in a part of California known as the Lost Coast. This region, southwest of Eureka, is sparsely populated. It is home to people who make their living primarily from resource extraction: ranchers, loggers, and fishermen. In the 1970s, countercultural migrants moved to the area to take advantage of cheap land. In the 1980s, all of these groups were aware of the fact that once abundant runs of indigenous King salmon were declining precipitously, largely because of the impact of three decades of industrial logging on steep hillsides adjoining riparian zones. It was the new residents who decided to try to do something about it. They initially created a hatchbox system to save young salmon, but they quickly saw the huge challenge they faced.

By getting out into the river and catching salmon in their arms, they began to understand how degraded the watershed had become. Without the retentive capacity of the region's former forests, the Mattole River was now subject to regular floods that scoured out the gravel beds and streamside stands of alder and willow that once provided outstanding salmon habitat. Hatchboxes might be able to ensure that more eggs would hatch but not that young salmon would survive long enough to swim to the ocean. That would only happen when the watershed was restored to something like its previous condition. This task was one that the region's new residents could not accomplish on their own. It would require the participation of groups with little experience in working together. Ranchers who had freely poached salmon as the fish swam through their properties would need to refrain from this activity. And money and labor would need to be found to begin the replanting of denuded forests and riparian zones in a community where resources were already stretched to the limit.

The challenges were overwhelming, but the community's commitment to salmon and a process that ensured that everyone's concerns would be heard and accommodated have allowed the work of restoration to move forward. Although nearly twenty years of labor has not led to a dramatic rebound in the salmon population, their numbers are no longer declining. Because members of the Mattole Restoration Council see their work as something that will need to continue over several generations, this has not deterred them.

Freeman House, one of the founders of the MRC, has become a philosophical spokesperson for the restoration ecology movement. His book, *Totem Salmon* (1999), provides a more extensive history of the Restoration Council. At one point early in the history of the Council, volunteers were examining aerial photographs that showed extensive sections of the river that had been scoured by floods in the mid-1980s. They had decided to replant these river sections, but when they went out into the field they found it impossible to locate them. Areas that on the photos featured little more than gravel and boulders were covered with stands of alder. After a number of failed attempts, they eventually realized that they had in fact been going to the places shown on the maps. Instead of needing human assistance, the river had replanted the trees itself. During drier seasons following the flood, alder cones had been

able to germinate and take root on the flood plain and now stood 12 to 20 feet in height. House said that this taught him a memorable lesson about the fact that he and his compatriots did not have to save the watershed. The watershed was completely capable of saving itself as long as humans stopped engaging in damaging activities.

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

Close to the Roxbury section of Boston, the Dudley Street neighborhood had gone through a long period of decline and devastation. Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar have described this history in *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Inner City Neighborhood* (1995). By the 1970s and early 1980s, many of the homes in the community adjoining Dudley Street had been abandoned or burned by property owners anticipating gentrification and the displacement of the community's current residents. To make matters worse, sanitation companies used the growing number of vacant lots as transfer stations. Piles of garbage and rats the size of small dogs could be found throughout the neighborhood. Contractors working on nearby urban renewal projects started dumping their refuse on abandoned lots in the neighborhood, and owners of dysfunctional cars simply abandoned their vehicles on city streets. In the early 1980s, a group of women decided that they had had enough. They started a campaign, called "Don't Dump on Us," that gained the attention of the mayor and the press. It led to the passage and enforcement of stricter regulations to prevent the use of abandoned lots as transfer stations. The city began to fulfill its own obligation to remove abandoned cars.

Following their success with this initiative, the group arranged with a class at MIT to develop a long-term plan for redevelopment of the entire neighborhood. At roughly the same time, they were able to gain support from a local Boston foundation that had been thinly distributing its resources to a number of smaller projects around the city. Failing to see much impact from these investments, the foundation decided to channel all of its resources into the Dudley Street efforts. What was remarkable about their participation was their willingness to serve only in an *ex officio* capacity on the board of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI). In doing so, they

demonstrated their faith in the capacity of local residents to make good decisions. Not long into its history as an organization, DSNI staff realized that a rarely used Massachusetts law could allow them to gain eminent domain over much of the community's abandoned properties. Although pursuing this strategy brought them into conflict with the Boston City Council, in the end they prevailed, gaining control of approximately one-half of the land in the neighborhood.

I had a chance to spend an afternoon in the Dudley Street neighborhood in the summer of 1995. By then 375 units had been renovated or constructed. The new buildings were attractive and solidly built. The improvements in the Dudley Street neighborhood have emerged not from the imposition of a plan developed by outsiders but from the steady and organic evolution of plans created and modified by local residents. As one community member noted, "Nobody knows the way; together we find the way" (Sklar 1996, 28).

The Courage to Teach Program

Based on the work of writer and activist Parker Palmer (1983, 1998), the Courage to Teach program was created in the early 1990s in response to a challenge from the Fetzer Institute in Michigan to apply to K-12 teachers some of the work Palmer was doing in community building and healing in higher education. Palmer created a program that consisted of a two-year series of seasonal retreats for experienced teachers aimed at reconnecting them with the ideals that had brought them into education to begin with. Central to Courage to Teach is an effort to help people reestablish their own sense of identity and integrity, believing that effective teachers teach who they are in the classroom. If educators can be helped to rediscover and hold this firmly, they will be able to pass their own enthusiasm and passion on to their students.

For the past four years I have had the privilege of working as a co-facilitator with two of my colleagues in Courage to Teach groups in Portland, Oregon. The retreats we have facilitated have amazed me because of the way participants bring to their time with one another their best selves. Although we had seen the same thing happen in retreats led by Palmer, we

were uncertain about whether we would be able to replicate a similar experience. Because this has happened time after time, however, I have become convinced that a set of understandings and social forms that lie at the heart of the Courage to Teach process are what makes this possible. What seems central is the tenet to avoid "fixing" or "saving" anyone else. Many of the forms utilized in the retreats are drawn from Quaker practice and the belief that all people possess an inner source of guidance if they are simply allowed the silence, space, and support to uncover it.

The possibility of this guidance is affirmed at each retreat through an event called the Clearness Committee. This Quaker institution provides a person with the opportunity to share a significant personal or professional issue with four of five other people in a setting characterized by deep respect and care. The aim of the Clearness Committee is not to provide therapy or counseling. The aim is only to ask open honest questions during a two-hour period to help the focus person begin to tap his or her own sense of guidance. This may not emerge immediately during the Clearness Committee, itself, but in the months following the meeting, it is not uncommon for people to achieve greater clarity about their own direction. Four people volunteer to serve as focus people during each retreat, and during our months together what I have seen in our groups is a growing openness and willingness to support one another. The result is that through this process people buffeted by schools that more often than not seem to be in a state of siege, regain a degree of strength and hopefulness that was not as evident when we began our work together. Their own comments about these experiences suggest that they are in fact experiencing renewal and healing.

My work with the Courage to Teach program with its emphasis on "not fixing" has given me a way to understand what seems to underlie the good work that is seen at the Mattole Restoration Council and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. What has occurred in both places provides a testament to the benefits that accrue if individuals concerned about saving the world are willing to step back and place faith and trust in the capacity of the people around them to find their own way when

given the right conditions. It is reasonable to believe that human communities can come together and make good decisions if they are provided with the resources and the opportunity to assume fundamental authority over their own welfare. These communities can manage themselves in ways that will lead to regeneration and healing in the same way that natural systems can self-manage and heal themselves if human activities that interfere with this capacity are stopped. The task for people concerned about reversing current social and environmental trends is finding ways that they can contribute to the creation of the conditions under which healing and regeneration can occur.

The Conditions that Contribute to Healing

These three organizations each address very different phenomena: a degraded watershed, a degraded urban community, and the degraded spirits of teachers. In each instance, however, their approaches to problem solving have resulted in exactly the kinds of regeneration associated with health: strengthened salmon runs, an increasingly safe and vibrant neighborhood, and reinvigorated educators. Are there commonalities in their approaches that might guide us in taking on the stance of healers rather than saviors as we confront other social and ecological dilemmas? Each reader is likely to draw his or her own conclusions, but for me, four underlying dispositions or behavioral patterns emerge from these accounts.

Trust

The first is trust. People involved with the Mattole Restoration Council learned to trust in the healing capacity of the natural world and the basic decency of their neighbors, regardless of their differences. The supporters of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative learned, similarly, to trust in the collective capacity of impoverished people to ameliorate debilitating social and economic conditions when provided with the opportunity and resources required to do so. Participants in the Courage to Teach program learned to trust in their own and others' inherent ability to find their way to healing and wholeness when immersed in appropriate forms of communal support.

Although people in modern industrial societies often give lip-service to the importance of trust, trusting either nature or other people tends to be an uncommon feature of contemporary institutions. The natural world is seen as untrustworthy and in need of constant manipulation and control to provide humanity with the resources required for our survival. And other people are often viewed as fundamentally selfish and unreliable, a perspective that has contributed to the emergence of the ubiquitous accountability structures that now permeate so much of our lives. When speaking about trust, I do not mean to imply that we should demonstrate blind trust toward any person or phenomena we encounter—a stance that in our current circumstances would be naïve, especially when confronted with less than trustworthy behavior on the part of corporate and political leaders. Reclaiming a willingness to act as if the natural world and the people around us are worthy of trust, however, may well provide a foundational condition for healing. As many premodern peoples believed that nature and their neighbors would care for them, we, too, may need to reclaim this kind of faith to effect the forms of regeneration seen in the Mattole Restoration Council, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and the Courage to Teach program.

Attentiveness

A second common feature encountered in these three institutions is attentiveness to local phenomena and experience. Attentiveness to the local is again not a common feature of most contemporary institutions. Increasingly, events in the urban centers of political and economic power have taken precedence over those on the periphery. Yet it has been through attentiveness to immediate experiences that human beings have been able to adapt to and alter the unique conditions encountered in the natural and social environments that either support or fail to support them.

Without the attentiveness displayed by residents of the Mattole Valley to declining salmon runs and a degraded watershed, they would have never formed an organization to deal with these issues. The attentiveness of what was a initially a small group of women to unhealthy living conditions led them to clean up the Dudley Street neighborhood and to begin the process of urban revitalization that has resulted in their efforts becoming a model of grassroots organizing. The attentiveness displayed by Courage to Teach participants is of a different nature, but equally important. There, people attend to one another and their needs and commonalities in ways that reestablish a sense of human connection, meaning, and support. It is no accident that attentiveness and caring are virtual synonyms and without care, social life and the quality of the local environment will almost certainly deteriorate. By paying attention to the health and well-being of our surroundings, we lay the foundation for caring behaviors.

Responsiveness

A third common feature in these institutions is responsiveness—the capacity to take action. For too many people in modern societies, responding to local conditions seems pointless. The forces that shape their lives appear to be beyond their influence, and they restrict their own involvement in civic or political life. Their failure to respond, however, means that all of us are the poorer for it; we do not benefit from their perceptions, insights, and energy. What is seen in the three organizations that have been the subject of this discussion is that people, compelled by what they perceive happening in their own places, have taken action. By joining together with others, they grasp their capacity to respond in meaningful and powerful ways. And in so doing they create the conditions necessary for social and environmental regeneration. Their actions do not arise from preconceived notions about what they must do to correct different forms of institutional oppression or stupidity; their actions instead are predicated on a grounded awareness of what is transpiring around them and an organic and communal response that grows out of direct experience, attention, and intelligent adaptability.

Mutuality

The final common element is mutuality. By *mutuality* I mean the willingness to respond to other beings out of a recognition of connectedness and reciprocity. In societies where mutuality is commonly practiced, people know that support given to someone in need will be returned when the tables have

turned. Without recognition of broader relationships and obligations, trust, attention, and responsiveness could simply lead to the domination and exploitation of one population of people by another or non-humans by humans.

Mutuality can be seen among people involved with the Mattole Restoration Council in the way their work to restore local salmon runs reflects a deep sense of inter-species affiliation and a desire to support this Pacific Northwest emblem. The Council's efforts were based on the understanding that the failure to honor conditions required to support healthy fish runs will result in fewer wild salmon for humans to eat.

One of the founders of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative told a story that captures the expression of mutuality in this community. The original activists whose efforts led to the founding of the initiative spent much of their early organizing activity seeking participation from other people in the neighborhood. At the outset, many people said no to their requests. After a fourth or fifth time at their door, residents would say, "Oh, you must be really serious about this. Yes, I'll help out this time" (Che Madyan, personal communication). A recognition of their common life experience and a shared value, seriousness, brought people together and helped them to see the value in reaching out and helping one another.

In the Courage to Teach program, participants alternately hold one another or allow themselves to be held each time they gather for a Clearness Committee. Even though its expression has become less common in our own society, mutuality lies at the heart of the human experience and our own survival (Clark 2002).

Implications for the Education of Children

I have outlined four qualities of healing, rather than saving. How can we foster these qualities, so children will themselves be in a position to adopt the perspectives of healers?

First, we promote *trust* by creating the conditions under which children come to feel safe and at home in nature, in their community, and in the classroom. An experience of at-homeness in nature often accompanies the opportunity to be in the out-of-doors. E. O. Wilson (1984) has written persuasively about the human tendency to affiliate with other beings and the natural world. If we want our students to trust that world, they must become familiar with it.

Moving beyond the classroom into the school ground, local parks, or open spaces provides one vehicle for achieving this end. A similar approach could deepen children's trust of their own community. After becoming aware that few of the students in her second-grade class had even walked through the small commercial district a block away from their classroom, a teacher at my children's elementary school initiated a project that led students to interview the proprietors of the local businesses and then construct electrified cardboard models of the buildings that housed them. The children spoke of the way this experience led them to feel much more comfortable about places they would have never entered on their own before. Teachers can also do much to transform their classrooms into trustworthy spaces by acquainting children with behavioral standards that encourage and expect the display of kindness and care in their interactions with others. Finally, teachers need to treat their students as trustworthy and capable of growing in healthy and life-affirming ways when given appropriate forms of support and guidance.

Second, *attentiveness* can be cultivated by providing students with experiences in their local environments. School curricula often focus on national and international events, and local forms of knowledge and understanding are set aside for the more generalized and global materials encountered in mass-marketed textbooks. Jerry Lieberman and Linda Hoody (1998) have demonstrated the way that learning situated in the human and natural environments can be more meaningful and engaging for students. Opportunities to monitor a watershed or collect oral histories turn children into knowledge producers rather than knowledge consumers, experiences that affirm their intelligence and ability to make sense of the world. Learning in this way demonstrates the value of paying attention and provides students practice in doing so.

Third, people become *responsive* when their activity leads to positive outcomes. If we hope to see our

offspring become involved in the healing of our regions and communities, we need to provide them with opportunities to see themselves as capable of making meaningful contributions. This can happen when children are given the chance to become participants in community decision making. After studying the impact of air pollution on local residents, students at the Greater Egleston Community School in Boston successfully lobbied state legislators to pass a bill guaranteeing human beings the same protections mandated for endangered species. In Seaside, Oregon, elementary school students collected data about playground equipment in county parks and presented them to the County Parks Commission. In each instance, children had the opportunity to both be responsive and experience the broader social benefits that can come from this.

Finally, *mutuality* is likely to emerge from many of the preceding experiences, but teachers can also create conditions designed to elicit a sense of connectedness to nature and others. Peer-mentoring programs can encourage this. So can opportunities to volunteer in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and nursing homes.

Mutuality arises from the experience of being cared for and caring for others. For example, as children help plants and trees grow, they learn how much nature helps them in turn by providing food, shade, shelter, and other vital needs. Providing children with such opportunities may be one of the more important things adults can do to support the healing of our world.

Choosing Healing in a Time of Crisis

In the wake of 9/11, there is an even more pressing need to question the tendency to adopt a messianic position when confronted with danger or other challenging situations. The current U.S. administration and a handful of its allies have approached the possibility of additional terrorist attacks in the manner of saviors. Intent on ridding the global community of this threat, they have restricted civil liberties at home and assumed the role of superheroes abroad, wielding their own weapons of mass destruction in an effort to reestablish the security that privileged members of most industrialized societies knew prior to

9/11. But whether this approach will lead to the healing of the conditions that led to the 9/11 attacks in the first place remains an open question.

Taking lessons from organizations like the Mattole Restoration Council, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and Courage to Teach, might it be possible to imagine a different course of action? Are there ways that we could support the creation of social settings characterized by trust rather than skepticism and fear? Past the rhetoric of good and evil, what details of life and experience should we be paying attention to, in the places where people actually live? What responses would enhance life rather than threaten it? Finally, could acknowledging our need for mutual support lead to problem-solving approaches more in keeping with the democratic and humane values said to be the basis for our common life?

Setting aside the desire to save the world from what we fear or despise will not be easy. I imagine, however, that genuine healing and the creation of a more humane, equitable, and environmentally sustainable society will at least in part depend on humanity's willingness to adopt a more humble and collaborative approach to our common problems, an approach grounded in a trust, attention, responsiveness, and mutuality.

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Educating for Human Greatness

Lynn Stoddard

By focusing on children and their needs rather than the mandates of the curriculum, schools can truly nurture human greatness.

Lynn Stoddard served as a public school elementary teacher and principal for thirty-six years before his retirement. He now writes and lectures on the urgent need to design a new system of public education that is based on ancient wisdom and modern research.

In the early 1980s President Ronald Reagan appointed a task force to look into the condition of public education. This group found our schools lacking in the things they were looking for and declared America to be a "nation at risk." It was implied in the official report that our country was fast slipping economically and militarily and would not be able to *compete* with other countries. Among other things, we were failing to teach our young people how to read, do math, and engage in scientific pursuits.

The *Nation at Risk* report (U.S. Department of Education 1983) launched a major effort by business leaders and politicians to "reform education." These people declared an emergency and set in motion an extremely intense movement to fix education. The report caused politicians to tighten the screws on teachers to standardize students.

The pressure reached a peak a few years ago with a new battle cry: "Higher Standards!" This motto was adopted at a governors and business executives summit for educational reform held at IBM headquarters in Palisades, New York, in March of 1996.

Each governor was asked to bring a prominent business executive with him to the meeting. Think of it. Governors took business leaders rather than educators to a meeting to reform education! It was a slap in the face to teachers. Can you imagine how physicians would feel if electricians and plumbers were to call a summit to reform medical practice?

The worst thing about the Palisades meeting was that many educators meekly accepted the outcome. They didn't blink an eye or even gulp when asked to try harder to standardize students. The reason? Tradition! The new motto, "higher standards," was not a call to redesign education. It was merely a summons for teachers to do what they have been expected to do all along: mold students into a common form, but at a higher level. It was a tradition that must be obeyed.

The governors and business executives, without any input from educators, opted to go with what they knew best— a system of education patterned after factory, mass-production assembly lines. In this system educators are not viewed as professionals who can make decisions about the needs of children, but as line workers who must carry out the mandates of managers. They must deliver the official state curriculum. Students are not viewed as responsible free agents who build themselves, but as raw material to be shaped into products by the workers. Thus students serve the needs of teachers who, in turn, are serving the needs of administrators and boards of education that are beholden to the governor and legislature. Parents are not part of the game. They are merely spectators on the sidelines. It is a backwards-facing system in which the only ones looking out for the needs of children are a few maverick teachers, principals, and parents who dare to go against the bureaucracy. It's tradition!

Higher standards was a smoke screen that obscured a harmful effect. It is much like the phrase, freedom of choice, which appeals to our sense of reason and fairness. Both of these phrases are magic in their ability to gain the support and allegiance of the people. What patriotic, thoughtful American could possibly be against freedom of choice or higher standards? Should we have freedom of choice in our schools? Certainly, but along with free choice comes the inescapable responsibility for the choices that are made. Should we have high standards? Of course we should, but high standards for what? Do we want high standards for forcing teachers to do the impossible task of making students alike, or shall we have high standards for nurturing people as they were meant to be—unique individuals?

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote some wise words that become an indictment of what has been happening as a result of so-called government reform:

> The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil. It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do. It is chosen and foreordained, and only he holds the key to his own secret. (1965, 40)

"It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do." Did you catch the significance of this? For the past several years the standards literature has been filled with the phrase, "what all children should know and be able to do." Governors and business executives were very serious about standardizing children. They arranged to have subject matter specialists identify what all children should know and be able to do in each subject area and at every grade level. They then had tests developed to measure student attainment at predetermined checkpoints. The strategists then used the tests to hold teachers accountable for delivering the lock-step curriculum—all in the name of higher standards. I will relate just two examples that were described in Susan Ohanian's great little book, *One Size Fits Few* (1999). In one state, the standards specify that all first graders will be able to "distinguish initial, medial, and final sounds in single syllable words," and all sixth, seventh and eighth graders (11-, 12-, and 13-year-olds) will be able to "detect the different historical points of view on historical events," including "the influence of new practices of church self-government among Protestants on the development of democratic practices and ideas of federalism." How many adults do you think can do either of these things? Can You? More importantly, is this necessary information that every person should know and be able to do?

You can see how absurd these requirements are. Can you also see what these kinds of standards do to teachers who are expected to insure that *all* children can do them? The middle grade requirement on Protestantism is so laughably foolish I will not comment on it, but for the phonics diehards let me challenge you to pick any one syllable word on this page and distinguish the initial, medial, and final sounds that it contains. Can you do it with the word *to*? What about *you*, *on*, *the*, or *this*? The reason you can't do it is that words do not contain the individual sounds of the letters. When we vocalize a word it is always a blend of the sounds of the individual letters. The blend of the sounds is different from the sounds of individual letters. What about the one-syllable words *laugh* or *could*? Do you see how it confuses and frustrates children to be expected to do impossible things, and why many of them learn to hate reading?

These are just two examples of thousands of similar standards that have been concocted by subject

matter specialists. If you have ever seen anything more cleverly designed to take the joy out of learning, I'd be surprised. Along with ridiculous, impossible standards comes the inevitable standardized achievement test batteries designed to hold teachers accountable, but accountable for what? It would appear, although I know this is not the intention, that legislatures are trying to hold teachers accountable for destroying children's natural zest for learning.

This great pressure on teachers to standardize students has had a demoralizing effect. They know it's not possible to do what they are being required to do. At the same time, teachers do not realize they have the power to overcome the absurd demands and many meekly succumb or leave the profession to seek more satisfying employment with much higher pay. I believe one of the reasons we have the greatest teacher shortage in our history is not primarily low salaries, but society's low view of the teaching profession and the resultant lack of trust and respect that results from it. Teachers who remain in the system out of great love for children try to make the best of the adverse conditions, but they are still affected. The saddest part is that students are the ones who have suffered the most, not only from pressures to conform, but also from lost opportunity to blossom as unique individuals. Alfie Kohn (2000, 61), a prominent educational critic describes the problem with these words:

> We are facing an educational emergency in this country. The intellectual life is being squeezed out of schools—or at least prevented from developing in schools—as tests take over the curriculum. Punitive consequences are being meted out on the basis of manifestly inadequate and inappropriate exams. Children are literally becoming sick with fear over their scores. Massive numbers of students—particularly low-income and minority students—may be pushed out of school altogether.

The publication each year of standardized achievement test scores in major newspapers is done to foster competition and hold teachers accountable. The saddest part of this is that people do not recognize the mounting tragedy. They fail to see that we are putting teachers, principals, parents, and especially children, into an untenable situation. It's a great mystery to me why so many people, especially smart governors and legislators, do not know that it is literally impossible to standardize children who are each a unique creation.

There are many signs that the increased pressure on teachers to standardize students is harmful. Because schools do not nurture positive differences, our youth are displaying differences in other ways, some of them not so positive. There is a growing youth rebellion against uniformity. Many schools are stagnating, and we see a mass exodus to private schools, home schools, and charter schools. Some students are dropping out altogether, even dropping out of life, as suicide has become the third highest cause of death among teenagers. We may soon overtake Japan as the suicide capitol of the world where the high-pressure education system is a major contributor to horrendous social problems.

The problem of forced standardization is having other detrimental effects. In Utah, where I live, we are faced with a serious shortage of good teachers, and it appears the same situation exists all over the country. Only a small, shrinking percentage of high school graduates are interested in pursuing a career in teaching. There are few, if any, high school graduates who can see themselves working as non-thinking robots on an education assembly line where they are required to crunch children into uniform packages.

Educating for Human Greatness

Fortunately, there is a solution to this prickly dilemma. In two schools where I served as principal, the teachers found a way to begin freeing themselves from bondage to a fixed curriculum and those who use it to control teaching. They discovered a way to see curriculum, not as a *goal*, but as a *means* to help students grow in the qualities of human greatness. With this focus, subject matter content shifted from being the boss over teachers to that of a servant. In a survey of about 2000 parents in six schools to determine parent priorities for their children, we discovered three major core drives that may be part of the basic nature of every person. They became our goals, the three dimensions of human greatness:

- *The Drive to be a Recognized "Somebody" (Identity).* This drive is much more than the

need to merely survive or exist. It is an intense need of the human spirit to fulfill one's unique potential as a special contributor to the world. It is a need to count for something, to have a sense of self-worth. It is a drive to answer the questions, who am I? Why do I exist? and What is the purpose of my life? It is a never-ending quest for *identity*.

- *The Drive for Warm Human Relationships (Interaction)*. This drive confirms another well-known characteristic of human nature: We are all born with a need to love and be loved. Everyone feels a deep need to belong and have a sense of community with other human beings. We have a built-in need to communicate with others. This is the second most powerful motivating force of human nature. It is the force of *interaction*.

- *The Drive for Truth and Knowledge (Inquiry)*. Human beings are born curious. They are born with a strong drive to make sense of the world and to acquire personal knowledge and wisdom. Curiosity is the third most powerful motivating force of human nature. It is the force of personal *inquiry*.

If these innate drives are universal, as it appears they are, it means we can hold children responsible for their own learning and development. Each one is designed to reach for greatness. At birth children have a built-in drive for self-realization, companionship, and truth—or identity, interaction, and inquiry. This makes me believe we can trust the spiritual side of human nature, if not the physical. I like the way Marcus Aurelius put it in his *Meditations* (1948, 83):

> Look within; within is the fountain of all good. Such a fountain, where springing waters can never fail, So thou dig still deeper and deeper.

If human beings are born with freedom of thought, they are each responsible for their own thoughts. It follows then that people are responsible for their own learning and behavior. This is the second mental hurdle that must be overcome. We must change our focus to believe children are capable of deciding what learning they should pursue. This leads to a be-

lief that children are basically good and want to learn, grow, and develop into the best each can become.

Compulsory learning must be abandoned if we are to help children reach their full potentiality. If human beings have a natural drive for Identity, Interaction, and Inquiry, we do more harm than good when we attempt to demand learning. It is as natural for the human brain to seek truth and knowledge as it is for the lungs to breath or the heart to beat. Would we ever consider compulsory breathing or compulsory beating for these two organs in the same way we have compulsory learning for the human brain?

These then are the giant mental hurdles that must be cleared before we can change our focus and begin to change education. We have an opportunity to see with new eyes and accept three vital concepts:

- Curriculum is a means of accomplishing educational goals, not a goal in and of itself. In other words, curriculum, or subject matter content, is our slave, not our master. It is wrong for someone to decide, "what all children should know and be able to do," and impose it on teachers to impose on children.

- Students can be trusted to design their own learning. They have a built-in drive for mental, spiritual, and physical growth, a drive for inquiry, interaction and identity.

- The role of parents and teachers is that of wise mentors to help children discover who they are and catch a vision of what they can become.

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For the Love of Frogs

Promoting Ecological Sensitivity Through the Arts

Kathleen Kesson

The arts can be an effective bridge to reunite us with the natural world in which we live.

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Every year on May Day, many of the citizens of Montpelier, the capital city of Vermont, come together for a ritual celebration called All Species Day. First, people of all ages gather in Hubbard Park, a scenic nature preserve overlooking the charming Victorian houses of the town. The sage is burned, the invocation is chanted. This is the day when the folks of this northern bioregion come together to honor the non-human species they share the land with and to celebrate the return of the sun, warmth, and long light days. Children and adults have labored to create the giant puppets and costumes that will represent the multitude of species at this long awaited ritual event.

The traditional Raven appears and her huge black wings stir the air and call the spirits. Drummers call the creatures forth, and they emerge from the woods: the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the many-leggeds, the ones who crawl close to the earth, the ones who swim, the ones who fly. White geese, soaring on high poles carried by humans, return from their winter voyages. The ancient mythic archetypes are present: Old Woman Winter lights the ritual torches and the fierce and frightening Dragon lumbers forth from the trees, spewing forth a bellyful of maiden dancers, who dance the dance of Eros on the spring grass. Plays are enacted, including the traditional myth of Persephone and more postmodern "rites of spring."

Soon the parade begins, and everyone-children, adults, creatures—assemble to march down the mountainside into the town. The streets are filled with drummers, dancers, and chanters as the crowd makes its way across the river to the very center of

power in Montpelier, the golden-domed Statehouse, which is crowned, appropriately enough, with a wooden statue of Ceres, the Roman Goddess of Agriculture. Excitement builds as Bread and Puppet's Earth Mother, a towering puppet that reaches nearly to the top of the Doric portico, appears on the steps of the Capitol Building in all her glory to bless the congregation and sanctify the gathering. From her skirts emerge a seemingly endless number of dancers, moving to African/Caribbean rhythms. Tiny maidens, garlanded in flowers and strewing petals, prepare the way for the Queen of Spring. And then here, on the steps of the Capitol itself, is reenacted the ancient marriage of the Stag King and the Queen of Spring, a European tradition older than the nation state, older than Christianity, older than patriarchy itself. Submerged for millennia, this pre-modern ritual emerges in postmodern times, as we begin to recreate a culture that reveres and respects all of the living beings of the Earth.

I open with this story because for me the All Species Day parade represents the integration of art, ritual, politics, and celebration in a way that deepens our empathy for the Earth and her creatures and points the way toward actions we can take to preserve our environment. It is a premise of this paper that an ecologically sustainable future depends on such cultural creativity—a new synthesis of politics, art, and social commitment that will help develop ecologically responsive habits of mind and heart. In this paper, I suggest a rethinking of the arts in education and illustrate, in a hypothetical curriculum unit about "lowly" frogs, how schools might promote ecologically responsive habits of mind.

Education and the Ecological Crisis

The work of such education scholars as Gregory Smith (1992), David Orr (1994), and C. A. Bowers (1993a; 1993b; 1993c; 1995), who are concerned with the impact of multiple and worsening environmental crises, has convinced me that the content, form, indeed, the very aims and purposes of modern education, are deeply implicated in the creation and the perpetuation of these crises. Smith points out that the rhetoric of educational reform, which concerns itself primarily with the need to create workers who will

maintain the United States' edge in global economic competition, fails to acknowledge that the marketplace itself "may be threatened with limitations imposed by the planet" (1992, 12)—a possibility with which we have not yet begun to come to terms. David Orr, in a compelling essay entitled "The Dangers of Education" (1993) argues that conventional education imparts a disconnected, amoral curriculum that alienates us from the moral lessons in the natural world. C. A. Bowers has shown how ecologically destructive beliefs and values are embedded in the language patterns and social interactions of the textbook and the classroom.

> *These two streams of come together for me in the idea that the integration of communal aesthetic experiences with environmental education is one important way to facilitate behaviors that orient us toward sustainability.*

My own study of the philosophy and history of science awakened me to the excruciating depth and complexity of the epistemological problem that lies at the core of the environmental crisis. In complicated ways, we seem to have "thought ourselves into" these interlocking crises with our conditioned acceptance of a dualistic worldview that has split mind from matter, reason from emotion, subject from object, spirit from flesh, and that privileges the abstract over the concrete. We have marshaled our conceptual resources over the past few hundred years, not only to understand but also to control and manipulate nature in ways that have disrupted the biological, social, and cultural patterns established over centuries of human interaction with the environment. We have only begun to appreciate the extent of our folly.

Bowers (1993c, 398) reminds us that we are nearing "overshoot," a condition in which the demands of an increasingly worldwide consumer culture will exhaust essential resources. In its 1990 edition,

Worldwatch concluded that we had approximately forty more years before we begin a long planetary slide into decline (in Gablick 1991). Since 1990, the frightening specter of conflict over diminishing non-renewable resources has become even more apparent (Remer 2002). Gablick (1991, 6-7) suggests that it is crucial to transform individual and collective priorities and values: "Materialism," according to her analysis, "simply cannot survive the transition to a sustainable world."

Ecological Responsiveness and the Arts

William Pinar and C. A. Bowers, in a 1992 survey of the curriculum field, ask, "How do we as educators, begin to develop the languages of dance, painting, music and narrative that primal peoples used as a means of encoding the moral templates for living in ecologically sustainable relationships?" I want to explore this question by beginning with a poem by Abenaki-Czech poet Joseph Bruchac entitled "Prayer":

> Let my words
> be bright with animals,
> images the flash of a gull's wing.
> If we pretend
> that we are at the center,
> that moles and kingfishers,
> eels and coyotes
> are at the edge of grace
> Then we circle dead moons
> about a cold sun
> This morning I ask only
> the blessing of crayfish,
> the beatitude of the birds;
> to wear the skin of the bear
> in my songs:
> to work like a man with my hands.

Bruchac's poem points to the "anthropocentrism" of modern culture—the view that we are the center of the world and everything else is at the periphery—and reveals not only the resulting impoverishment of the human spirit, but the peril to existence itself ("we circle dead moons around a cold sun"). Matthew Fox, the contemporary Christian theologian, says, "the disease of anthropocentrism is, in my opinion, what most haunts the one-sided and therefore violent psyche of the West" (in Richards 1962, ix). In our separation from rock, sea, cloud, tree, and animal, we have become profoundly alien-

ated. If we continue to think of the world as separated from ourselves, says physicist David Bohm, "constituted of disjoint parts to be manipulated with the aid of calculations" we become separate, alienated beings whose main motivation toward each other is control and manipulation. But, he goes on, if we can begin to perceive

> an intuitive and imaginative feeling of the whole world as constituting an implicate order that is also enfolded in us, we will sense ourselves to be one with the world … we will feel genuine love for it. (in Griffin 1988, 57-68)

To sense ourselves to be "one with the world"—surely, awakening that realization should be a central task for an education that might enable us to begin to heal the ecological wounds inflicted on our tiny planet as a result of our disassociation from other life forms. In Matthew Fox's creation-centered spirituality (1983), art offers up the possibility of reconnection:

> With art as meditation, we truly listen to the cosmos within us and around us and give birth to the ongoing cosmogenesis of our world and worlds…by turning to art as meditation we ensure our continual greening (p. 198) … by letting go of our overdependence on words we allow images, symbols, pictures to emerge, and we express them by drawing, painting, body movement, music and poetry…. Art as meditation takes one on deeper more communal journeys than words can ever do" (p. 194).

In the concentration demanded by various artistic disciplines, the subject/object dualism is overcome. The dancer becomes the dance, the potter becomes the pot, and life is lived in the interpenetration of shaper and shaped.

Let me share another poem, this one by an Iglulik Eskimo woman named Uvavnuk, entitled "Moved":

> The great sea stirs me.
> The great sea sets me adrift,
> it sways me like the weed
> on a river-stone.
> The sky's height stirs me.
> The strong wind blows through my mind.
> It carries me with it,
> so I shake with joy.

In simple and profound ways, the arts (rhythmic body movement, singing alone or in unison, listening to or reciting poetry) *feel good*—they are physically and emotionally pleasurable. Most aesthetic theorists, who are more interested in the purely conceptual response, have long ignored this factor. The split between formal, commodified art and human experience was well articulated by John Dewey (1934, 3), who decried the fact that art had been "isolated from the human condition under which it was brought into being, and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life experience."

Ellen Dissanayake extends Dewey's ideas further with her extensive interdisciplinary investigations into the nature of aesthetic experience, suggesting that human beings have a universal, biologically based need for art (1992; 1988). From her evolutionary perspective, art is something humans do *because it helps them to survive*. Consider the early connections between art, ritual and ceremony in many societies, as well as contemporary artistic expressions in cultures such as those of the Southwestern Hopi Indian or traditional Balinese, which have not yet lost their traditional bonds to the biotic community. The role of participatory aesthetic ritual in such cultures is multi-faceted: rituals affirm life processes and re-inscribe positive social values; confirm the human interdependence with the surrounding natural world; unify the social order; facilitate individual and communal healing; mark transitions (rites of passage); make common or ordinary experiences "special"; and perhaps most important for understanding the evolutionary purposes of art, aesthetic rituals nourish the capacity *to experience transformative or transcendent emotional states and extraordinary states of consciousness* (Dissanayake 1988).

Communal aesthetic participation, as in the making of music or song, offers us the opportunity to enter a state that transcends individuality "in which we are not (as is usual) separate and sequential but seem to partake of a timeless unity: tones remove the barriers between persons and things" (Dissanayake 1992, 71). Songs, stories shared, sand paintings, contemporary urban murals, rhythmic processions and sacred circle dances construct vital bridges between separate lives and community experiences.

In much the same way as we are stirred to emotion by the arts, humans derive aesthetic pleasure and emotional enticement from an association with nature. Some researchers are now arguing for the biological basis of such responses, and these ideas are loosely affiliated under the framework of the "biophilia hypothesis," a term coined by the noted scientist Edward O. Wilson (Kellert and Wilson 1995). Biophilia is "the innate need to relate deeply and intimately with the vast spectrum of life around us" (p. 42). Proponents claim an evolutionary necessity for such capacities: "Human genetic needs for natural pattern, for natural beauty, for natural harmony are all the results of natural selection over the illimitable vistas of evolutionary time" (p. 51). Further, "studies of the relationship between environment and human response suggest that nature has a more powerful impact on our emotional and physical health than has been appreciated to date" (p. 166). Both the aesthetic and the emotional response to nature are captured in Uvavnuk's poem—*The great sea stirs me / the sky's height stirs me / I shake with joy*.

These two streams of evolutionary theory—that of biophilia and that of art—come together for me in the idea that the integration of communal aesthetic experiences with environmental education is one important way to facilitate behaviors that are ultimately *adaptable*, that is, that orient us toward sustainability. Delores LaChapelle, in speaking of the historic process of such integrative practices, notes the

> wisdom of these other cultures who knew that their relationship to the land and to the natural world required the whole of their being. What we call their "ritual and ceremony" was a sophisticated social and spiritual technology, refined through many thousands of years of experience, that maintained their relationship much more successfully than we are. (in Devall and Sessions 1985, 248)

Getting There From Here

Rediscovering the deep sense of connection with and reverence for nature is a tall order, given the alienating conditions of modern schooling and society. Many teachers bring environmental awareness, education, and action into their classrooms, includ-

ing rich and varied nature experiences in the curriculum: river watches, bird counts, animal tracking, and weather observation, as well as gardening, composting, and harvesting projects. As well, many teachers, influenced by Howard Gardner's (1983) *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, are making efforts to integrate the arts more effectively into their curricula. Students are offered more choices about how to express their learning, through dance performances, song writing, art making, or play writing. These latter developments are promising, but not unproblematic.

Bowers (1995) challenges some of the core assumptions of individualistic forms of creativity, and suggests that we need to re-conceive more ecologically responsive forms that stress interdependence and interconnectedness rather than individual, subjective expression. I would suggest that in the intersection of existing classroom practices (environmental education and integrative arts), we might begin to develop a pedagogy that could, as Pinar and Bowers (1992) asked of us,

> develop the languages of dance, painting, music and narrative that primal peoples used as a means of encoding the moral templates for living in ecologically sustainable relationships….

Study Unit on Frogs

In order to make my theoretical proposition more concrete and bring it into the realm of practice, in the remainder of this article I'll depict a hypothetical unit of study that shows how a common topic might be enacted in a holistic/aesthetic/ecological curriculum framework. Let's take the topic of frogs, a common enough topic, with information dispersed throughout the grades in science and biology textbooks. Some of us may have been lucky enough to raise tadpoles into frogs at some point in our academic careers. The less fortunate among us may remember an inevitable scientific rite of passage: the dismemberment and dissection of the creatures. A better example of non-empathetic, reductionist science is hard to find!

In my fictional frog curriculum narrative, designed for older elementary children, the study of frogs is initiated by the insistent question of a student: *Why are the frogs disappearing?* What a fruitful question for inquiry! In small groups and as individuals, we pursue topics of special interest, and research as many different frogs as we can discover: land dwelling frogs, water dwelling frogs, tree dwelling frogs, poisonous frogs. We ask ourselves: Where do they live? What do they eat? How do they grow? How do they mate? In what ways do humans depend on them? How do they depend on us? What are some myths, stories, and superstitions about them? What are we humans doing that might be causing their disappearance? How do scientists solve such mysteries? Have other animals disappeared? Why?

As a culminating event, parents and friends are invited to our presentation, "The Case of the Missing Frogs." When the guests enter the room, they see that it has been transformed into a multitude of ecosystems represented by murals on every wall and large dioramas. Colorful clay and paper scale models of frogs of every kind are located within their appropriate environment, with information cards beside each one. The students have taken weeks to create these artistic life science murals and environments and are very proud of them.

Much work has gone into this presentation, as students and their teacher have researched many different aspects of the lives of frogs. They have discovered that frogs are amphibians and that there are thousands of species of amphibians. They learned about the importance of "habitat" and that many amphibians live in habitats that are not protected from destruction by human activity. They were shocked to find out that of the 825 species of amphibian that have no protection over any part of their ranges, almost half of them are threatened with extinction. Learning to say the name of a favorite frog species recently discovered in Papua, Indonesia, *Litoria wapogaenisi*, was great fun, and really impressed their friends! Unfortunately, the students discovered that this favorite is one of hundreds of animal species that have no protected habitat. It made them sad to learn that scientists believe many of these populations will disappear in the next 10 or 20 years. After many weeks of research and discussion, they think they have found one of the main reasons why the frogs are disappearing: Their habitat is being destroyed at an alarming rate. And amphibians are in more danger than other animals, because their

ranges are smaller, and they don't receive as much conservation attention. Perhaps people just do not love frogs.

After viewing all of the tableaux, the guests are seated in a circle around the room. The lights go out and specially placed green bulbs are lit, casting a swamp-like, otherworldly glow. Frog songs, taped by two students on an evening at a local pond, fill the air of the room. A few younger siblings giggle, but the audience quiets as the class begins to tell the 180 million year story of the frogs through music, movement, storytelling, and harmonic chanting. A lot of work has gone into this performance. Aside from the research writing and the charts and graphs of every kind, students have also written and rewritten this information into a form suitable for a staged reading. They have created the murals that serve as backdrop for the presentation, learned about audio taping and lighting effects, written poems about frogs, and worked with the creative movement teacher to perfect movements depicting different events in the lives of frogs. A special piece has been choreographed for the end of the presentation.

At a given moment in the script, a large group of students move into the center of the circle and take "frog-like" positions. In this green light and with the frog sounds in the background, the children almost feel like frogs! Classmates on the periphery of the circle begin to read poems that the class has written that express eloquently how they feel about the disappearance of the frogs. As each poem is read, one frog hops away and disappears. The green light bulbs go out, one by one. The songs of the frogs grow dim. Gradually, the frogs are diminished until the last frog remains, alone. She looks around, discovers she is alone, and hops away. The lights are all out. There is silence. One of the students begins a drumbeat, then other percussion instruments join in, and they sing the song of the frogs that they have composed as a group.

When the lights come up, students answer questions from the audience about what they have learned. Many of the adults have learned things that they didn't know. The students share with their parents all the things they have thought of that they and their families might do to save the frogs from disappearing.

Perhaps this hypothetical example stimulates your thinking about the many ways in which ecologically centered, integrated arts can be brought into the curriculum in a way which, as Bowers suggests, encodes the moral information we need for survival, and which heightens our emotional response to both nature and experience. In this culminating experience, all of the elements of ritual were present: an altered environment (light and sound), chanting in

> # Difficult as this may be, we must find ways to reconnect in a deep and empathic way with the rest of creation.

unison, synchronized movement, and emotionally appealing subject matter. Yet, the ritual was not "religious" in any sense that might be threatening. It was, rather, "theatrical" in the sense of the early connections between theater and participatory ritual. The hoped-for effect of the event was a heightened moral sensitivity to the issues, the development of empathy toward creatures of the natural world, and a sense of purpose and commitment to save the frogs from extinction. In a small way, the experience was analogous to the larger, community wide experience of the All Species Day.

Let us not underestimate the difficulties of transforming a paradigm of fragmentation to a paradigm of interconnection and interdependence; to move, as Donald Oliver (1990) suggests, from the technical, knowledge-as-separate-subject approach to the grounded knowledge-as-intimate-relationship approach. Historian Morris Berman (1989) reminds us that the shift from distanced consciousness to an ecstatic, kinesthetic awareness in which "everything is alive, quivering, embodied" (p. 38) is a movement that our somatically alienated culture both longs for and fears. Difficult as this may be, we must find ways to reconnect in a deep and empathic way with the rest of creation. It is not just frogs that are endangered. I am convinced that the human-constructed breach between self and world, the product of centuries of wrong thinking, must be bridged if we too are

to continue to participate, as a species, in this wonderful unfolding cosmic drama.

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Shakespeare Goes to Kindergarten
Poetry and Young Children

Evelyn Walsh

Most of us have Mother Goose committed to memory well beyond our nursery years. Why? Maybe it's the unique way we as young children responded to the rhythm of verse—with an instinctive, uninhibited "ear" for language. Thus the poetry we hear most often as children, perhaps in the most nostalgic and comforting circumstances (bedtime rituals, storytime), stays with us all of our lives.

So let's not limit these memories to Hickory Dickory Dock! Because young children are so open to language, without inhibitions or prejudices about poetry, they can also enjoy much more varied and sophisticated verse. The preschool and kindergarten years (even infancy) offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to capitalize on this capacity.

Many young children want to hear well-loved poems over and over again, and they have an extraordinary ability to memorize verse without any obvious effort. Surely there are developmental advantages to promoting these skills (memorization, attunement to patterns in language and meaning). Letting children capitalize on their openness to language has another benefit: Simply put, it's fun to hear and speak in verse.

And many bits of verse excerpted from the work of poets like Shakespeare are just as accessible as "Three Blind Mice" or "Old Mother Hubbard." A few Shakespearean lines can be isolated from the context of an entire play yet delight a child on their terms.

For example, why not dress up like witches and chant a couplet from Macbeth:

> Double, double, toil and trouble
> Fire burn, and cauldron bubble
> (Macbeth, IV.i)

Verse like this can become a very real presence in the young child's inner life, imagination, and emotions. It can also act as a useful reference point in her view of the world. As a child grows and gains the intellectual skills to appreciate verse in other contexts—as part of a play or a longer poem; as indicative of an era; for its imagery and symbolism as well as the beauty of the verse—she builds upon the foundation laid by her first response to that verse: a preschooler's forthright and powerful delight in the sheer fun of language.

It's also delightful to be able to call up bits of verse at will throughout one's life; it can add depth and meaning to our own experience, allowing us to connect our own thoughts and feelings to a larger sense of collective belonging, of timelessness, and of meaning. Accessible lines like these can be taken out of context and read on their own terms:

> She was a child and I was a child
> In this kingdom by the sea,
> But we loved with a love that was more than love—
> I and my Annabel Lee.
> (Edgar Allan Poe)

> My candle burns at both ends;
> It will not last the night;
> But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
> It gives a lovely light!
> (Edna St. Vincent Millay)

EVELYN WALSH is a writer who loves reading with children. She can be reached at emw@vnp.com. This essay is dedicated to Caroline, Patrick and Aidan: "I sigh that kiss you, / For I must own / That I shall miss you / When you have grown." (William Butler Yeats)

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves that we find in the sea
(E.E. Cummings)

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
(Langston Hughes)

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night
(William Blake)

Verse like this will appeal to many children as young as two or three. As they grow, favorite lines of poetry may surface again and again as touchstones, fostering different levels of appreciation and understanding but always building upon the link to the first and subsequent exposures, whether at 3, 9, 14, 31, 63, 89 or 103.

Whether it's Mother Goose, Sendak or Shakespeare, I also wonder if failing to expose children to poetry at a young age causes them to miss developmental opportunities that won't come again. There are hints in the developmental psychology literature that this may be the case (Crain 2003, 94).

Suggestions for Teachers and Parents

Making Poetry an Everyday Part of Classroom Life

- Read, read, read all kinds of poetry in class (related to curriculum topics, student interests, current events, other cultures).

- Read poetry not traditionally considered juvenile.

- Listen to poetry set to music.

- Read picture books that rhyme.

- Let kids hear poems (or excerpts) enough that they will commit them to memory (perhaps select a "poem of the week" and read aloud daily).

- Make poster-size lines of verse part of the classroom décor and point them out to students.

Connect Poetry to Activities and Events

- Let kids illustrate favorite poems.

- Poetry swap: have kids bring in favorite poems, read and/or exchange them.

- Have kids participate in readings (for example, calling out refrains like "I don't care!" from Sendak's *Pierre* poem).

- Act out poems in class (can be as simple as motions or elaborate as costumes/stage).

- Have kids illustrate favorite poems or poems being used in class.

- One-on-one poetry writing (no rules!).

- Collaborative class poetry writing.

- Encourage children—without pressure—to recite or read poetry in class.

- Celebrate National Poetry Month or have a "poetry party" with various activities on a regular basis.

- Celebrate a poet's birthday (Georgia Shakespeare Festival has a fair for the Bard's birthday).

- Talk about poets whose lives are of special interest to children.

- Help children make poetry scrapbooks where they can collect favorite poems.

- Share these activities with parents for home use.

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Resources

The late musician Bill Crofut made a series of recordings in which poetry is set to music in an original and irresistible way. I highly recommend *Dance on a Moonbeam* and *Child's Song*, both available on compact disc.

The Best-Loved Poems of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, edited by Caroline Kennedy, mixes selected poems with her memories of the role of poetry in her family's private and public lives. She recounts, for example, reciting St. Vincent Millay's "First Fig" to her father at age three. This is a marvelous example of how an "adult" poem can delight a child on her own level yet set the stage for a lifelong and ever-evolving appreciation of poetry.

Using Underwood's Native American Stories in the Classroom

Marsha L. Heck

Paula Underwood's Native American learning stories preserve five generations of her family's oral tradition, in which learning was sacred and every person's perspective was honored. Underwood says (l994, 17) her stories braid together

> Body (the way we live on the Earth), Mind (the way we identify and process information), and Spirit (our awareness of our relatedness to each of our brothers, each of our sisters, to Earth, and to the Universe).

I use the stories' powerful images and themes to engage current and future teachers in reflection, discussion, and lesson planning. Teachers, in turn, use the stories in their K–12 classrooms. They, too, find that the stories stimulate reflection, while contributing to multicultural and science units and lessons on community building.

Who Speaks for Wolf reminds us that wisdom sometimes "comes only after great foolishness (2002, 39). *Winter White and Summer Gold* explores equity in relationships. *Many Circles, Many Paths* deals with issues of friendship and community decision making.

In my classroom management course, teachers read *Many Circles* and consider the hero's anguished struggle to promote cooperation. By placing themselves in his position they make connections to conflicts with and among students. After reading this story, one veteran teacher shared her new insight that "No one learns when they are not ready."

One fifth grade teacher used *Wolf* as a center of a unit on wolves, their habits and habitats. But the story went beyond this science unit. The story also illustrated the value of listening to one another in social settings. Also, the children's drawings of different sizes of wolf prints provided dynamically integrated art and mathematics lessons in scale and proportion.

Traditionally, Underwood's stories are read three times, in three ways. In my teacher education classes, I first read them aloud. Next, I ask students to read them in a round-robin fashion or assign silent or home reading. Finally,

I ask the class to listen to Underwood's taped reading. After each reading, I ask, "What may we learn from this?" In my classroom management course, the central character in *Many Circles* usually brings to life Noddings's idea that

> We need to help students learn to treat each other ethically … [and] understand how groups and individuals create rivals and enemies and help them learn how to be on both sides. (1995, 368)

Underwood's stories enrich classroom content through narrative and culture, and illustrate caring dispositions toward others as well as democratic decision making. These stories also illustrate a particular method of learning—that of embracing questions, growing from mistakes and listening to others. In K–12 classrooms the *Wolf* story often becomes a caring mantra for inclusiveness. As one teacher put it, "If we got into education to make the world better, this story is a good beginning."

The struggles of Underwood's characters suggest how people can come together despite differences. Underwood's portraits of caring and complex community decision making are timely for social justice activists facing a world burdened by war and terrorism. When a just classroom, let alone a compassionate world, are hard to envision, Underwood's stories stir the imagination and stimulate relatedness thinking.

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Book Reviews

Rethinking School Reform: Views from the Classroom

Edited by Linda Christensen and Stan Karp
Published by Rethinking Schools, Milwaukee, 2003

Reviewed by Judith Y. Singer and Alan Singer

Rethinking School Reform: Views from the Classroom is the latest in a series of reprinted articles from the newspaper *Rethinking Schools*. The Rethinking Schools collective, while based in Milwaukee, is a national network of educational activists committed to addressing issues of equity and social justice. Linda Christensen and Stan Karp, editors of this collection, are veteran public school teachers and long-term activists who are on the editorial board of the newspaper.

In her Preface to the book, Sonia Nieto describes "school reform" as "two of the most overused words in educational discourse today." However, she welcomes this addition to the debate because it adds the voices of people who are usually overlooked, families, students, and especially teachers, to a discussion that is dominated by powerful political interests. Nieto feels that their contributions help to clarify "what it will take to truly reform our public schools" (p. iii).

As supporters of *Rethinking Schools* (one of the authors of this review is an occasional contributor), educational activists, and teacher educators, we welcome this book. But we do have reservations. Some of the articles included in the collection are thoughtful and on target. Others do not seem to belong in this collection, and in our view, they distract from the theme. A few are problematic and tend to weaken the thrust of argument for reform offered by the editors.

In their Introduction, Christensen and Karp declare their intent is to offer "a vision of schooling and reform quite different from the one emanating from official sources" (p. vi). However, neither the Preface

nor the Introduction draw enough of a connection between the articles or explain why they were selected and how they fit in and support this vision.

The book is divided into five parts. The Critical Teaching section focuses on good instructional practice and the possibility of developing "a social justice classroom" (p. vii). Taking Bias Seriously calls for confronting issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation "head-on" in classrooms and provides examples of ways this has been done effectively. The articles on Education Policy and Politics and Standards and Testing look at the broader battle over schools taking place on the local, state, and national levels and they raise the question of what should matter in education. The final section, Roads to Reform, returns to the classroom and discusses the "policies, resources, people, and purpose" needed to create schools that are "places of individual academic achievement" as well as "laboratories for a more just society" (p. viii).

As teacher educators, we believe the most effective section is probably the first one, because it opens with a clear statement of purpose from the editors of *Rethinking Schools*; but the articles in this section also tend to wander in different directions. We are big fans of the work of Linda Christensen, who has two articles in this section. In "Untracking English" and "Acting for Justice," she discusses her experience as a classroom teacher and models a pedagogy of possibility. Bob Peterson, a fifth grade teacher at Escuela Fratney, a two-way bilingual school affiliated with *Rethinking Schools*, offers a very useful reflection on his own teaching and the need to ground curriculum in the lives of students.

Articles by Howard Zinn, Bill Bigelow, and Ruth Shagoury Hubbard focus on the content left out of the curriculum. A short article by Zinn is coupled with an excellent statement by Bigelow on the importance of introducing students to the "unsung heroes" of the past, people who have struggled for human dignity and against social inequality. They provide a way for students to become historians and actively explore the possibility of social justice. They also offer useful guidelines and guiding questions for student research. However, the editors need to

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discuss why these articles belong in a collection on school reform. While the articles offer concrete suggestions for teachers struggling to reshape curriculum, few progressive teachers believe that adding the names of "unsung heroes" to the curriculum, without addressing the way children are taught, schools are funded, and our society is organized, will significantly change education in the United States.

Some of the essays included in the next section, Taking Bias Seriously, also are really about curriculum. A theme in many of the articles in this section is the idea that teachers have to provide students with alternatives, not just with an account of how bad things are. Christensen's "Unlearning the Myths that Bind Us" discusses ways students can use their newly constructed analysis of Saturday morning cartoons to become social activists. Alejandro Segura-Mora's "What Color is Beautiful?" tackles the issue of race and color by confronting young children about their own attitudes towards what is considered beautiful. A limitation of this article that is reflected throughout the collection is that readers learn what they might do, but authors have little space to help teachers explore the underlying causes of the issue. While Segura-Mora effectively models what it means to take bias seriously, his approach does not help students or teachers examine why there is bias in the first place. This is the crucial issue and should have been more directly addressed.

Two articles in this section are especially recommended. Lisa Delpit ("Ebonics and Culturally Responsive Instruction") talks about the importance of teachers being respectful of language differences and bringing students into the conversation concerning when to use dialect and when to use Standard English. Delpit notes that well-meaning teachers are often perceived by their students as intrusive. She urges teachers to remember that the purpose of education is to make meaning of the world, not enforce proper pronunciation. According to one student, "she be butting into your conversations when you not even talking to her" (p. 80). Stan Karp ("Arranged Marriages, Rearranged Ideas") reports on how he struggles with the cultural practices of his students in an ethnically diverse high school, especially young women who are subject to traditional gender roles including marriages arranged by their

parents. Karp is angry at the possibility that these young women will be forced to abandon their educations, but he comes to understand that the push for change has to come from them. He tells the story of one female student who is transformed through her political involvement fighting for the inclusion of Bengali students and their concerns in the student government.

The themes introduced in these articles are revisited in the final essay of the book by Tom McKenna, a high school social studies teacher from Portland, Oregon ("Confronting Racism, Promoting Respect"). McKenna discusses the difficulty getting working-class White youth to acknowledge the existence of racism in the United States. He also describes a program supported by the Canadian teachers' union to challenge all forms of bias. He reminds teachers that any movement for change "begins with a single voice" (p. 324).

One article in this section, Bob Peterson's "Presidents and Slaves: Helping Students Find the Truth," has serious problems that need to be addressed. The research project that Peterson's fifth graders were engaged in was certainly meaningful, but their major source of information on slavery was a web site that provided little supporting evidence and offered no historical citations.

Education Policy and Politics and Standards and Testing are oppositional chapters that effectively debunk right wing proposals for schools but are less successful at presenting an alternative vision for education. In "Schools More Separate: A Decade of Resegregation," Gary Orfield provides powerful documentation of the increased segregation of schools. Makani Themba-Nixon (" 'Choice' and Other White Lies") and Barbara Miner ("For-Profits Target Education") look respectively at the negative impact of "choice plans" on minority students and the total failure of the Edison schools and efforts to privatize education.

We are not as happy with "Neighborhood School: Déjà Vu" by Robert Lowe. Lowe vacillates about whether or not to support local schools. He ultimately declares that "parents of color whose children attend urban schools today should collectively have the authority to decide" whether they support local initiatives or more systematic school integra-

tion. It is not clear how inner-city families will get the power to direct these reforms. In a sense, this article symbolizes the weakness of the sections "anti" approach.

The section on Standards and Testing continues with a series of attacks, but also fails to spell out a new vision. An article by Linda McNeil ("The Educational Costs of Standardization") is sharply critical of the fraudulent initiatives in Houston that were supposed to model school reforms based on high-stakes testing. Other essays look at college admissions policies and point out the threat to multiculturalism. The essay by Gloria Ladsen-Billings ("Teaching in Dangerous Times") discusses teacher preparation programs and calls for "culturally relevant pedagogy." She notes that the "work of teaching is both complicated and complex" (p. 250). Unfortunately, there is not enough space in this brief article for her to offer more than a superficial introduction to her views. This section ends with an alternative report card prepared by Portland Area Rethinking Schools. It is intended to promote community discussion about the future of education, but we never learn if it was actually used, and if it was, what were the results.

The last section, Roads to Reform, is the logical place for an alternative vision of educational reform. However, the lead articles continue the oppositional character of the book. Stan Karp critiques school reform plans adopted by the New Jersey Department of Education. Linda Christensen documents reform failures at her school in Portland. The major proposals advanced are Bob Petersen's calls for teacher councils and "social justice unionism" (p. 309). We agree with what Peterson has to say about the precarious future of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association and the need for a new vision of the role of educational unions; but once again, a description of the new vision and why unions would endorse it is missing. The AFT has been a leading advocate of the standards and testing movement and its magazine and newspaper have provided forums for conservative demands for content-based instruction.

In "Ebonics and Culturally Responsive Instruction," Lisa Delpit argues that

> despite our necessary efforts to provide access
> to Standard English, such access will not make

any of our students more intelligent. It will not teach them math or science or geography or, for that matter, compassion, courage, or responsibility…. Access to the standard language may be necessary, but it is definitely not sufficient to produce intelligent, competent caretakers of the future. (p. 87)

We believe that this statement summarizes both the strengths and flaws of this collection of essays. As teacher educators, we wanted to like the book. Personally and professionally, we need what Paulo Friere called "A Pedagogy of Hope." This volume effectively presents many of the problems facing our schools. It offers powerful critiques of reform plans proposed by conservative forces, the Bush administration, and private industry. But it falls short of providing an alternative vision for preparing "competent caretakers of the future." It falls short of delivering on the promise of hope.

Seeking Passage: Post-Structuralism, Pedagogy, Ethics

by Rebecca Martusewicz
Published by Teachers College Press, 2001

Reviewed by C. A. Bowers

Rebecca Martusewicz's *Seeking Passage*, as the title suggests, takes the reader on an important journey. She relies on the insights of post-structuralist thinkers such Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serres, and the anarchist philosopher Mikahil Bakunin. The personal experiences she recounts in near poetic language serve to ground the theory of post-structuralists, giving them a sense of life and importance often lost in printed texts.

The insight that holds the chapters together is that life is characterized by differences that are layered in the encoding processes of culture and in the memory, thoughts, and anticipations of everyday life. Differences, rather than fixed entities and predetermined status boundaries, are the basis for previously un-

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imagined possibilities. Martusewicz explores the implications of this ecology of differences for teachers and students, and in the process takes a position in opposition to the more ideologically driven approaches to teacher/student relationships that are often cloaked in the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way "things are."

What seems especially important about her own journey, and her interpretation of her mentors' insights, is the emphasis she places on the inter-subjective nature of experience and the role language plays in our encounters with the world. She is aware of the tension that arises between the cultural formation of experience and the biographically unique aspects of experience. Her book, in effect, maintains that language both confines and opens possibilities. Difference is an inherent aspect of the language processes that make personal experience an ongoing process of interpretation and negotiation—except when social structures give certain groups the right to exercise power over others. Her understanding of the mediating role of the multiple language processes highlights the teacher's responsibility for helping students make the passage to new understandings of social justice and to understanding the multiple ways they are dependent upon the natural environment.

The book contains a fascinating discussion of the social meanings of sexuality, especially for girls. For the most part, though, the book is on a philosophical level. Martusewicz clearly loves ideas themselves. For example, she summarizes Bakunin's view that

> the social cannot be separated from the natural, since they are part of the same "universal solidarity." The solidarity Bakunin refers to is a process, a transformative life process that cannot, he argues, be isolated within "nature" or excluded from what is human. This indefinite, transformative, ultimately creative relation, is actually part of the same force that produces itself anew in each successive moment, that is never the same, that creates life itself. (p. 127).

"Reading this," Martusewicz says, "practically knocked me off my chair" (p. 127).

This book asks us to constantly interpret what constitutes moral reciprocity in interpersonal and human/nature relationships. In effect, it provides a conceptual basis for understanding the life-enhancing passages as we confront the degraded environment and the rigid cultural maps that still dominate curricula. *Seeking Passage* will also serve as a springboard for learning how other cultures have created texts that have ensured safe passage through their bioregions. The reader can hope that Martusewicz's next book will explore the differences between our dominant culture and more community- and environmentally-centered cultures that live within the limits of what natural systems can support.

The Power of Portfolios: What Children Can Teach Us About Learning and Assessment

by Elizabeth A. Hebert

Published by Jossey-Bass (San Francisco), 2001

Reviewed by Lori Rosendale

> It's time to set the record straight. The word "empowerment" separates traditional teaching from holistic teaching. Simply put, holistic teachers require students to be responsible for their own learning. That is to say, ideas central to holism such as valuing intuition and feeling as ways of knowing, plus recognizing the importance of living and learning where social relationships are based on caring, as well as content, are made operational by students' taking responsibility for their learning. (Ralph Peterson, *Life in a Crowded Place: Making a Learning Community*)

In *The Power of Portfolios*, Elizabeth Hebert has created her own powerful portfolio focusing on both data collection and description of learners' strengths and multiple ways of knowing. As the principal of Crow Island School in Winnetka, Illinois, Hebert has been involved with the evolving process of portfolio use as a tool for learning, teaching, and assessment for the past fourteen years. She refers to the text she

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has written as her own ongoing portfolio and, by organizing her book into eleven "lessons" rather than chapters, she invites the reader to join in the journey of portfolio practice from inception to presentation. A "reflection tag," or rationale for including items in the portfolio, accompanies each "lesson" that Hebert presents. Critical analysis is evident every step of the way as Hebert engages in "the untidy life of ideas" by constantly reexamining the issues surrounding the purpose, the process, and the presentation of portfolio use.

According to Hebert, the connections of portfolios to our own lives can be traced back to the memory boxes that many of us had as youngsters. Those boxes, often stored in attics or basements, included "spelling tests, lacy valentines, science fair posters, early attempts at poetry, and (of course) the obligatory set of plaster hands" (p. ix). As portfolios have gained acceptance in the educational setting, however, they have often been used as a procedure to document "best work" without actively involving the learner in the portfolio process. Hebert acts on the understanding that "portfolios are simply too good an idea to be limited to an evaluation instrument" (Graves 1992).

Hebert and her colleagues framed questions about portfolio use around Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which are "expressed in the context of specific tasks, domains, and disciplines" (Gardner 1993, xvi). The posited questions are a guide for the selection of portfolio data and for presentation.

> But how could we attribute importance to all of these intelligences—especially those intelligences not directly observable in the academic classroom? How could we abandon ingrained ways of viewing the curriculum as a hierarchy, and find ways to acknowledge a child's successes in solving a mathematical equation as on par with successes in composing a musical phrase or maintaining physical balance on a beam? Was some learning more valuable than other learning? How could we report learning to parents, and would they accept a more even attribution of importance to all areas of the curriculum? (pp. 14-15)

These questions shift the portfolio from a substitute for testing to a dynamic statement of student knowledge. Hebert's students make choices about what goes into their yearly portfolio, and they are also expected to articulate a rationale as to why they've included a particular piece of writing or a specific research report. (Photographs, musical programs, and evidence of projects are also examples of the kinds of items considered for inclusion in a portfolio.) Learners, in essence, create their own learning benchmarks and share their understandings of what constitutes evidence of growth with their peers.

Herbert's book includes vignettes of students' thinking and talking about themselves as learners, and these vignettes provide powerful evidence of what happens when children are fully engaged in both learning and assessment.

> I think school is great. Not only is it fun but you're learning. Science is my favorite subject. I like real hands-on science. Last year in Social Studies, I did a report on Georgia. It was the largest project I had ever done in my life. This year I did a report on steam trains. The quality of my work is better this year. It went smoother. My spelling has improved. I spell words the way they sound. For example I will spell "group" like "grupe" because that makes sense. Sometimes it's right and sometimes it's wrong. Math is not my favorite subject. I think that I need to slow down because I'm going too fast and getting the answers wrong. If I did slow down I could probably get things right the first time. (C. J., fifth grade, p. 73)

> I know my writing has improved this year because … at the beginning of the year I only wrote 2 or 3 words and the letters were not right. Now I can space words and I can put periods at the end and I can put capitals. (Billy, first grade, p. 70)

As I read the observations made by these young learners, I was reminded of my own experience as a special education teacher and evaluator when assessing Robbie, a fifth-grader in a self-contained special education classroom who had a reputation as a "difficult child."

The first subtest went off without a hitch. Robbie exhibited slight frustration and I reassured him that he would not be expected to know everything on the test. It was during the second subtest that the trouble began. Robbie is a tough, little kid. He gets into fights. He bullies children and he's had more than his share of black eyes, scrapes, and cuts. Several questions into the subtest he began to have difficulty responding and his eyes were welling up. He tugged his shirtsleeve and rubbed hard across his eyes. Two more items attempted. He was quickly reaching a ceiling. That's the technical jargon. But, for Robbie, the realization came crashing in that he didn't know as much as he thought he did. Suddenly, a huge solitary tear rolled down his face. "I'm so stupid. Why am I so stupid? I'm retarded." He put his head down and began to cry, first softly and then uncontrollably. I closed the testing easel and held Robbie for at least ten minutes. Here was this tough little guy who had worked so hard at changing himself as a student, and for what? To be shown what he didn't know and what he hadn't achieved. His small shoulders shook with sobs under my arm. I felt as much of a failure as Robbie did. At that moment we both sat there, bonded in a sense of powerlessness and defeat.

Imagine the possibilities if Robbie had been permitted to have a voice in sharing what he felt he had learned during that school year? He had come to know himself as a talented artist and used his ability to include detail in various reader response activities. He had worked at becoming a cooperative learner during literature circles and he eagerly looked forward to opportunities to be a document "detective" using clues and strategies when constructing written responses to document-based questions. A portfolio could have served as evidence of both his literacy acquisition and learning achievements. He might have been able to talk about himself as a learner as C.J. and Billy were able to do. This understanding of one's own learning creates an opportunity for all children, including struggling students such as Robbie, to think about themselves as learners and to articulate their thoughts.

For Hebert, one of the critical ways to connect with and to value the varied ways in which learners come to know and experience the world has been to reflect with her faculty on their childhood experiences.

> We recalled our own early school experiences, when our own multiple intelligences went unnoticed and unappreciated by our teachers. We recognized that what captured the youthful imagination was often not acknowledged or valued. Our teachers, among the most powerful and cherished people in our lives, could have encouraged us to pursue what really mattered to us. But for many of us the opportunity was lost simply because most teachers didn't know how to fit our passions into their curriculum. (p. 14)

Approximately twice a year learners at Crow Island School prepare for a very special evening in which they have the opportunity to sit down with the significant adults in their lives and to celebrate the learning that they've documented in their individual portfolios. During these celebrations, families are clustered about in corners and at desks as learners carefully remove work from their portfolio and share their work. The presentation evenings do not come without careful preparation: several weeks prior to sharing with their parents, students have discussed their portfolio archive with teachers, peers, and older students. An organizational form is used to help structure the conversations and to highlight specific aspects of the portfolio. These ninety-minute presentations represent a collaborative gathering of teacher, learner, and parent as equal partners in the learning community of the classroom.

Hebert's book offers practical advice for the practitioner interested in developing alternative ways of looking at a learners' work both in and out of the classroom. But it does more than that. Crow Island School illustrates how portfolios transformed the school from a collection of classrooms to a community of learners. It is a testament to the power of authentic assessment practices. The notion is not a new one but in our current climate of high-stakes testing and No Child Left Behind, holistic educators are re-

assured about what really counts when we describe who a learner is and what s/he knows.

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Children of Immigration

by Carola Suarez-Orozco and
Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco

Published by Harvard University Press, 2001

Reviewed by Smita Mathur

While immigration is not new to America, it has reached historic proportions in the last forty years. This unprecedented inflow of immigrants is pushing all Americans to adjust to a new social reality. The debate on the effects of immigration on American economy and social life is currently raging. Both the advocates for immigrants and those who think immigrants are tearing apart the American social and economic structure express their convictions passionately.

The political and social motivations that guide the debate give rise to several reasonable concerns and misconceptions about immigrant families. Amidst all the wrangling for resources, jobs, and power the immigrant child is a relatively unempowered entity. While the immigrant youth accounts for 20% of all the youth of America, they are often silenced and their issues neglected. *Children of Immigration* is a very timely document that explores the lives and experiences of children who are caught in the steady flow of immigration to America. The authors, Carola Suarez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco present a full spectrum of immigrant experiences from a multidisciplinary approach.

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In analyzing the experiences of children of immigration, the authors borrow extensively from psychological, cultural, social, anthropological, historical, and educational perspectives, giving a well-grounded view of the issues that touch the lives of children of immigration in the U.S. The term "children of immigration" refers to both USA-born children and foreign-born children living in America. All of these children have foreign-born parents and experience somewhat similar social and psychological experiences; and while the authors are cognizant of differences, they tend to group all children of immigration within one generation of immigration into a single category. However, the experiences of children of immigration vary significantly and the differences are as critical as the similarities. Children within the same generation of immigration are distinct by virtue of their country of origin; factors that compel them to immigrate; the academic, social, and economic capital they bring with them; and their attitudes and values, to name a few. These differences are too profound to be lumped together. While the authors acknowledge the significance of these variables, they have not explored them in depth and this single analytical category makes the unique pressures of immigrant children invisible. Fortunately, readers have access to other books that focus on the uniqueness of immigrant groups from specific ethnic backgrounds, life situations, and economic pressures.

This book brings the immigrant child's life into focus as the debates rage in the larger social and political arenas. In Chapter One the authors describe the diversity in pathways chosen by recent immigrants. Descriptive case studies and critical analysis of ethnographic data highlight the differences between children with legal immigrant status, undocumented immigrants, transnationals, and refugees. For example, they point out that refugees have low motivation to immigrate and the process of immigration for them is often involuntary and sudden. Immigrants, on the other hand, are highly motivated to migrate. The move to America is seen as highly desirable and beneficial for the whole extended family. Unlike the refugees they have time to prepare for the stress of immigration. The difference in motivation and planning has a significant impact on the adapta-

tions made by families when they reach the American shores.

In Chapter Two the authors compare anti-immigrant attitudes at the turn of the last century with those held towards recent immigrants and describe the various misperceptions and negative attributes ascribed to new immigrants. The authors dispel these myths with valid, well-supported arguments; they effectively portray the immigrant family as a "contributor to society" rather than a collective of "free loaders." Anxiety about the economy, is often manifested as unfounded anti-immigrant sentiments. Many believe that immigrants are taking away jobs from Americans, and that immigrants burden the American taxpayer by over utilizing medical, educational and welfare services. Others are convinced that immigrants are responsible for the high crime rates in some metropolitan American cities. The authors present research-based evidence to evaluate these sentiments. For example, they point out that the National Research Council concluded that immigration has contributed $1 billion to $10 billion per year to the domestic economy. They also explain that immigrants tend to be healthier than individuals born in America and have lower infant mortality and morbidity rates. Immigrants are therefore less likely to tap into publicly funded health services. Additionally, the authors have conducted an in-depth review of literature to understand crimes among immigrants and have concluded that there are currently very few reliable studies on crimes by immigrants. From the limited information that is available it is clear that crimes rates are lower among immigrants than native-born Americans or foreign-born individuals.

In a chapter exploring children's reactions to separation and reunification with family members, varied psychological and social reactions to immigration, cultural issues related to the stress of immigration, acculturation, and the significant shift in the power distribution within family relationships are critically scrutinized. The authors discuss the destabilizing effects of immigration on family life and point out that the immigrant child who develops English language proficiency faster than his parents becomes the language broker and family spokesperson. This tends to undermine parental authority and results in a situation where the immigrant child is given more power and control than is considered culturally appropriate. This role reversal puts undue psychological and emotional pressure on both the immigrant child and parents. The authors also discuss the factors that determine the future professional, psychological, and social outcomes for all children of immigration. These can serve as an important reference for researchers of immigrant families.

In the fourth chapter, the authors present a conceptual framework for the immigrant child's reaction to social mirroring. They present the various forms of ethnic identities that may develop in children and factors that contribute to the maintenance and formation of personal and ethnic identities among children of immigrants. The book presents useful insights related to the changes in perceptions and attitudes of immigrant families over time. For example, the authors point out that during early stages of immigration, families tend to compare their current life to what it would have been in their native lands. This type of comparison contributes significantly to their feelings of well-being. It energizes and motivates them towards their academic and professional goals. However, as time progresses the comparison group shifts to the other majority Americans. This new standard of comparison makes them cognizant of their marginal and deprived status within mainstream American life and reduces their sense of well-being, which, in turn, has a negative psychological impact on immigrant families. This and several other similar insights are generously discussed throughout the book. They are especially useful in designing and interpreting research on the immigration experiences.
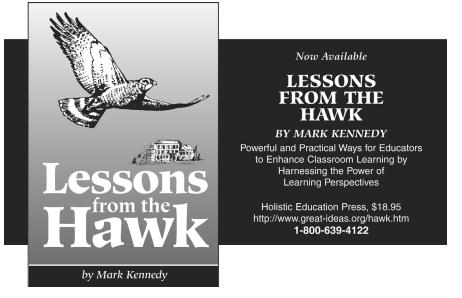
The final chapter in this book reveals the attitudes of immigrant children and their families towards education and the school system. The authors explore the impact of poverty, segregation in schools, bilingual education, and parent-school relationships.

The authors raise several key issues in conceptualizing and defining difficult concepts like acculturation, ethnic identification, ethnicity, and social mirroring. They provide guidelines that can make current conceptualizations more accurate and meaningful to contemporary American life. For instance, in a

conceptual discussion on acculturation, they point out that often when researchers define acculturation, they fail to clarify which aspect of American culture a group is acculturating to, and the characteristics of the acculturating groups. The authors distinguish between the expressive and instrumental aspects of culture and point out that acculturation to instrumental aspects of a culture (skills and competencies needed to climb the social and economic ladder) are considered desirable. Conversely, immigrants often resist acculturating to the expressive elements (values, worldviews, and patterns of personal relationships) of the culture.

The authors bring a wealth of personal and professional experience to the table. Carola Suarez-Orozco is an "old immigrant," a cultural psychologist and an experienced researcher. She has spent nearly two decades working with immigrant families and draws on this rich experience. Indeed her extensive experiences deserve our respectful attention. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco identifies himself as a "new immigrant" from Latin America. He is a Professor of Human Development and Psychology at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The authors are co-directors of the Harvard Immigration Project, the largest longitudinal study of immigrant families in America. The study tracks experiences of 400 recent immigrants enrolled in over 50 schools in Boston and San Francisco areas. The study draws on data from a variety of sources like parents, and teachers of children of immigration, and personal narratives of the

children. They collect information from achievement tests administered in schools, attendance records, grades, and a record of disciplinary actions taken against the children. The authors supplement this data with ethnographic observations in several different locations conducted over time. The ethnographic and ecological perspective is a significant strength of the study. These detailed and descriptive data sets, in conjunction with the experiences of a well trained, enthusiastic and motivated research team, form the basis of the opinions expressed in this book. Additionally, the authors draw information from various other sources like scholarly documents, immigrant memoirs and films. The authors must be commended for weaving so many threads together and writing this thorough and far-reaching book.

The authors' claims are supported by case analysis of several immigrants and critical analysis of demographic and statistical information. The book is highly readable and while each chapter flows into the next, the chapters also can be read as standalone pieces. *Children of Immigration* is intellectually stimulating, refreshing, and thought provoking, and should be read by scholars, counselors, and all advocates of immigrant families. Policy framers and lawmakers will find this book particularly relevant. Because the authors dispel many myths associated with immigration and immigrant families, the book also is a valuable tool for educating the public at large about the American experience of immigration.