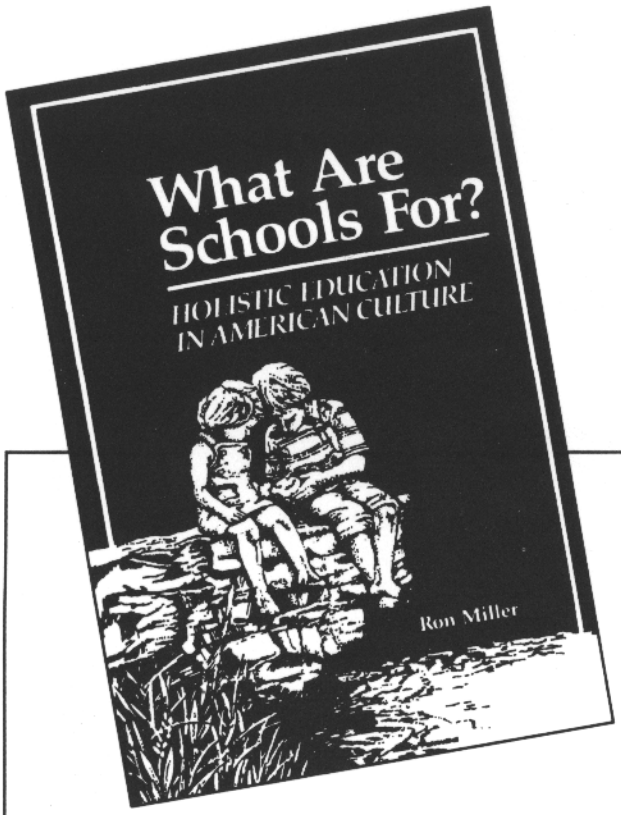
Paths of Learning

Options for Families & Communities



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Richard J. Prystowsky, *Editor*
420 McKinley Street, Ste.111-437
Corona, CA 92879-6504
909-549-9067
rjprys@ix.netcom.com

Production Editor: **Amy Kirtley**
Design: **Anything Graphic, Pittsford, Vermont**
Production & Subscription Coordinator: **Charles Jakiela**
(csj@great-ideas.org)

The Foundation for Educational Renewal, Inc., is a nonprofit organization set up in 1998 to publish *Paths of Learning* and promote alternative perspectives on teaching, learning, and human development. The Foundation is not affiliated with any institution, partisan interest group, or particular educational movement, but aims to stimulate dialogue and build bridges among diverse educators, parents, scholars, policymakers, and citizens who seek more democratic, holistic, student-centered forms of education. In addition to publishing this magazine, the Foundation also sponsors an online educational research database at <http://www.PathsOfLearning.net. The founder and president is Ron Miller, a leading historian and commentator on alternative education. He can be contacted through *Paths Of Learning* at P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733, or by e-mail to <milleron@together.net>.

Manuscripts

As stated in the Mission Statement for *Paths of Learning* (see http://www.great-ideas.org/pathmiss.htm), the purpose of this journal is to "encourage an understanding of education as a means of nourishing holistic personal development and a sustainable, democratic, and peaceful community life." To this end, we welcome manuscripts on any aspect of teaching, learning, and mindful living, written from diverse points of view and encompassing a wide range of educational choices.

Except in unusual cases, manuscripts should not exceed twelve pages. Submit three copies of the manuscript to the Editor of *Paths of Learning,* Richard Prystowsky. Manuscript submissions from youth (up to age 12) and from teens or young adults (through college age) should be sent to the appropriate editor c/o the journal's address or via e-mail. Manuscript should be double-spaced printed in 12 point type. Submissions should be aimed at intelligent readers who, though interested in, might be unfamiliar with the subject matter being discussed. We also ask that authors demonstrate respect for persons holding alternative points of view, even if the authors passionately disagree with these views.

You may also fax your submission to the journal at 909-549-0516. If you wish to e-mail your submission, with or without attachments, please send your work to the editor at <rjprys@ix.netcom.com>. If you want your printed copies returned to you, please be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Please include with your submission a brief autobiographical statement, as well as a short, descriptive summary of your article. If your article is accepted for publication, we will then ask that you send us a photo of yourself, as well as one or more photos that you would like for us to consider using in connection with your article. We will also ask that you send (by mail or e-mail attachment) a copy of the final accepted article after all revisions have been made and approved by the editor.

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Options for Families & Communities

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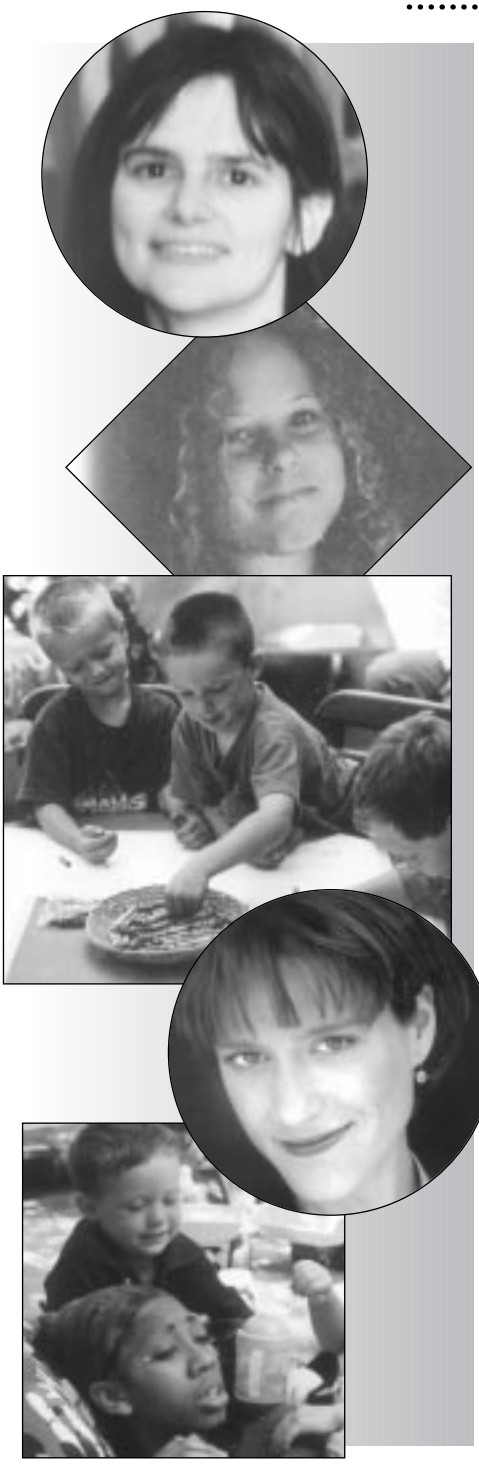

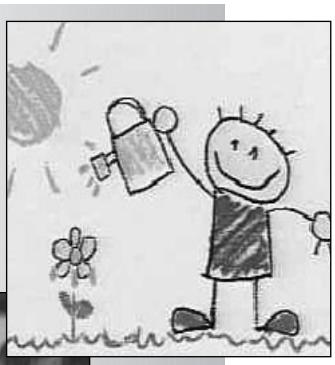

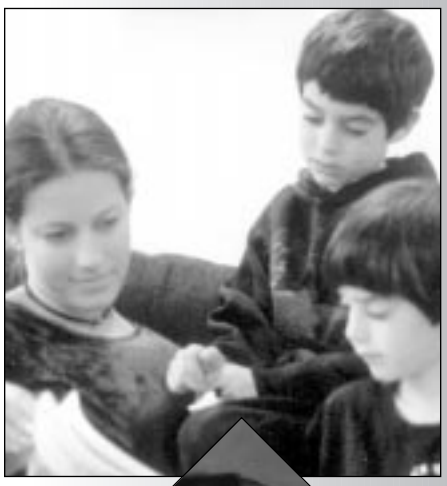

Cover photo, "Ashlie," by Bob Dean, Brandon, VT

Letting Go and Coming Home

As I was sending to our copyeditor the final manuscript copy for this issue, I began thinking about what I would write for the editorial. Wanting my editorial to reflect the themes of the pieces that make up this issue, I thought about how so many of the writers here speak passionately about our need to trust the children, to fill them with love, to give them the freedom that they need and deserve to have so that they can be whole, independent beings who act not out of fear and guilt, but, rather, out of love, compassion, and strength.

And yet, try as I might, I just could not seem to find the words with which to construct an editorial that matched the passion and content of these articles—the passion, for example, with which Dr. Thomas Armstrong so eloquently helps us to see how we might free ourselves from suffocating paradigms of teaching and learning so that we all—teachers, students, and parents—can flourish in the nurturing spaces of our inner geniuses; or the passion with which Erika Schickel, in her profile article on Play Mountain Place, insightfully reminds us that trusting the children is, ultimately, both a grounding and a consequence of freedom; or the passion with which our two young writers, Jennifer Thornton and Crystal Ferry, teach us how one both must and can reclaim one's freedom to be whole and happy.

And then what turned out to be a rather soul-searching, family-centered event happened. As I reflected on my reaction to this event, I began to realize that my struggle was not entirely dissimilar to the kinds of struggles alluded to by many of our authors. It was a struggle involving trusting and loving children within the context of my own fears of betrayal and abandonment. The struggle—and my consequent attempt to understand it—was, in effect, the editorial writing itself. And so I give you here, our friends in the *Paths* community, the following essay. Perhaps you'll find in this narrative a reflection of your own struggles, too, and in the pieces that follow, some penetrating insights into how we all might face these struggles, transforming them into familial and communal oases of trust and love.

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Very shortly after New Year's, my wife and I took our younger daughter to the airport so that she could visit a friend of hers in another state. She would be flying alone, but this fact isn't really what had my wife and me troubled. More than anything else, we couldn't understand how she could want to leave us when her sixteenth birthday was only days away. How could she possibly prefer to spend this special time with relative strangers rather than with her loving family? What was happening here?

Without having to dig too far into our own childhoods, my wife and

I sketched a creative script of victimization, in which we, of course, were the victims, and in which our daughter was the victimizer. However, when we decided to question our daughter about her decision, we found, much to our surprise and relief, that her calm, reasonable response did not match our script. In fact, rather than confirming our worst fears, her response confirmed what had always been our greatest hope: that, filled with our love for them, our children would be able to leave us with joy and experience the world as home, knowing that they could always return to a loving, caring, supportive family. As was the case for the mama bunny and baby bunny in *The Runaway Bunny*—a book that my wife used to love reading to our daughter and that, perhaps not coincidentally, my wife ran across in a bookstore while our daughter was on her trip—we and our daughter can never really leave each other if we all live in love.

One of my most important and influential teachers once told me that, as long as I had not reclaimed my soul, I could never "leave home"—the home of my childhood, a home in which, to be sure, I found parental support and love, but in which I also experienced what I perceived as parental abandonment and, to the child, parental betrayal and childhood bereavement. However, my teacher also said that, when I fully reclaimed my soul, I could both leave and return home as a whole, mature adult, one who has become his parents' equal precisely because he has forgiven his parents even as he acknowledges their shortcomings (and perhaps because he has acknowledged them).

Unlike my daughter, as my teacher might explain, the very young child surrenders his soul to his parents for survival, a quite understandable move. However, if the adult does not realize that his soul belongs to the universe, and not to his parents, then he will not be able to reclaim it, and thus he will not be truly free. Plagued by his problematic past, he will likely replay the problems of his intra-familial drama in his adult life, especially, perhaps, with the members of his own family. Ultimately, the adult must learn to forgive in order to be free (indeed, forgiveness might primarily benefit the person doing the forgiving); he must let go, she must let go, in order to come home.

This recent incident with our daughter has confirmed a central teaching very dear to many of us struggling to free ourselves from burdened pasts while at the same time trying hard not to pass on the legacy of these burdens to our own children: when we open our hearts to our children, filling our children with love, we help them avoid having to surrender their souls to us. Nurturing our children by meeting their needs and filling them with love, we help them to love themselves and ultimately to be independent beings. We help them to become our equals, not persons fearing that they need to please us in order to gain our approval, and not persons who feel guilty because there are others in the world with whom they also want to spend time. Our daughter felt safe enough, loved enough, nurtured enough, filled up enough to be away from us, even on her sixteenth birthday. Her leaving us did not indicate that she preferred being with strangers more than she preferred being with us, an interpretation that my wife and I had initially made, which was based on our own troubled familial experiences. Rather, she really wanted to see her friend; her friend's parents were paying for the trip; she wanted to be home in time to start her college classes; and she wanted to be home in time for my birthday. All things considered, this seemed like the best time to make the trip. What a reasonable way to think; what a safe place in which to be.

Thus, my wife and I found ourselves presented with a wonderful teaching here, in which we learned that succeeding generations need not inherit the intra-familial problems that so many parents in their own generations faced. We learned that healing is ultimately regenerative when it is practiced from the heart. We learned that our children need not have to reclaim their souls if we never demand that they surrender them to us. We learned that, letting go of our own pain, we come home to the love that we had always wanted to have—unconditional and always present, even during times of emotional conflict within the family. We have helped to create this love for ourselves and our children, and our children have helped to create it for us.

"Now the eggs are teaching the chickens," my mother used to say. Indeed.

Richard J. Prystowsky

Holistic and Practical Uses of Educational Research: How Parents, Teachers, and Students Can Benefit from Research

BY ROBIN ANN MARTIN

Would you like to be involved in some educational research? "Oh, yes, what fun, include me in!" Okay, so it's not the typical response you would get from most people. Indeed, most people would likely yawn and envision some boring academic analysis—if they envision anything at all. Yet, research does not have to be like that—it can be fun and full of heart as well, not to mention quite useful in making people more aware of what works and what doesn't work in schools, and in providing information for setting educational policy.

While good teachers know intuitively how to create classrooms or situations that allow students' natural learning instincts to thrive, the educational school system as a whole still has much to learn in this regard. Research is one way in which the educational system as a whole (and the rest of us) can learn from those good and intuitive teachers. Yet, research alone is not the answer, just as technology can never solve human problems.

Everyone interested in education (including parents and students) who are wanting change in a particular direction must get involved to guide the directions in which research goes, at local as well as at national levels. For within the politics of education today, one of the major cultural influences on how public schools develop is research—research whose goals, methods, and agendas are currently set by university academicians who are strongly influenced by the power of the institutions funding the research. Beyond the political realm, if conducted with heart and effectiveness, research can also benefit non-publicly funded alternative schools that are simply wanting to learn more about themselves and how to evolve in directions that would most benefit their students and communities. In fact, I envision a future when parents and local communities will be the ones who hire the university researchers to partner with them for creating better schools or homeschooling centers, rather than allowing the big corporations and the government to direct where all the funds in research go.

Robin Ann Martin coordinates the Paths of Learning Resource Center, http://www.PathsOfLearning.net—a tool for teachers and parents who want to transform, improve, or refine their approaches to education. She has studied education for almost ten years, with a focus on creating self-directed learning tools for adults and a growing passion for learning to create empowering, experiential environments for learners of all ages. She also coordinates the Center for Inspired Learning, a more informal educational resource directory at http://www.inspiredinside.com/learning.

Scott H. Forbes, a concerned researcher, recently wrote to me on this topic: "We researchers are pretty cheap, so this is not a massive fund raising issue. As the funders, the parents, students, and teachers could also demand that the research be written up in a way that is accessible to them, and perhaps summarized in a way that the local papers would want to carry. If parents, students, and teachers are to be more than the 'subjects' of

research, they must be agents of it, and that does mean participating (as you rightly suggest)."

Yet, before that time comes, we need to begin breaking down the walls between researchers and non-researchers and creating bridges that make research more understandable, accessible, and practical at a grassroots level. How do we build these bridges? I don't know—it's a new ballgame that's still being explored, one that I think we need to create together. However, ideas for getting started are beginning to churn within me, inspired greatly by all that others are doing in holistic education and research. One idea is to write articles such as this one—introducing the topic of educational research to people beyond or outside of the field of research. Another idea has manifested as the Paths of Learning Resource Center, an online tool for *anyone* wishing to explore research and real-life stories centering on the growing array of learning options.

As I develop this Resource Center, I'm finding that my whole heart is joyfully swept into its creation—as I often laugh and cry with each article I read—sensitive to the implications of what is happening in education. Yet some people might question the place of such feelings in research. This educational research stuff is supposed to be serious business. Indeed, it *is* serious, so serious that I must put my whole heart into it, in the hopes that I might reach people in deep and meaningful ways to help them open their eyes so that they can see education from fresh perspectives. Actually, it's not really me who reaches out; rather, it is the service itself that reaches out, helping longtime educators, researchers, and parents connect with each other through their writings that include informal stories as well as formal research. Of course, as I create this service for people, in the hopes of transforming education, I often wonder: How can we assist parents and educators who are busy with the business of life and teaching so that they might really benefit from this entity that we call *educational research*?

This question brings us back to the issue of how to build bridges. Perhaps the single most important step in this process involves our moving beyond the label of "educational research" and looking at the roots of what we mean by this concept.

What exactly do people mean when they say "research"? We use the term so casually and frequently nowadays that we seldom take the time to consider the different pictures that people might have in their heads about this rather vague term. For some people, research entails going to the library (or the Internet) and looking up resources about a particular topic; for others, research is some hands-on activity or experiment in a laboratory; others may think of it as something that researchers ("experts") do—whatever that may be. Webster tells us that research can be: 1. careful and diligent search, 2. studious inquiry and examination aimed at the discovery and interpretation of new knowledge, or 3. the collecting of information about a particular subject.

Okay, so if that's research, then what is *educational* research? Naturally, it is the study of the particular subject of education—methods, systems, relationships, ways, avenues, approaches, and processes for learning and teaching. In other words, it entails the study of how we might create situations and circumstances in which people learn more effectively, how we might understand why some people have trouble learning some subjects while others excel at them, and how we might support schools and teachers so that they help rather than hinder the various teaching and learning processes for different teachers and students.

At another level, educational research has been removed from "daily living" and put into universities, where it has been made into something so theoretical and distant that few people can understand it. Granted, it may often be used to make policy decisions at school, district, and national levels, or to support grant writing, but how often do we really use it to make grassroots community decisions for informing our daily actions? How often do the students and teachers who are most directly impacted by the policies generated by educational research learn to question the research supporting the policies? As we begin to question the foundations of traditional research, we do see a trend towards integrating research more and more with real life.

Traditional educational research has often used measures "within the system," such as grade point averages and college test scores, to validate the system. For example, a traditional researcher might ask questions such as, how does the amount of time spent in class relate to a student's scores on tests? Or, how do students' grade point averages relate to college success factors? In contrast, a researcher from a holistic perspective might question the importance of students' test scores and college success and instead investigate questions on the meaning and depth of students' lives, their quality of life, or their ability to become more empowered citizens. However, this does *not* mean that holistic researchers would necessarily ignore the numerical "facts"; rather, they are likely to interpret such data from a broader perspective. And to be sure, there are many researchers who in attempting to focus on holism often ignore numbers because they are focusing on the uncountable, complex issues among students, teachers, and the broader culture. In a nutshell, "traditional researchers" have used methods and topics that allow them to focus on things that can

be counted and categorized more easily, while "holistic researchers" ask questions and use methods that give them a different, broader picture of learners and teachers.

I do educational research from a perspective of holism (wholeness and interconnectivity). The Paths of Learning Resource Center, for example, is an educational research service that collects and presents information and stories about holistic education. It covers such wide-ranging topics as teaching strategies, core practical and philosophical differences between schools and other learning options, strategies to create new schools, historic and social issues that impact education, long-term outcomes of various educational options, and whole systems thinking in education. Essentially, all of the topics that you'd find in this magazine are also the kinds of topics for educational research from a holistic perspective (only we move beyond this magazine to encompass a wide range of sources as well).

Just as the subjects in holistic schools don't in and of themselves make them integrated and whole, so too is it with educational research. As important as what you study is *how* you study it. What is "good" holistic educational research? Is it "accurately" looking at the numbers and trends in school records? Is it observing closely and well how students learn best? Is it developing a comprehensive survey in which teachers are asked what works well for them? Is it stoically observing from a "professional" distance, or observing hands-on and getting to know your subjects as real people? Is it keenly noting the relationships among grade point averages, college test scores, and how well students do in college and succeed in life? Is it qualifying and perhaps even quantifying definitions of "success" so that you can study it more closely? Is it informally noticing that your students are behaving in certain patterns over a period of time? Yes, to all of the above.

Although not all schools use them, test scores and grade point averages can be of value in interpreting the effectiveness of different types of schools and teaching methods. Of course, holistic research will tend to lean more towards the use of "authentic measures" of a student's whole development from multiple perspectives, including measures having to do with issues that range beyond the students' individual learning and development to their interactions with the community and the planet. While holistic researchers tend to use qualitative research methods (direct observations, field notes, surveys, interviews, etc.), not all qualitative research is necessarily holistic. As Forbes, a holistic educational researcher from Oxford, recently explained to me: "Qualitative research has the possibility to reach beyond the countable, so it has the possibility of being more holistic, but that is all that, I believe, can be claimed."

Perhaps most surprising to some people are the "informal" aspects of research methods. Often, I think, research can be viewed in two general categories, *informal* research and *formal* research. Informal research is what many of us do all the time, as we take note of issues that are important to us and make observations. Even most scientists (such as Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Elisabet Sahtouris, and countless others) admit to the important role of "inspiration" in all that they do. So, like formal research, informal research also starts with inspiration and leads to the more directed and targeted gathering of facts for making decisions. The difference between formal and informal research is simply that *informal* research is not limited to any particular research methodology, which sometimes means that it is not as systematic or rigorous. Furthermore, the lack of predefined methods can mean that the researcher using informal research may have the freedom to shine light in places that formal research methods cannot always reach. As few schools have the benefit of their own on-site researchers, informal research is the high quality stuff that gets done in most small alternative schools as staff, students, and parents collect information to make decisions about their education or about the future of their schools.

In my view, the best informal research is that which is most reflective and respectful of all the information and viewpoints available, as well as that which leads to decisions that are most in line with the values of the students, parents, teachers, and other decision-makers within the school. While many school members might not think of what they do as "research," their efforts often fit my definition and account perhaps for the most important research of all. Why? Because informal research often leads to the sorts of anecdotal stories or articles in magazines such as *Paths of Learning,* which may have a great impact on how people think about education, as well as on their beliefs about their own powers for creating change in education. To ignore informal research in education would be like ignoring Rosa Parks in the civil rights movement.

Informal research often leads to more *formal* research, the kind of systematic research that has traditionally been left to professional researchers. When doing formal research, people decide to be very careful and meticulous about what data they gather and about how they gather it. They are very careful to define their goals in gathering the data and in aligning the methods and samples they use with their broader goals (often called "hypotheses" or, more broadly, "theories"), as well as in noting their biases and assumptions. Traditionally, formal research starts with a theory, moves to a hypothesis, and then attempts to disprove the "null hypothesis," all of which is used to add evidence to support (or disprove) the theory.

Theories are never fully proven; they just gain more and more evidence and become more widely accepted as

they do so, or else they never really get off the ground. Some theories, like Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, are very widely known, with many schools attempting to create programs based on their implications. Other theories, like Robert Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence, may have much credibility in educational research and provide much scaffolding for researchers, but they are not as widely known by teachers who otherwise might find the applications useful. Some theories are designed especially for application in schools; others are intended simply to describe phenomena such as the effects of or reasons for cooperative learning, special talents, or learning disabilities.

By staying within the bounds of formal research, whether traditional or more holistic, researchers tend to be more careful not to jump to conclusions based only on a partial picture of the facts. Formal researchers are generally more careful than are informal researchers to examine the limitations of their research and to be critical of how their methods (how one does the research) and samples (who is studied) impact the conclusions that they draw from their data. They also take time to examine more closely other writings and research in order to place their research in the broader context of past work in the field, as well as the political, historical, and cultural settings that impact their research questions and results.

So, how does the practice of formal research impact those non-researchers who might want to be more involved in using (or creating) educational research for themselves? The bottom line is that most teachers and parents want to know how such theories will help their students or children to learn most effectively. Given the rush of today's society, and the high demands placed on education and children, it makes sense to conduct research in ways that are more connected with those who need it.

One stumbling block for getting people more connected with research—reading it and doing their own—is its separation from our daily lives and our deeper beliefs about our reasons for being. It is often so objective that, quite frankly, it's boring—especially compared to the myriad of entertainment we find on television, at the movies, or even just sitting together and chatting with friends late at night in the kitchen. So, do we need to make it more "entertaining" to capture people's attention? Perhaps. However, I'm merely going to suggest that we make our approaches to research more engaging and meaningful in our daily interactions and personal constructions of the world.

In contrast to traditional research, holistic research, with its emphasis on grassroots practicality, tends to be more connected with people and more engaging as well. Within holistic research, people are beginning to question the perspective of the material world, in which "objects" are all that can be studied and where the "objects" studied are separate from the researchers. While the vast majority of researchers in various fields accept that they are not, in fact, separate from that which they study, few have accounted for this fact in the methods that they use. When this "objective" foundation is questioned more deeply, research becomes more engaging because the researcher becomes a part of it, as do the participants (traditionally called "subjects"). In a holistic view of science, for example, researchers look at the world as interconnected, wherein the person doing the research, the question or problem being researched, and the participants in the research project are all considered as interwoven aspects of the conclusions that are reached.

As few schools have the benefit of their own on-site researchers, informal research is the high quality stuff that gets done in most small alternative schools as staff, students, and parents collect information to make decisions about their education or about the future of their schools.

Also in contrast to more traditional research, holistic research often does not start with a predefined hypothesis; instead, it tends to be more explorative in nature. In its most liberal form, known as "participatory research," all of the participants being studied help to formulate the research questions, collect the data, and draw the conclusions. Research For Action (RFA), a growing organization based in Philadelphia, is an example of an organization using participatory research. As RFA explains its guiding principles:

> Research for Action is committed to the belief that education can only improve when schools become learning organizations not only for stu-

Now What?
A Resource List—compiled by Robin Martin

Examples are often the best way to understand anything as complex as research, which sometimes sounds so theoretical that it's difficult to put your hands around it. Below are a few examples of different types of research that can be used in education. Use these examples as starting places for whatever kinds of research intrigues you most.

Informal Research

Learning in the Afternoon: When Teacher Inquiry Meets School Reform—an article about a seminar in Philadelphia which helps teachers in "reseeing their classrooms" and "making changes in their practice that reflect and enact what they have come to know and value about what it means to participate in an inquiring community."

The Lives of Children—a book from 1969 with journal writings by George Dennison about his work in a small inner-city free school. This book has inspired many educators to think differently about what schools could really be.

Qualitative Research in Education

Here are a few books that I've found which seem especially insightful:

Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods, by Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen (1992).

Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography, by John Van Maanen (1988).

Research and Policy: The Uses of Qualitative Methods in Social and Educational Research, by Janet Finch (1986).

Beyond books, to pursue this field further on the Internet, a couple of the many places that you can explore are the following:

Bobbi Kerlin's *The Qualitative Research Page*
http://www.oit.pdx.edu/~kerlinb/qualresearch/

Judy Norris's *Qual Page: Resources for Qualitative Researchers*
http://www.ualberta.ca/~jrnorris/qual.html

Participatory and Action Research

Research for Action (RFA), based in Philadelphia
http://www.researchforaction.org

Other educational organizations that use various levels of participatory (or action) research:
http://www.researchforaction.org/resources.html

Beginner's Guide to Action Research
http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/sawd/arr/guide.html

Action Research International
http://elmo.scu.edu.au/schools/sawd/ari/ari-home.html

Resources for More Academic Research

American Educational Research Association (AERA)
http://www.aera.net/

Taylor & Francis Journals
http://www.journals.tandf.co.uk/listings/soc.html

Moving From Reflection to Action…

If you would like more reflections or details about any of the resources listed in this guide, we invite you to visit our Online Action Guides at http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm, where you can more easily link to the referenced books and web sites. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about educational research, just call 1-800-639-4122.

dents but also for teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. In creating participatory research projects, we reverse the traditional structure of bringing outside experts in to study a school or program. Instead, RFA staff helps educators, parents, and students learn key research and analytic skills. Diverse stakeholders work to define issues and questions, establish techniques for gathering information, evaluate data, and chart new directions based on their findings. Through this process of collaborative inquiry, Research for Action brings together people with different voices and visions, and helps them develop research and problem-solving skills. (http://researchforaction.org/principles.html)

While its guiding principles sound simple enough, this organization is actually on the leading edge of holistic research, a kind of research that questions many of the core beliefs concerning traditional research and the notion of objectivity. Research reports generated by RFA programs are created as collaborative projects between the RFA researchers and public school members. In reviewing these reports, I have been quite impressed by their level of professional quality, as well as by the depth of participation and reflective action on the part of the schools involved.

Looking at another type of holistic research called "action research," Scott Forbes commented that the interesting thing in such research is that the researchers not only acknowledge that they affect what they observe, but also continually modify their research to take their own beliefs and goals into account as they attempt to achieve the desired end. This is not to imply that they manipulate the data to achieve the desired end, but that they include their own biases as part of the data and that the process of research has many cycles which evolve with the broader goal of improving one's own practices (the desired end). Further, if their data are not helping to lead them towards a certain level or kind of improvement, then they will change their methods and collect new data, or analyze the data from new perspectives. Forbes adds, "Action research is a formalized 'learning from doing' that you might consider an attempt to make as formal as possible what must remain informal research. Some contend that it is the best of both worlds."

Having now explored some unfolding perspectives on educational research, let us return to the question of how we can assist parents and educators who are busy with the business of living and teaching so that they might really benefit from this stuff that we label *educational research.* I believe that the answers to this question are within us, and that they will unfold only as we begin to question the politics and funding sources of current educational research. Then, whether we're formal or informal researchers interested in transforming education, we must be willing to question and step beyond the current boundaries and foundations of traditional research so that we might work more directly with research participants in ways meaningful to them.

MY EXPERIENCE

BY CRYSTAL K. FERRY

Crystal relaxing at her tea party.

When I was asked to write for this magazine, I was eager to share my experience. I wanted to show how many children are being treated in schools. My name is Crystal. I am nine years old and I am homeschooled.

When I was too young to go to school, my mother gave me work to keep me occupied. I loved to learn. But when it was time for me to start school, my parents weren't sure that they were ready to do all of that teaching.

When I was five years old I was enrolled in a private school. Kindergarten was great. But when I went to first grade it was all downhill from there. I had a teacher that had only been there for one year.

She didn't have any patience. One day I was reading with my group. When we were done, the teacher's assistant told us to make sure to read each night. I told her that I read to my father. The teacher said in front of the whole class, "I think you should tell the truth." Then she told the assistant that my father read to me.

I felt very sad about what she had said because it was a lie. I told my parents about it when I got home. My mom went to the school and talked to the principal and teacher about this problem. The principal agreed that what the teacher did was wrong, but she wasn't corrected or made to apologize. Nothing more was said or done about it.

I loved second grade. The teacher was nice because she didn't get mad like the first grade teacher did. She was willing to help you and go over the work more than once. She made learning more fun.

Third grade was a different story. I started to cry over work. The teacher would call us names. She would tell us that our work was pathetic. She gave us lots of homework. It took hours every night to get it all done. I had no time to play or do anything else but schoolwork. My mom had to have talks with her and the principal a lot. Other parents were complaining to the principal about the teacher too. Finally my mom let me start doing the schoolwork from home. I liked that much better. I spent the last three weeks of school doing the work from my house. My parents decided they liked doing it at home much better, and so did I.

Now I am homeschooled and proud of it. I am doing fourth grade from home and don't ever want to go to school again. I even told my mom that I want to do college through homeschooling. My mom says she thinks I might like college. I have a lot of years to think about that.

Crystal is 9¾ years old. Her primary interests are fashion, animals, art, and science.
Photographer Cindy Ferry.

Freedom Beneath the Trees:

A Profile of Play Mountain Place

By Erika Schickel

The summer before my daughter's third birthday, it became clear to my husband and me that Franny was ready for preschool. Having just moved to a new neighborhood, we called a service that provided us with a list of schools in our zip code. Beginning at the top of the list and working our way down, we toured a variety of schools. We were shown brightly lit classrooms and tidy art corners, snack areas and rows of cots and cubbies. We inspected worksheets, admired finger paintings and observed "circle time." Everywhere we went I tried to picture my improvisational, opinionated and headstrong daughter waiting in line to wash her hands, waiting to be called on, waiting to eat. I couldn't.

At the fifth school we visited, I stood on the sun-baked asphalt of an outdoor play area, listening to my tour guide recite the now familiar daily schedule: "playtime, snack, art, lunch, nap, snack, story, play, home." I found myself gripped by a numbing stupor. My attention was wandering, I felt hot and cranky, and I wanted to go home and take a nap. I hadn't felt quite that way since ... grade school.

Then I did what I had been taught never, ever to do: I interrupted the teacher.

"Does your school have any kind of philosophy?"

The woman looked at me as though I had grown tusks. I tried to clarify. "Well, for example, how do you discipline children?"

"Oh, well..." I could see her groping for an answer to my odd question. "...we don't *hit* them or anything."

Another World

I made an appointment at the last school on our list. It had a curious, yet intriguing name: "Play Mountain Place." My husband and I found it on a shady, residential side street in Culver City. An unassuming, hand-painted sign told us we were in the right place. We opened the wooden gate and stepped into another world.

It was a world of trees. In the parched landscape of Southern California, here was a cool, quiet oasis of venerable, old trees—cedars and eucalypti, ginkgoes and Brazilian peppers. They formed a living roof over the campus, stilling the air and muffling the sounds of the outside world. Situated beneath the trees were two modest houses, the same vintage as the trees, and a pair of geodesic domes. Sheathed in clear plexi-glass, the domes appeared to serve as open-air classrooms. It didn't feel like a school; it felt like a living, breathing place.

A sign directed us into the main house, which, though it was outfitted for preschool, still felt like a home. Couches and bookshelves lined the walls. There was a piano and a fish tank and a great mess of small toys spilled out on a play table. It was a cozy, welcoming place.

Editor's Note:

In this issue of *Paths,* we offer you a profile of Play Mountain Place, an alternative educational environment in Los Angeles whose underlying philosophy is something of a cross between Carl Rogers's humanistic psychology and A.S. Neill's student- and freedom-centered approach to teaching and learning. Written by a parent whose daughter attends this school, this article was penned not long after Play Mountain celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

The rear wall of what was once the living room had been knocked out and replaced with glass sliding doors that opened on to the Big Nursery yard. My first thought was that this seemed like a place for Hobbits. It was magical and make-believe. Built into the trees were small houses, with ladders leading up to lofts. An ancient wisteria twined through an arbor, forming a long awning across the center of the yard. Little tables and chairs were placed around the yard and hand-painted signs marked the different areas: "Pole Loft," "Dragon's Lair," and "Bamboo Corner." Under the Pole Loft was a "sand kitchen," thoroughly outfitted with enough pots and Tupperware to cater a mud banquet. In one corner of the yard stood "The Fish," a large, hand-sculpted jungle gym made from conduit and tires that looked like a huge grouper—a long slide running through its middle, tires forming the "O" of its mouth. Parked next to it was a vintage tractor, ready to plow imaginary fields. There were tire swings, easels, dress-up clothes, and a long box-like table filled with birdseed where plastic dinosaurs roamed. A battered, comfy sofa sat in the corner with a bin of colorful storybooks placed on a table in front of it.

It was August, and there were only a few children in the yard, but they were all over it—climbing, painting, reading, talking. Our tour group was directed to enter the yard and sit low and observe the play. At first it looked random, even chaotic. But soon a logical pattern began to emerge. Everyone was involved in some kind of important work, whether it was painting a picture, pouring water into cups, or simply eating lunch with friends. The children moved in synchronicity with each other, mixing and matching harmoniously. At one point a conflict arose between two girls over a swing. They called out, "Teacher! Problem!" The teacher came over.

"What's the problem?"

"I wanted to go on this swing," said a little tow-headed girl, her wide-set eyes swimming with tears.

"I see. And that doesn't work for you, Isabella?"

"No! I was here first!" cries the dark-haired girl, her two middle fingers jammed in her mouth for comfort.

"I see," said the teacher. "So you're feeling like you're not finished with it?"

"No!"

"How much more time do you think you're going to need with the swing?"

"Umm, five minutes," says Isabella, taking her fingers out of her mouth. The teacher turns back to Annabelle.

"Annabelle, Isabella is saying she needs five more minutes with the swing. Will that work for you?"

"Yes," says the wide-eyed girl. "That's okay with me." The two girls, having reached an agreement, end up playing together on the swing.

I had never seen children treated with such simple, straightforward respect. They were neither sanctioned nor coddled. They were listened to and given a chance to arrive at their own decision. Though at that point I still knew very little about this school, I knew in my heart that this was the right place for my daughter.


Erica Schickel

Little did I know when I enrolled my daughter in school that I was signing up for my own education as well. In the year and a half Franny has attended Play Mountain Place, I have felt myself drawn into its life and history, and feel an overwhelming need to tell its remarkable story.

The First Day of School

Play Mountain's story began some fifty years ago, in Los Angeles, California. The country was just starting to get back on its feet after the one-two punch of two world wars. It was a time ripe with ideas and a nation ready for change. There was a "free thought" movement afoot, in which people held the hope that future wars could be prevented by raising a generation of peaceful, respectful, and conscientious children.

Phyllis Fleishman was working as a teacher in the Santa Monica school system. She received her master's degree in education from the Whittier School of Education, Broad Oaks. While there she was mentored by Dorothy Baruch, the school's director, who subsequently became a well-known author and child psychologist. From there, Phyllis went on to work in the Santa Monica City Day Care Centers which she described as "better than most of today's commercially run day care centers. Children were respected as individuals. They had the freedom to choose from their environment, and were not regimented for convenience's sake" (Connolly n.d.).

This was the resumé of a school-founder-in-the-making. And as with so many small schools, Phyllis's began with an immediate need: her own twin sons were preschool-aged and there was no place she was comfortable sending them. So she, with the support of her husband, Manny, set out to create a school. Not a "school" in the usual sense, but an open, secure, safe, imaginative, nurturing, stimulating place for children to learn about the world and themselves. In the summer of 1949 Phyllis and Manny converted their backyard into a play-safe area, enrolled their two boys and four of the boys' friends, and thus Modern Playschool was born.

The Fifties

The early pictures of Modern Playschool are quaintly dated. Early photos show teachers in crisp aprons watching over their muddy charges. Arlene Goodwin, a former teacher, recalls, "At that time [Phyllis] wouldn't let teachers wear slacks

at school. They had to wear dresses and they had to wear an apron with a pocket and have a little pad and pencil there to take notes about what the children said and were doing." Things may have appeared regimented, but radical things went on there during the 1950s. While a generation of children was being drilled in the Three R's and the xenophobia of the cold war, the children at Modern Playschool were learning about themselves and engaging in one of the first anti-bias programs in the country. They were learning to accept each other's differences and resolve conflicts peacefully.

Of course, back then the term "anti-bias" had yet to be coined. Phyllis was simply following her instincts as well as the work of Carl Rogers, the father of Humanistic Psychology. She took his view "that human beings become increasingly trustworthy once they feel at a deep level that their subjective experience is both respected and progressively understood" (Thorne 1992, 26). She had an unshakable, almost zealous, belief in the abilities of children. Phyllis believed that children deserved to be treated as equals by adults. Their lack of experience should not be a liability to their status in the community. At Modern Playschool children were spoken to, and more importantly, listened to, as complete and equal human beings.

In practice, she achieved this by using a pastiche of educational and psychological techniques, both borrowed and invented. She trained her teachers in reflective listening: the act of hearing and repeating back to children what they say, giving them a sense of being heard and understood.

She made sure that every day teachers would engage one-on-one with each child in what is known as "special time," a specific portion of time in which that child is focused on to the exclusion of all else. In a busy schoolyard, this simple connection can often be overlooked. Phyllis made sure it never was, saying, "Special time is our recipe for contented children. You could look on this special time almost as therapy for a child, a time when he feels special, unique, listened to. A different time, so different that he is satisfied for the rest of the day" (Connolly n.d.). Special time satisfies the natural craving that children have for attention and, conversely, makes them less demanding of attention.

Problems, Plans and Sharings

Another of Phyllis's brilliant innovations was the "Morning Meeting." Every day, at around 10:00 a.m., after an hour of leisurely parent drop-offs, good-byes and free play, it's time for "Morning Meeting." This is the one time of the day when kids are assembled in their separate groups: Little Nursery, Big Nursery, House Group, Primary, and Mountain Yard. As with everything else, participation in the meeting is strictly voluntary. The restless are free to play on the perimeter, as long as they don't disturb those who want to meet.

Ten-year-old Arli possesses a poise and confidence that I am not used to seeing in pre-teens. Most kids her age act as if they would rather chew glass than speak openly with an adult about their lives. But Arli's unself-conscious ease is a quality that I have observed in all of the kids at Play Mountain. They treat adults with the same open, respectful friendliness that they have been treated with all their lives. Arli, a Play Mountain student since the age of three, gives me a quick rundown of the morning meeting routine: "What happens is they've got a chalkboard and they write 'Problems,' 'Plans,' and 'Sharings.' A problem is, like, if your brother threw up on you. And your plan is, 'I want to play basketball with Ben, Shamari, Zachary and Zoe.' And your sharing is like, 'I went to Disneyland and met Mickey Mouse.'"

"Problems" are emotional housecleaning. Children can talk about anything that may be bothering them, so that they may start the day with a clean slate. Phyllis believed that "children need to be given the space to simply express how they're feeling. The only way to help the child handle those angry, scared feelings is to get those feelings out in the open, talked about" (Connolly n.d.).

In the "Plans" portion of Morning Meeting, children plan their day's activities. More often than not they choose not activities but each other, declaring with whom they want to play. A plan gives the children purpose, self-direction, and a place to start in a day that is ripe with opportunity. Whether or not they carry out their stated plan is entirely up to them.

The last topic of morning meeting—"Sharings"—is a loosely defined category that includes show-and-tell, knock-knock jokes, personal stories, or just a little rambling. "Sharings" gives kids the floor and lets them talk about themselves and their interests while the group listens. My own daughter methodically loads up a purse every morning with objects from home to show, and is known in the Big Nursery yard for telling fantastical stories such as "My daddy threw me out in the snow and I froze," or "The monster knocked down the door and it was my dream and the cat's dream." The Morning Meeting notes are always written down by a teacher verbatim, and left out for parents to read at pick-up time.

Morning Meeting is not just a time to be heard, but is also the one time in the day when the entire group is assembled together. School director Judy Accardi explains, "Morning Meeting is a very group-process oriented time. It's intended to be the place where people build their group relationship." This is part of Play Mountain's magic. It encourages children to learn about themselves not only as individuals, but also as individuals within a group. This translates into that holy grail of educational ends, leadership skills.

Everyone a Teacher

Phyllis was a natural leader. Her passion and dynamism drew people to her and her school. Phyllis had a way of spotting great teachers in people who didn't even know they were teachers. Anya Stewart, for example, co-owner of a local sandal repair shop, hand delivered a pair of sandals to Phyllis at the school and

Now What?
Reflections by Robin Martin

The history and details of "A Place Called Play Mountain" invoke our imagination, painting pictures of how schools can move beyond the limitations of our own stand-in-line, do-what-you're-told education. With our imaginations called forth, let us ponder the questions and actions we might take to move toward creating more Play Mountain Places in the world.

Questions to Ponder

- ▲ What features of PMP do you wish you had experienced as a child, and what experiences do you feel might benefit your own children? How does the PMP reflect your own beliefs of what education "should" look like?
- ▲ What aspects of PMP could be used to recreate schools in your own community to help your own children experience the wonder of childhood more fully?
- ▲ Are there other living/breathing schools like PMP where children learn in synchronicity with each other, develop leadership qualities, are treated as equals, and given the space to experience all of their emotions?
- ▲ How can schools that are already using PMP as a model learn from the lessons of PMP as they evolve beyond the age of their founders?

Other "Free School" Books You Might Enjoy

Here are both new and "classic" books that exemplify many of the core issues that Phyllis Fleishman took such care to create when she founded PMP, a school ahead of its time.

Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood, by A.S. Neill (1960, edited by Albert Lamb, 1996)—portrays the development of PMP's "ideological match," a well-known free school in England. Summerhill is based on Neill's firm belief in self-regulation and allowing children to make their own rules and determine for themselves how much to study.

Freedom to Learn, by Carl Rogers (1969)—a book for educators and parents that provides insights and applications to Roger's humanistic psychology in schools. Rogers writes in ways that speak to the everyday person about learning that is alive, fully experienced, and reaches students in more meaningful ways.

Deschooling Our Lives, edited by Matt Hern (1996)—challenges our assumptions about the nature of education by illustrating many learner-centered options that people are using (successfully!) in place of traditional schooling.

Making It Up As We Go Along, by Chris Mercogliano (1998)—tells of the real life experiences of The Albany Free School where the guiding principles of educating are "love, emotional honesty, peer-level leadership, and cooperation" (p. 19). Founded in 1969.

Lives of Children, by George Dennison (1969)—now over 30 years old, this book's lessons are still invaluable. It gives the day-by-day diary of a teacher helping to start a unique elementary free school in urban New York.

Real Education Varieties of Freedom, by David Gribble (1998)—profiles fourteen free schools around the world to provide an array of ideas on the many forms of learning and structures that are possible within the single category of "free schools."

School Websites for Exploring

The next best thing to visiting schools like PMP is taking a virtual tour to get a flavor for the diversity of students and activities, as well as the values of school staff who share in visions like that of Phyllis Fleishman. In addition to the PMP website, here are a few other innovative, humanistic schools where students are respected and honored with levels of responsibility not often seen in more traditional schools.

Play Mountain Place: http://www.playmountain.org

Summerhill (Leiston, Suffolk, England): http://www.s-hill.demon.co.uk/

Windsor House (North Vancouver, BC, Canada): http://whs.at.org/

Puget Sound Community School (Seattle, WA, USA): http://www.pscs.org

Sudbury Valley School (Framingham, MA, USA): http://www.sudval.org

Moving From Reflection to Action…

> "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."
>
> *—Henry David Thoreau*

Play Mountain Place is a castle with a foundation under it. For ideas to put foundations under your own "castles in the air," we invite you to visit our Online Action Guides at http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm, where you can more easily link to the referenced books and websites as well as read about additional reflections spurred by Erika Schickel's article, "A Place Called Play Mountain." Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide, just call 1-800-639-4122. (The guide also includes a list of recommended teaching and learning books compiled by Play Mountain Place.)

ended up staying for the next thirty-six years. Diana Fleishman, a teacher for over ten years, recalls her start at Play Mountain: "I was working in a restaurant as a waitress and Phyllis said, 'One of my teachers is sick, could you substitute for a couple of weeks?' I said, 'I'd love to, but I don't have any experience,' and she said, 'Oh, it doesn't matter, you can't make a mistake.'" At Play Mountain, everyone was learning through experience, teachers and students alike. Mistakes, in Phyllis's view, were a welcome opportunity to learn.

Though her recruitment of staff was somewhat random, her mentoring program was anything but. As the school's reputation grew, other people, eager to participate in Phyllis's "experiment," sought the school out. If Phyllis sensed a match, she quickly took them under her wing, immersing them in the school's humanistic philosophy, making them first interns, then teachers. It was this mentoring system that has given the school its strength and longevity. Because the philosophy and teaching techniques are so thoroughly communicated and employed by school staff, the original humanistic philosophy has retained its integrity without becoming static. There is a distinct lack of written material reflecting Phyllis's ideas and philosophy (much to the chagrin of this reporter), but that is because Phyllis early on made a conscious choice not to publish, but to communicate her ideas. She seemed to feel that freezing her ideas into print would render them lifeless. Instead she poured her energy into training her teachers not just to teach, but also to train others. Thus, she has left a living legacy of committed individuals who daily ensure that her school stays true to its roots.

The skills Phyllis taught, mostly by example, continue as the core of adult-child interaction at Play Mountain today. The two most important are reflective listening, described earlier, and "I messages."

"I Messages" provide a clear example of how day-to-day interactions go at the school. Former PMP parent and director Arlene Goodwin explains that "an 'I Message' was to say a feeling like, 'When this happens I feel bad...' and then you can add a 'because' or an 'I wish you would.' And it is about practical things like, 'When the blocks are on the floor I feel uncomfortable because I can't really go on with the next activity.' That sentence is saying I feel this about the blocks on the floor, not about you (the child)." This kind of rhetoric takes the blame off the child and shifts the dialogue into a problem-solving context. To the newly initiated, reflective listening and "I Messages" can sound formulaic and a little awkward, but as Goodwin affirms, "It's all about raising the level of moment-to-moment interaction."

The Birth of The Mountain

After running Modern Playschool for eleven years as a preschool, and after receiving much pressure from parents to expand the school, Phyllis and Manny bought the adjacent property and opened the elementary school. In the course of construction a large pile of dirt accumulated in the middle of the yard. The kids were all over it, playing on it, jumping off it. Phyllis, a firm believer in the power high places give to the vertically challenged, decided to keep it. Packed solid by footsteps and covered with decomposed gravel, it was dubbed "the Mountain."

The newly expanded school needed a new name, and Phyllis's stepson, Norman Fleishman, takes credit for thinking it up: "They built the mountain and the idea was the play-off between the 'play,' which was the way everybody learned ... and the 'mountain' where you climbed up something, where you stretched ... that blend of those two things ... a combination of play and work and cooperation." It was almost called "Play Mountain School," but the children balked at that. To them the word "school" meant desks and grades and homework, none of which existed there. Instead, this was a "place" where a child could go barefoot and learn stuff and have fun and just *be*. So the "Play Mountain Place" sign was painted in bright colors on a wooden board and hung over the front gate.

Summerhill of the West

In 1960, A.S. Neill's account of his free school in Britain, *Summerhill*, was published and Phyllis found in Neill an ideological match. That year Play Mountain became the West Coast headquarters of the Summerhill Society, an alliance of alternative schools centered on Neill's principles of self-directed education. Phyllis borrowed some of Neill's ideas and mixed them with her own. What worked she kept; what didn't was discarded. In her 1970 interview with Richard Bull, Phyllis recalled the evolution of her free school: "Our school just sort of grew the way it grew, and I read *Summerhill* along the way. We became more free gradually. Lots of things that we did in the beginning we just don't do anymore, because it seemed that the kids didn't want it or need it. So we just got freer and freer" (Bull 1970).

Though the Summerhill affiliation was strong, Phyllis's school diverged from the Summerhill model in one key way: Neill held an antagonistic view of parents and their tendency toward authority. He wrote in *Summerhill*, "The curse of humanity is the external compulsion, whether it comes from the Pope or the state or the teacher or the parent. It is fascism *in toto*" (1960, 114).

Since Summerhill was a boarding school, it was easy for Neill to alienate parents from his process. But Phyllis was running a day school and felt strongly that parents not only should be included, but also should form a partnership with the school: "Some free schools just take the kid and disregard the parent, but we feel we must be able to work with the parents in order to do any good" (Bull 1970). She ran regular parent workshops, teaching methods of non-authoritarian communication, and strove to involve parents in the daily life of the school. Diana Fleishman recalls that "[a]dult education was always a very important part of the school. Phyllis developed formal seminars and workshops for staff, parents, older students, and the larger community." In 1988, the

Institute for Humanistic Education and Parenting was established by PMP administrators to further these educational programs. To this day, it functions as a kind of left brain to the right brain of the school.

The Sixties

The 1960s were a time of change both culturally and politically. Alternative schools sprang up all around the country, reflecting new ideas in education. Play Mountain, now in its adolescence, had worked through many of the philosophical and procedural kinks that hinder a fledgling school. The day-to-day procedures for executing their philosophy were well in place. Patricia (Pat) Pool came to Play Mountain as a parent in 1969. She recalls her experience with other alternative schools at that time: "I just had the feeling that [other schools] were still trying to figure out who they were and what they were about. This school was so clearly more grounded than the others" (Fleishman 1999). Though a free school, Play Mountain had its limits. Pat recollects, "Phyllis was one of the alternative school directors in the Sixties that did not allow pot to be smoked on the campus. In the Sixties we were a school that was comfortable setting realistic boundaries and limits."

Limits

Limits are an essential ingredient of freedom at PMP. A "limit" is not simply a "rule" in sheep's clothing. Rules are often arbitrary, serving mostly to curtail undesirable behavior in children. A limit is more organic, arising in specific circumstances between or among individuals. A limit must always be justifiable in terms of the individual's or group's emotional or physical safety. Whereas a rule is often followed by, "Because I say so!" a limit has its own logic and accountability: "I need to have a limit about your dancing on the table because I think it is unsafe. But I see you are wanting to dance. Do you want to do it somewhere else?" It is couched in explicit language that is respectful of the child and that gives the child power to choose to accommodate the limit. A child will never feel coerced or blackmailed into following an adult agenda. If the child doesn't like a limit, then she is free to discuss her feelings about it, and she will be respectfully listened to.

People visiting PMP for the first time often make the mistake of thinking that there are no limits in a free school. Even after a year and a half at the school, I find it hard to explain concisely how limits work in a free environment, so I go to Patricia Pool for clarification. Pool, a former PMP director and parent, has a bright, round face and the even, patient cadence of someone who has spent a lifetime talking to children. She welcomes my question and explains by making a little corral with her hands: "A small circle means that the things children can dream to do are fewer." She then made a circle with her arms and said, "If you have a large area in which children can invent their plans, then they actually have more chances to hit natural boundaries. The practice of freedom means constantly negotiating with others and not stepping on other people's rights."

Morning meeting.

This freedom can and does lead to a lot of conflict—the bread and butter of the Play Mountain education. In any given day kids are wheeling around the yard, bumping into each other, engaging in conflicts both large and small. With or without the help of a teacher, kids negotiate and peacefully resolve their problems as these problems arise. The result of all this conflict is an overwhelmingly happy and peaceful school environment.

Geri Hall has been a parent at Play Mountain for almost a decade. We are sitting in a corner of the Mountain Yard watching a group of ten-year-old boys construct a skate ramp out of some discarded pipe. They each have their own idea of how best to set it up. After some negotiation, they reach consensus and soon have it propped against a table and are taking turns jumping off it. Geri reflects on Play Mountain's philosophy: "It just feels like it's a different way to be in the world. It's a joyful way of being in the world, being able to be yourself and feel safe that nobody's going to laugh at you or make fun of you and if they do there's somebody to help them stop and to help you say, 'Stop.'"

Moosh

Dostoyevsky once said, "Whether it is good or bad, it is sometimes very pleasant to hit things." One of the basic limits at all schools is that children may not hurt each other physically or emotionally. At more traditional schools this usually means that hostility is simply not tolerated. But a child who is constantly made to repress his anger will get his licks in elsewhere. Were Phyllis alive today, she probably would have pinned the Columbine tragedy on Klebold and Harris's not getting to do enough Moosh.

Phyllis, by all accounts a hot-tempered woman, believed in the free expression of anger: "I think the whole business about free schools having to be full of love is just nonsense. It should be full of regard for each other. But it just can't be all loving because human beings

have all kinds of feelings, including love. We try to have an environment where hostility is an acceptable emotion." To that end, Phyllis created the "Moosh Plan": "We try to have things available and everywhere handy for expressing hostility safely. Tearing newspapers and kicking and squashing boxes, egg cartons, or eggshells, things to throw and things to hit, all the time handy. So we don't have an emphasis on being nice and, since we're not afraid of hostility ... we don't have kids scaring themselves to pieces with their own fantasies of what they're going to do with their hostility" (Connolly n.d.).

The Seventies

The school saw its zenith in the 1970s: "In the 70s there was a flooding of people to Play Mountain, and we were very much in the flow of educational reform," observes Pat Pool, PMP director from 1979 to 1991 and co-director from 1994 to1999. "It was the one decade where we were right with the cultural movement" (Fleishman 1999).

Enrollment swelled to over 120 students, and the school expanded once again. Phyllis and Manny bought the property across the alleyway and built Gillman Hall, a facility for junior high and high school-aged kids. Play Mountain was known internationally and PMP staff were asked to conduct teacher training seminars for Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Pasadena, and Orange County school districts in methods of open classroom communication and conflict resolution. A weekly Los Angeles radio program called "Education" was aired for three years with the assistance of Play Mountain staff. PMP staff also ran Conflict Resolution and Peaceful Parenting workshops through public agencies and private companies in and around Los Angeles. It was a heady time for a school that had known nothing but steady growth from its inception. Then tragedy struck.

Taking care of Angie.

In 1977, Phyllis Fleishman, after a long illness, died of cancer. The community was grief-stricken. Teacher Arlene Goodwin, who was asked to step in as director, recalls of that time, "This whole community went into mourning. A large part of my work was to actually help that process happen. But there was another part, and that was of course trying to keep the school together. I think the teachers were very tired, the school was large, there was a lot of high feeling—the children were upset" (Fleishman 1999).

The school itself was dealt a nearly mortal blow. Enrollment dropped from 130 to 30. Gillman, the school's newest and most tangible asset, had to be sold. Arlene, exhausted after two and a half years of this emotional work, resigned as director, and former parent and administrator Pat Pool assumed the post.

Pool recalls, "There was a sense that not only did someone need to be able to model and help implement the philosophy, but also to think of it as an institution now, as opposed to 'Phyllis's school.' An institution that needed a little attention in order to make this transition and survive its founder" (Fleishman 1999). Very rarely is an independent school able to survive the death of its founder, and Play Mountain nearly didn't.

The Eighties

The 1980s were a patchwork of good and bad times for the school. Pool recalls, "The media announced that alternative education had failed. I don't know what they were talking about because every place I saw it, it was succeeding" (Fleishman 1999). Nonetheless, parents were beginning to seek out highly competitive, structured programs that would guarantee their children the leading edge in the rat race. Play Mountain, still reeling from the loss of its founder, was trying to stay on its feet. Though enrollment remained low during the 1980s, the decade also brought its triumphs. In 1981, the city of Los Angeles honored Play Mountain for its contributions toward bettering the community's human relations. In 1987, PMP kids successfully petitioned the city to honor Rosa Parks with "Rosa Parks Day" every February 4th.

The 1980s also brought a great deal of interest in the school from other countries. In 1983, Mizuho Fukida published *School is Fun* in Japan, providing Japanese readers with a first-hand account of PMP's philosophy and method. In 1988, Pat Pool and Anya Stewart were invited to Japan to conduct a series of workshops on humanistic education and parenting. There they were met with open minds and great enthusiasm. To this day, Play Mountain continues to attract interns from all over the world, particularly from Japan. These interns further inform, energize and enrich the school's already diverse community.

The Nineties

The 1990s have been a time of continued vitality, as well as a time of struggle, for PMP. In 1990, the staff were asked by the L.A. Unified School District to offer training in school self-government. In 1997, *Los Angeles Magazine* named the PMP one of L.A.'s best preschools and private elementary schools. But distressingly, neither the local

nor the international acclaim has added up to financial stability for the school. It remains, at the close of the decade, under-enrolled and in the red.

Nevertheless, it is a testament to Phyllis's vision and strong mentoring program that Play Mountain, throughout all its trials, has been able to stay true to its humanistic roots. No matter how stressed resources have become, the children have rarely, if ever, felt the pinch. Though Phyllis rejected publishing her ideas, she made sure that a system was firmly in place in which they could be passed down, teacher to teacher. Anya Stewart, her very first intern, observes, "It just keeps growing like a flower garden. It keeps re-growing each year..." (Fleishman 1999).

My family came to Play Mountain Place in 1998, one of the most challenging and difficult years in the school's fifty-year history. Having exhausted its funds from the sale of Gillman Hall, the school was facing imminent financial demise. An aggressive plea was made for donations from parents to keep the school open. Many families gave what they could, but several other families, feeling shaken and betrayed, left Play Mountain. It was also a year that saw a gut-wrenching split of the Board of Directors, prompting many changes in the administrative structure of the school.

Throughout these trials, many divergent opinions have been aired and debated. Many issues remain to be resolved. There has been consensus, however, in one respect: everyone agrees that the school needs to learn how to operate successfully as a business. This is no small task, selling a process-oriented education in these product-oriented times. Having spent fifty years devoted solely to its programs and the children it serves, the school must now focus on its bottom line so that it may continue to serve its community.

But it is within that community that the school's greatest strength lies. I sensed that keenly last August, when students, teachers, alumni, parents and friends came from all over the country to celebrate the school's fiftieth anniversary. As I stood under the twining wisteria in the Big Nursery yard, I watched a group of forty-something alums scramble atop the fish to pose for a group picture. As I watched them awkwardly try to navigate the contours of the jungle gym in their party clothes, I felt a sudden rush of affection for a place that would nurture such unselfconscious and whole-hearted people.

I thought about the woman who had started it all, half a century before. I had heard someone that evening describe Phyllis Fleishman as both a mirror and a lamp, and I felt that also perfectly described her school. Its history reflects the struggles and triumphs of alternative education as a whole in this country. The lessons it has learned from experience can light the way to the future, not just for us, its immediate family, but for the extended family of people who choose free schooling for their children.

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Release the Body,

Release the Mind

By Martha Goff Stoner

As a teacher of college literature and writing, I spent almost fifteen years working with students whose bodies were caged by desks, and whose energy and freedom of thought were also caged by the fact that their bodies were imprisoned. Like most of my fellow teachers, it never occurred to me that the physical body had anything to do with the learning process. Yet I now know that the mind feeds the body and the body feeds the mind in a constant dance of fluctuating, and often imperceptible, energy flow.

From the time I was young, I was a dancer, and as a college student, I learned yoga, but when I entered the classroom to teach, I forgot that I was bringing a body with me, and I didn't notice that my students had also brought theirs. But I did notice very early in my teaching career that my students experienced a lot of anxiety when faced with writing assignments. Their anxiety was noticeable in the way they hunched their shoulders and gripped their pens when writing in class or in the way they stood before me after class asking questions about an assignment, nervously shifting from one foot to the other or not making eye contact.

Early in my teaching career, I taught many freshman composition courses. Because these were required courses, rarely did my students think of themselves as writers. In fact, many of my students did not like writing. Not only did these students carry a significant burden of anxiety, they also clung to prejudices about themselves and about writing classes. Many *knew* they couldn't write well, *hated* writing classes, and were suspicious of "English" teachers.

Aware of my students' anxiety and resentment, I decided I would be more likely to teach them to write well if I first attempted to relieve them of their resistance to writing, to writing classes, and to writing teachers. My strategy included lots of free-writing (writing which is not critiqued and in which the student is counseled not to worry about grammar, punctuation, or spelling, but simply to put words on paper), many hours of individual conferences in which I verbally encouraged and cajoled, numerous ungraded essay assignments, emphasis upon end-of-the-term writing for the grade (this allowed students to be graded upon improvement), and practice in meditation to counter in-the-moment anxiety.

It was the use of meditation in the classroom that initiated the discoveries that led to my current use of body movement in writing classes. Teaching meditation in a conventional college classroom was an unheard of practice in 1985 when I began doing this. I was hesitant at first because I feared my students would react negatively. But I knew that meditation calmed my nerves and thought it might also calm theirs.

I taught a very simple breath-awareness technique. At the beginning of each class, I asked my students to sit quietly with their eyes closed. When everyone was

Martha Goff Stoner has taught writing at the University of Michigan, at Michigan State University, and at Adrian College. She is a student of shamanism, poetics, and dance. She currently lives in an oak forest in Southeast Michigan where she homeschools her two sons.

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silent and when bodies seemed still, I asked students to bring their awareness to their breath and to allow their thoughts to float through their consciousness without clinging to them. We practiced this technique for five minutes at the beginning of class. Afterwards, students wrote for five minutes or so about anything that came to their minds. They were told that their writing was private and that they needn't worry about any of the conventional forms—spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. I emphasized that these two experiences—the meditation and the writing—were entirely for the student. I stayed out of their 10-minute free time as much as I could.

The results were astonishing—far beyond anything I expected when I tentatively began the practice. As one student wrote in her end-of-the-term course evaluation:

> The meditations helped me a great deal in relaxing and learning how to let myself write without restrictions. I think this writing adds a lot to the course. It helped me see a lot of things about myself that I hadn't seen before. I also think it's good because you can go back, re-read the meditation, and see how you've grown as a writer and as a person.

Meditation practice enabled many students to relax before they wrote and to write freely once they put pen to paper. As I watched students writing after meditation, however, I noticed something else. I noticed a shift in the way their bodies looked. After meditation, everyone was writing. Rarely did I see anyone looking out the window, bored. Rarely did I see anyone sitting back in his chair, chewing on his pencil, frustrated and unable to write. Typically, students seemed alert and engaged in their writing. They leaned forward over their papers, determined to catch the flow before it stopped. Meditation after meditation, day after day, everyone was writing calmly in a spirit of flow, and many sighs of satisfaction or smiles were evident when students looked up from their papers, having said all they had to say.

Though students knew that their writing was private and that they did not have to share it aloud in class or turn it in after class, many students wanted to read aloud after meditation and writing practice. The following indicates just how much had changed for one student:

> I learned that I can write. If somebody allows me to write about what I feel is important, and how I want to express it I can do it. When I came into this class for the first time I thought I would never be able to write. Now I love writing, expressing myself in new ways.

What more could a writing teacher ask for?

Yet I was more than fortunate, for I received more. As I experimented with meditation, I learned that the body was part of the writing act. Movement, I noticed, seemed to be expressive of what was happening in the mind of the writer. A calm, alert body seemed connected to a satisfying writing experience. Body reflected mind.

From my own writing experience, I knew that when I was frustrated, when ideas did not seem to come, I might jump up from my desk and pace. Sometimes I would open a window and breathe the fresh air. Or perhaps I would leave my study and go out for a walk.

I thought of these acts, if I thought of them at all, as ways of "getting away" from my frustration. But it had never occurred to me that perhaps by moving my body, I was actually enabling myself to think.

Now, I began to suspect that body movement was not just a *reflection* of what was going on in the mind. I began to wonder if body movement might in fact *alter* what was going on in the mind. If this were true, body movement could become a conscious part of the learning experience. I decided to experiment. I began asking students to get up out of their seats, to wander aimlessly, to hop, to sit on the floor, to go outdoors.

Consider:

> *It is a gray November day. My students walk into the classroom and sit at their desks. No meditation today. I ask the students to write spontaneous free-writing. I tell them the writing will be private. Some bend over their writing. Some can't seem to begin and keep gazing out the window. A few yawn and lean back in their seats, idly doodling with their pencils. After a time, I ask them to stop writing, to stand up and to walk out into the hallway and wait for me there. The students appear surprised, but do as I ask. In the hall, I tell them, "Now go back into the classroom, only this time, walk in backwards, find your paper and pen, then sit on the floor and write whatever is on your mind." Immediately, they begin talking to each other, some laughing, some directing sarcastic remarks at me. A few of the more adventurous begin the backward walk into the classroom. More giggling ensues as more students follow, some bumping into the students behind (ahead of) them. A young man trips and makes a big display of falling. Virtually everyone is laughing now. By the time they have found their paper and pens and are sitting on the floor, there's general uproar and confusion. Lots of talking. Lots of laughing. In my*

"teacherly" voice, I rise above the noise to remind them that they are to write, in silence now, whatever is on their minds.

Bodies attack paper. Everyone is engaged in the writing. No one is talking. No one is looking out the window. Attention is focused on the page. What has happened? A simple waking-up exercise. Not only have I asked them to move their bodies when they thought they'd be sitting for an hour, but I've asked them to move in an unconventional, albeit relatively safe, fashion (backwards) and I've asked them to sit where they typically do not sit in a classroom (on the floor).

After the writing, I ask if anyone would like to read their floor-sitting writing. Several hands go up. Jokes fly off the pages. One reader-writer hits a deep, serious vein. Everyone listens quietly and respectfully. I ask those who volunteered to read the floor-sitting writing if they would like to read their chair-sitting pieces aloud. Some do. To a person, they all prefer their second writing. Even those who did not volunteer to read chime in when asked what it was about the second piece that they liked better. They cite characteristics like spontaneity, excitement, truth. "That's the real me," says one student. "When I was sitting in my chair I was being good, a good student. Here on the floor I'm just a nobody and I can say anything I want. Walking backwards felt goofy and risky; it made me feel like writing goofy and risky too."

It is certainly true that simply doing something unconventional in a classroom can shake things up enough to cause some authentic writing to occur. But in this case, each student's body was involved in the act. The students were not spectators of someone else's unconventionality. They all took part in and created their own spontaneous unconventionality.

But I wonder if even more than this happened when the students moved backward. I wonder if a physiological transformation took place as the students moved. Did the fact that they moved cause their writing to be more exciting? More pleasurable?

Consider, for a moment, the phenomenon of incubation. We all know about this process—a person is stuck in the midst of a creative project, has run out of ideas, or is perplexed about a particularly knotty problem that seems to have no solution. He or she takes a walk, drives to the store, goes to sleep or in some other way engages the body in action while allowing the conscious mind to forget the problem. Then suddenly, as if from nowhere, "eureka!" the solution pops into the mind.

Where did that solution come from? Is the phenomenon of incubation a matter of simply taking time out from focusing the mind on the issue at hand, thereby giving the mind enough rest to allow an idea to emerge, or is the body itself playing a key role both in the fact that the idea does emerge and, even, in the nature of the idea that emerges?

Might a walk in the woods promote a particular train of thought and thereby enable a certain form of creative idea to emerge, whereas a jog through two miles of city streets might be responsible for the emergence of significantly different ideas? Certainly, there are many variables here. The environments are different. The type of person who chooses such environments and activities is, arguably, different. So, logically, we assume, these variations could produce different ideas. But is it possible that in addition to these different environments and personality traits, the actual movement of the bodies influenced the nature of the ideas that emerged? If we move slowly, do we think differently from the way that we think when we move quickly? If we walk backwards, does our thinking reorient itself? If we hop, skip, jump, do we shift our inner awareness and, thereby, affect our way of expressing that awareness?

In such cases, how is the body participating? Does the body mold or reflect back to us our thought processes? Can we discover individualized body rhythms that make it more likely for us to be creatively expressive and fulfilled? Is it possible that a person who believes "I cannot write" might become a writer if she first became a dancer?

Such questions lead us into the realm of consciousness studies. To ask if the body might in some way be a repository of ideas is to ask a fundamentally materialist question. That is, we seem to be asking if thoughts "reside" in the body, if consciousness has a location that we might someday be able to map in the body. But those who study consciousness know that consciousness is much more elusive than these questions imply. If, through practice and experimentation, we find ourselves able to say that movement of the body *does* affect thought, we cannot so easily explain why this is so.

We can, however, begin to include body movement in our classrooms. Without precisely understanding the mechanism, we can still conduct the experiments that will lead us to a deeper understanding of the role the body plays in learning. We can study our students and ourselves. We can notice that in moving, we grow; in remaining static, we inhibit. We can affirm that if we release the body into movement, so too do we release the mind.

A PORTRAIT OF THE JESTER AS OBSERVER:

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. THOMAS ARMSTRONG

by Richard J. Prystowsky and Charlie Miles

Editor's Note: Last fall, Charlie Miles, our Editorial Assistant, and I met up with Dr. Thomas Armstrong in Orange County, California, where he was giving some talks. Knowing the seriousness of his work—in books such as *Awakening Your Child's Natural Genius*, *The Radiant Child*, *In Their Own Way*, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, and *The Myth of the ADD Child*—we were delighted to discover in Dr. Armstrong a warm, welcoming, humorous man whose insights and observations directed the course of the interview, which we present below.

Even before we began taping the interview, Dr. Armstrong provided us with amusing and engaging commentary, some of which we were able to capture once we realized that we were going to have to be quick to keep up with him! In the spirit of the wonderful afternoon chat that we had with him, we begin here *in medias res*—we think that Dr. Armstrong would like that.

Richard J. Prystowsky

Seeds of a Radical Educational Theorist

Tom Armstrong: Looking through the names of people listed here on the *Paths of Learning* Editorial Board, I recognize so many familiar names and people who have influenced my life. Oh this is amazing, all these people. Don Glines, for example, was my assistant principal in eighth grade at Canyon del Oro Junior High in Tucson, Arizona, in 1963. (Laughing) I don't think he remembers me. I was a discipline problem in eighth grade.

Charlie: So have you kept in touch with him since then?

TA: No, no no, I've had no contact at all. [Editor's note: Since the interview took place, they have been in touch.] The last time I saw him I was probably being sent to the assistant principal. He was like the discipline person. (Laughter) As I recall, I was pretty spunky that year; I got into a number of fights, and I was actually put on the discipline list, one of my better years. (Laughter) Later, we moved back to North Dakota, and then I got involved in achievement and that sort of thing, so eighth grade always stands out for me as one of my hyperactive years.

C: So you would have been considered an ADD child?

TA: Well, I had a hyperactive year in second grade, too, and so they did actually refer me for testing. I remember, I used to like to play the piano on my desk, to keep my fingers in motion, and so apparently one of my teachers came in—she was very tired, she'd had a bad day—and sent me to the principal's office, and they had me tested. This was a critical moment in my educational career. Who knows what might have happened had I not talked my way out of the situation? I remember the test they gave me. They said, "What's the hardest substance?" And I said, "It's not a diamond." I had just read in the paper the previous week that they had found a stone harder than a diamond. And then they asked me who wrote *Romeo and Juliet* and I said Longfellow! (Laughter)

Dr. Armstrong is an award-winning author and speaker with 26 years of teaching experience from the primary through the doctoral level. He has written for a number of publications, including Ladies Home Journal, Parenting, *and* Mothering. *He has appeared on national and international radio and television programs, including "The Today Show" and "Donahue." An engaging speaker, he has given hundreds of keynotes, workshops, and lectures.*

Maybe they were impressed that I knew about Longfellow in second grade. I don't know, but anyway, I just talked my way out of it, so they skipped me a grade instead of putting me into the "opportunity" class. It's those hairy moments that maybe give me a little empathy for students. They are tested, and then their educational careers end up on some kind of track and pretty soon they're flipping burgers at McDonald's for a living.

Richard: A few moments ago, you said that you sent John Holt a manuscript of your book *In Their Own Way*.

TA: I sent him the manuscript, and he wrote back saying, "Make it a little more conversational, you know, like you're sitting across the cracker barrel from somebody." At that time, I still had a lot of academic in me from college. I certainly appreciated the way he invited me to put things in simpler language and more conversational terms. He always did such a beautiful job with that in his writing

R: He's a beautiful writer.

In the acknowledgments to *In Their Own Way*, you mention that for each of your books there's been "a seed that you've been able to point to as the starting point of your labor of love. A shimmering wave of pregnant potential that gave witness to what was to come." Was there such a seed, or were there such seeds, to which you can point, concerning your becoming a "radical educational theorist," and is that label of you accurate?

TA: Radical educational theorist! Wow. Well, I think I'm becoming more radical now than I have been. I have this real itch to write an article about what corporate America is doing to education. I haven't been overtly political about some things. I'm taking a more sociological perspective, and so to that extent, I am not buying into the biological the way that some people are. But "radical educational theorist?" Okay! Okay.

So what would be the seeds of that? (Laughing) Well, it probably started in second grade. I've always tended to just think differently from the people around me, and fortunately, I've also been able to make people around me laugh, both at me and with me; it's been a good combination. In fact, sometimes I think of myself as a jester. You know how the jester, in the olden days, would be connected with the king? He would be in a position where he could stand outside. He could say, "Look at how stupid that is!" He'd even point to the king and say, "You're really dumb!" It was always a fine line he was walking, because of course the king at any moment could [here Dr. Armstrong gestures an "off with his head" motion].

Lately, I've been looking up my genealogy, now that on the Internet you can do all kinds of searching that you never could do before. I also spent a little time in Scotland earlier this year, where I got some materials, and I discovered that one of my ancestors is Archibald Armstrong, who was the court jester to James I. In fact, he was almost beheaded by James I, who had become the King of Scotland and England; he unified the two. James wanted to clean up the frontier—the border areas, Northern England and Southern Scotland—where the Armstrongs were from. They were essentially border rascals. They were the cattle-rustler kind, you know.

R: So Archibald Armstrong was the jester roughly around the time that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*. Shakespeare's fool in Lear is exactly the kind of jester you're talking about.

> The more I look at the American spirit, at the American spirit exemplified by Ben Franklin and the Protestant ethic, the more I see that the whole business of work and ambition and thrift—all these value systems—are built into who we consider the "good learner!" The good learner is the one who delays gratification and sits quietly and works hard, patiently plodding.

TA: Wow! Wouldn't that be amazing? Anyway, I just finished reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In the second chapter, where Stephen is teaching school, there is a reference to a class clown, Armstrong. I figured it was a reference to Archibald because, after he retired, King James gave him about four hundred acres in Ireland. I wanted to write somebody; I discovered this!—another allusion in Joyce! I just don't know to whom to send it. But the thing is, my ancestor Archibald Armstrong was about to be executed, but he joked his way out of it—kind of like how I was about to be sent to the opportunity class but I argued my way out of it. (Laughing)

I identify with that image of being able to be outside of things and make comments about them, and I see a lot of humor. I see a lot of tragic humor, but I think that I prefer to stay with humor because it also allows us to deal with what's going on. It's easy to get depressed about some of the things going on in education. Certainly, I've gone through many, many years in which I've felt very dispirited and disheartened. I mean, my experiences in public schools were just devastating. They were the most unhappy years of my life, because of everything that was going on—the labeling, and the way that supervisors would come in and automatically look for something wrong in the classroom, and that kind of thing. It was difficult. So humor has been really helpful to me. I think it's a nice tool for people in general.

R: What in particular was it that happened while you were in second grade that led to your talking your way out of this?

TA: Okay, let me just [Dr. Armstrong spoofs lying down on the analyst's couch, and with a German accent says], "Vel, Docktor. Let me go back to when I was in second grade…."

R: I'm just wondering, what did the tests show?

TA: I have no idea. But I suspect that, since I skipped a grade, I did well. I mean, I look at it in terms of this multiple intelligence thing I've been involved in, where Dr. Gardner at Harvard has suggested that it's the linguistic and the logical that we value the most. It certainly proved true in my case, because I was able to argue my way out, or at least to give good verbal answers. Even if they were wrong, they were good verbal answers. (Laughing) I was allowed to pass! I wonder what it would have been like had I done those same behaviors, but hadn't had the verbal skill. Where would I have gone? Where would I have ended up?

R: Do you feel there are lots of kids in the system and the schools who…

TA: Yeah! I mean there has to be a reason why I feel so driven to speak about them and to protect them. Or, perhaps, not to protect them but to have their gifts recognized, their potentials. Because so many kids go through the system, and I hear one story after another from parents about how their kids just go through the system with frustration, with anger, even though they've got all these wonderful things going on in their lives. They're creative, they're artistic, musical, or dramatic—or they're even wonderful readers—but somehow being able to read wonderful, beautiful literature and be insightful is not particularly valued in the schools. You know?

> The best schools are the ones that look like real life, that are like real life. They can take any shape or structure, but the more they look like real life, the better they are!

What's valued is your ability to work a workbook, to write a book report, and to know how to phrase your answers when the teacher calls on you. Those are really limited things. Where in the real world do you actually have to do that? Maybe those verbal skills are valuable in the corporate world. Perhaps you need to give a good corporate spin to your report and that sort of thing. I suppose that it's a case of training—training our kids to take their rightful place in the corporate world.

I'm going through this process now where I'm reading everything that I didn't finish when I dropped out of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, in 1971. I dropped out about midway and when I went back, I went into Education so I never got a chance to finish my Liberal Arts education. About four years ago, I started my reading with the Bible and Homer and Shakespeare and have been reading my way straight through, you know, and just enjoying every single moment of it.

I got to Marx last year. Wow! You know, this guy started to make a lot of sense to me. He was talking about human potential; he wasn't talking about Mao and khaki uniforms, you know. It's amazing stuff. The process of looking at it made me look around. Perhaps in the same way that the Church predominated over the medieval cultures, we have corporations predominating over everything we eat, breathe, think, and live in this day and age. Take, for example, the Education Summit. Where did it take place? This year and maybe every other year? At the IBM retreat center. Who attended? Well, not too many teachers, not too many kids, not as many governors this year, but thirty-two CEOs of large corporations.

Now there's talk of textbooks having ads in them, and that sort of thing. As I read Shakespeare and Homer, as I listen to Mozart and Beethoven, and as I look at Van Gogh and Michaelangelo, I think about the way cultures work. I have to think to myself, "Well, what is the art of the corporate world? What is corporate culture giving us? What is corporate culture giving us in terms of music? What is corporate culture giving us in terms of social relations?" Not too much!

And yet, this is exactly the world we think we want our kids to grow up in, and everybody is just as excited as all get-out to have the corporate world enter education. Because of the money! Money, money, give us money! Give us computers, give us trainings, and that kind of thing. And yet, it's a little bit of a Faustian bargain. Because what we are buying into is a very barren culture, a culture that has as its bottom line money—not edification of the soul or some sort of deeper kind of learning. That's one of the things that I've been thinking about lately. And I don't know what it has to do with what we were talking about! (Laughing)

Public Education and National Standards

R: Someone who worked in the field of criminology told me, several years ago, that politicians and others know that the criminal justice system is systemically flawed, but that in order to get votes they have to talk the way they talk even though they know it's a failed system.

TA: Right.

R: Is there something like that happening with the educational system, so that the people who "run things" know that it's a systemically flawed system, but that, for whatever reason, they continue to pursue this way of operating? Or is it that they don't know better?

TA: Well, I think the link with politicians as you describe it is very strong in education. In fact, the language of educators at the higher level is often fashioned by that of politicians, and vice-versa. In order to stay in power, essentially, whether that be as a school board president or as a U.S. Representative or as an Assemblyman, they need to talk a certain kind of language to their constituents.

I mean, typically surveys show that when people talk about what they want in education, the public tends to be far more reactionary than educators. In other words,

they want discipline; they want uniforms. They want pretty much everybody to learn in the same way, while educational research suggests, "No! No!" And so there's a real lack of synergy between those two camps.

Politicians from Clinton on down are talking about national standards. "We want uniformity!" and that sort of thing. That's where politicians and the higher administrators want to lead us. And then there's everybody else—teachers who know that kids learn in different ways, many fine principals, and selected administrators at all levels—who understands real education. Everywhere I go I meet people who are just wonderful beacons of real learning in education, in all sorts of potentially and actually powerful educational positions. But that isn't the *Weltanschauung* of educational discourse. It's standards; that's where it is.

C: So is there any hope for modifying public education?

TA: No.

C: None?

TA: I don't know. The education structure just reflects what the cultural structure is, in a sense. I've been reading American history and American literature, and I've been thinking about "American culture." The more I look at the American spirit, at the American spirit exemplified by Ben Franklin and the Protestant ethic, the more I see that the whole business of work and ambition and thrift—all these value systems—are built into who we consider the "good learner!" The good learner is the one who delays gratification and sits quietly and works hard, patiently plodding.

I just finished Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which was excellent and funny in this tragic funny way. He starts out the book using Ben Franklin as this classic example of the spirit of capitalism. When I think about some of these impulses in the American psyche, well, you know [draws in breath], there's not a lot to work with.

There is the individualism of the American spirit; *that* I think is the most hopeful part of the American psyche. When Gardner, or Holt, or I, or someone else says, "We need to give individuals opportunities to think in their own way," there's a real resonance there. That's the opening, the entry point for making change in education. I think that's why I've chosen to harp on it, why I've been attracted to multiple intelligences.

For example, multiple intelligences [theory] is respected because it comes from Harvard—Harvard our first college—a Puritan college, as a matter of fact! Right? So it really harkens back to the very beginnings of our culture. When I say "our culture" I'm talking about the northern European culture, and not the ones that we trampled over. But Gardner, coming from Harvard, gets a great deal of respect; he's saying very much the same kinds of things that people like Holt said, but he's saying them in a language that's up to date, that isn't [as] tired as is, to be honest with you, the rhetoric of the 60s, of Holt and some of the other theorists. People kind of laugh at it now. There's a tendency for people to be unable to hear that language, so they have to hear another language. In another twenty or thirty years, multiple intelligences may be laughed at, and there will have to be some other new language.

I'm working on a book on the stages of life right now. It's going to be called *Sacred Odyssey: The Story of Your Life From Prebirth to Postdeath*. There will be a chapter on each stage of life: a chapter on prebirth, on birth, on infancy, all the way up to death and dying, and then postdeath. It's going to try to be experiential (not all my experiences, of course!). In other words, it's the story of your life, so we're going to take you through it, as if you are there, you know.

And so, I've been thinking developmentally, thinking about, well, three things: The first is exploring those developmental stages in ourselves—the past stages and the stages that are yet to come, as well as the one we're at. Second, we can look at the people in our lives who are at different stages; how do we understand what they're going through? You know? They live in a whole different world, a whole different land. And we think that they're somehow where we are, and there are points of contact, but ... and then, the third part is the cultural, or the community part. How can we look at our community developmentally? In other words, what are we doing to help the newborns in our community? What are we doing to help the elderly? What are we doing to help adolescents-at-risk?

That's really where my interest is going. I'm thinking actually less and less about education *per se,* and more and more about some broader social questions. My Ph.D. is actually in East-West Psychology, so that's really what I *should* be doing. (Laughs) This book, *Sacred Odyssey*, is about bringing together West and East and integrating them.

R: Don't you think that that's what you have been doing all along?

TA: Well, in a sense I have. Certainly the multiple intelligences theory has been rich with multicultural emphasis, which is another reason why I've been attracted to it, looking at all the different ways in which cultures value art and music and science and logic. But, other than the book I wrote a while ago called *The Radiant Child,* I haven't really done so much with that emphasis. In other words, in this book I want to consider the mystical traditions, such as Buddhism and Sufism, and put those together with Jung and Freud. This book is going to do more of that, or try to do more of that.

The Natural Genius

C: That sounds great. One of your most powerful and influential notions is that each child is a natural genius, and that the role of parents and teachers is to help awaken that genius in the child. For our readers who

might be unfamiliar with this concept, can you describe what you mean by it? Is it similar to James Hillman's notion of the daimon within us? Do adults have a natural genius in need of being awakened? How do we awaken the natural genius in children and adults?

TA: Right. Yes. Well, first of all, obviously it's not original with me, since James Hillman was thinking about it, and since the genius has been around for a long time. In fact, I've seen titles that predate my *Awakening Your Child's Natural Genius*, very similar titles. So it's just a great idea, and I was fortunate to stumble upon it. You know, what actually happened was that I had written a column in *Parenting* magazine for four years, and my publisher Jeremy Tarcher had an option on another book for me to do after *In Their Own Way*. I didn't know what I wanted to do, and I thought, "Well, why don't I just take a lot of my parenting columns and make a book out of that?" So I wrote up something called "The Learning Curve." I submitted it to them, they liked it, and we started to work on it.

I was working with one editor, but then another editor briefly came in as a consultant and dropped this idea about the genius in some of his notes. I felt really excited. He was talking about the genius and the Roman concept of genius, and I started to think and look at it. It had so much life for me. So that's really what happened. That editor seeded this idea. I changed the whole book around so that the idea of genius would be central to it.

I just finished another book called *Awakening Genius in the Classroom*. This book also links up with the stages of life book that I'm working on. When I was doing the prebirth chapter, I found all kinds of great cross-cultural material about the existence of a being who is with us at birth. That would be, in fact, Hillman's daimon, or more appropriately, Socrates' daimon. At the end of *The Republic* Plato actually talks very clearly about the daimon being present before birth.

R: Hillman talks about it, and Socrates very openly talked about the voice within him, the guiding voice within him.

TA: Yeah.

R: Especially towards his death, and how comforted he felt because he was following that voice, and he knew that was the right path.

TA: There are so many stories from different cultures. There's a wonderful story in the Jewish *midrash,* from about the ninth century B.C.E., about an angel. Before birth, it said in this story, we have a light that shines above our head from one end of the universe to the other. But just before birth an angel called Laylah comes up to us and strikes us on our lip, and that light vanishes. We take birth in complete ignorance of who we are. And then we have to rediscover who we are. It is said that that's why we have this little indentation on our lip.

I love stories like that. I was in New Zealand and found that there is a Goddess Hine Titama—the goddess of the dawn—who is similar. I was in Iceland earlier this year, and they have a spirit there called a *fylgya* that also inhabits animals, and is also connected in some way with the caul, the protective covering around the fetus at birth.

I'm going to do a presentation on all of these prebirth images, these deities, at a conference in December. In Buddhism it's Avalokiteshvara (India), or Kuan Yin (China). It seems that so many cultures have a recognition of a being that is with us before we are born. Some people associate that being with one's Higher Self; other people or other traditions say, "No, this is a distinctly different entity," and so this is a puzzler. Or a guide. An angel or an archangel. I don't want to offend any particular religious sensibility, so I say, "This is the spark of divinity," whether it's within us or something that comes from above us.

That is really a nice way for me to think about linking spirituality with education. It's kind of hard, especially if you're working in the public schools, to talk about spirituality without ruffling some feathers and getting people really nervous. People are nervous because all sorts of things have been happening. If somebody has his Bible on his desk, he could go to jail. There's one guy that I know, Charles Haynes, a prominent educator in the field of religion and education, who has written a wonderful book called *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*. He says that there are very good ways of teaching about religion in a public school setting, ways that are legal, constitutionally speaking, in which you're

not encroaching on the separation of church and state.

But I think there are things that public teachers do in schools that shouldn't be done. I know one workshop leader who used to go around having teachers close their eyes and imagine the god within.... Imagine teaching the kids in public schools to imagine this sort of warm orange light, to imagine that the orange light rises, and that everybody in the classroom has their orange light; that kind of stuff. I don't think that's legal. I think the First Amendment has some protections against that, because for a child who's growing up Islamic, or Jewish, the image of floating lights may not work. For those in a Fundamentalist Christian denomination, this kind of thing can be a real offense to their sensibilities and their belief systems. I think we need to respect that.

Of course, at the same time, in education you want to talk about what is important to you, and it's hard for me not to talk about the Spirit or whatever you want to call it. So, a really great way of doing that is to talk about the genius! The genius is such a great word because we can give it different meanings. We have educational connotations to it, very direct psychometric connotations, such as an IQ score of 140 or 150. We've got some cultural connotations—Michaelangelo and Picasso and Einstein were geniuses. The best learning that we can have is at genius levels. So, it's hard to be against the genius, right? Every parent wants his kid to be a genius!

So we have all these educational associations, and then, on the other hand, we have many spiritual and cross-cultural connotations. I find it's a really nice word that allows people to move from feeling "I'm a little uncomfortable here" to feeling "I'm pretty comfortable with this." I find that many people respond to the idea that we're all born with this birthright to learn. It brings us back and reminds us, and everybody needs this reminder, probably every five minutes, that we are natural learners. I think that's probably the most important concept in all of education. I can't conceive of a more important concept.

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Once you understand that concept, then you can examine all the education structures and ask, "How true is this structure to this basic idea? Do we see people learning in their natural ways in this learning environment? Or are those natural ways being somehow frustrated, or blocked, or disconnected, or fragmented, or torn apart, or flogged, or stabbed." [Dr. Armstrong grows animated, acting all of this out.]

(Laughter)

R: Let me follow up a little. Many of our readers are in alternative education in one way or another—homeschools, free schools, Montessori schools, democratic schools—or are in the more traditional system but have a great interest in alternative education, as parents and teachers and so forth. How can they help to awaken the natural genius in the kids they work with, given that they don't have the kinds of constraints that the public school system is working with? What kinds of good learning environments can they help to create, in other words?

TA: Well, it all comes back to awakening their own natural genius, as parents, as teachers.

R: How do they do that?

TA: Good question!

(All laugh)

Carl Jung on the Shores of Lake Zurich

TA: Well, okay. One example I give people is Jung's life. I used to think Jung was a lot greater than I think he is now, frankly, after I learned of some of his connections to early proto-Nazi publications. To me he's not quite as exciting as he used to be. But still, I do like a lot about his work and his life, because he did lead an interesting life. He took some risks.

After he'd broken with Freud and wanted to go his own way, he didn't quite know where he wanted to go, and he went through kind of a depressive period. He had a dream, one night, about playing as a child. He remembered that when he was a child he used to go to the beach of Lake Zurich and play with stones and rocks and gouge out places for little fortresses. He used to make little cities! And being, of course, at that point already a psychoanalyst and pretty keen on the idea that dreams could point to some significant things, he took it very seriously, or maybe very playfully, and he decided as an adult now to begin doing that again.

He had his psychiatric practice there, still on Lake Zurich, and after his morning rounds of clients, he went out on his lunch break to the edges of the lake and played as a child. He just started playing again! He said this process of playing, as a child—I think this is in his book *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*—unleashed a whole string of fantasies and dreams and images that actually got pretty hairy for him. He went pretty deep into a primary process. And yet it provided the creative foundation for the rest of his life, for forty years after that.

So certainly, that's one very specific thing. Pay attention to your dreams. Remember your childhood, in whatever ways. Remember what you were doing because your genius was alive then. What were you doing? Were you painting? Were you dramatic? Those are just starting places. Another way to start is to say, "What is it already in my life that fills me with passion, that I wish I had more time to do? I want to paint. I want to write. I want to write poetry, or act, or whatever it happens to

be!" That's the genius, that's the daimon calling. I really love James Hillman's *The Soul's Code*. In fact (laughing), I got so excited, I sent him all my books. I said, "God, I feel like I know you!" And I got a postcard, you know, sort of a standard postcard back.

(Laughter)

TA: It was a cute postcard though. He'd just become number one on the bestseller list—this guy was an overnight sensation—so he had a little postcard of a dam breaking and the waters pouring through and people trying to bail out. I distinctly had a sense of the predicament that he was in. But I really, really liked that, the way that he looked at the destiny experiences of people, and the call of the daimon. We don't have a language for it in traditional psychological models. The whole nature-nurture thing doesn't quite work for that.

R: Is it the case then that if parents have the time and freedom to awaken the daimon, the genius in themselves, without the other constraints, it will just sort of naturally follow that they'll be able to help their students and their children and others?

TA: Well, first of all, you used an interesting phrase, to "have the time to awaken their daimon." Think about that for a minute. Well, let's see, do I have the time? When I think about it from Hillman's point of view, the daimon doesn't wait for time. The daimon doesn't care about time!

R: That's true, that's true.

TA: When I give parent talks, that is the question that comes up: "I don't have the time!" I gave a talk last night, and I remember one guy, this very quiet, wonderful father, saying, "I want to do all these things. But what about the time?" There's this feeling that comes on parents of "should," "could," "I've got to," "I've got this responsibility," "Look, I've got this incredible opportunity and I'm blowing it."

You're so lucky to have this child in your life. You're together. Don't listen to all these "parent experts" who say, "You should be doing x, y, or z. You should be stimulating and enriching your child and blahblahblah." Enjoy the time you have together—that's such a simple thing!

First of all, I'm not a parent. So, I have a hard time giving any kind of response at all to parents about having enough time. I have no idea what parents experience. I have no concept of it! In the second place, I am willing to say something because I'm up there. For some quirky reason my daimon put me in this situation, you know. (Laughs) So, with this father I ended up saying, "Hey, look at your life now. Enjoy your life! The way it is. You don't have to do anything different. Just look at your life!"

And that's where it's at. You have this opportunity. You're so lucky to have this child in your life. You're together. Don't listen to all these "parent experts" who say, "You should be doing x, y, or z. You should be stimulating and enriching the child and blahblahblah." Enjoy the time you have together—that's such a simple thing!—because the daimon, or the genius, is always there. It's just staring us in the face, I suppose. It's like consciousness itself....

R: So, you're saying that it's not so much that we need to find the time, as it is that we ought simply to enjoy the time that we have already.

TA: Yeah, yeah. See, when you say "find the time"—where are we going to find it? It's hidden! I don't have the time to find the time, you know? I don't know where to start looking. But when this father asked that question, I was thinking, "Well, how much time do you have?" I actually said that to him, but what I was thinking was, "He has 24 hours, like the rest of us."

R: Yes.

TA: And, of course, I don't want to minimize. Some parents do actually have to spend eighteen hours or more *not* in the presence of their kids. So there are very dramatic things that need to be dealt with. But assuming that some of that time is with your child, that's the time. That's the time, right there! The daimon is hanging out in that part of the day as well. And available, too!

R: But, you know, there is a connection here. The very fact that the father who asked you that question has this predicament indicates the complications—culturally, familially, communally—that you're so concerned about. His question comes up only in that kind of context.

TA: Yes, and even though I don't have children, I have my inner child. Somebody said this morning that they just love the way my child comes up, and I thought to myself, "Well, that's why you don't have children. You don't *need* children! You have enough on your hands already, you know?!" And that's pretty much it. My wife and I got married when we were around 40, and we thought about having kids. She's a child psychotherapist. It just seemed so overwhelming, to have a child when you've got your hands full with your own inner children!

Anyway, the predicament that I'm having right now—I've been having it for many years—is that I want to write poetry. I want to write novels; I want to write plays. My daimon is telling me to do this. And I can't shake it. And yet, I want to kind of hold on to this secure world of educator or radical educator or multiple intelligence person, and my daimon says, "No, you've got to do this." That's the predicament I find myself in. I'm saying, "I don't have time. I don't have time for it. Uh, no, I'd rather not, thank you!" But my daimon says, "THOMAS, DO IT!" You know, I feel this really powerful voice and I go, "Calm down, uh, I'm too busy. You know, I got a book to write." Or, "I'll do it, but after I finish this next education book." And then I finish that book and wow, there are two or three other education

books that have popped up in its place. So I mean, there's a sense in which I'm kind of related or connected to that predicament. We all find the prompting of something powerful, and yet we live in the midst of the ridiculous. We want to live the sublime but we live the ridiculous, the everyday stuff. Trying to find that miracle, that daimon in the midst of the everyday world, I think, is the big challenge.

R: That's good.

TA: I think, isn't that what they write about a lot these days? Finding that thing in the midst of everyday life?

R: Yeah, absolutely. Vietnamese Zen Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh is very clear about that when he says, you meditate in the world. You don't meditate outside of the world.

TA: Yeah. I have been doing meditation for a number of years. I took a little course that Jack Kornfield gave, at a particular time when I really needed it. And it has been really helpful; I just love it. It really is a process of noticing, noticing all the crap that comes through your mind, and then always being able to bring yourself back to your quiet place—I suppose your daimon. But, I don't think of the daimon as being particularly quiet; it can be, though! Does Thich Nhat Hanh talk about the daimon or any of that kind of thing?

> We can all agree—restless child. Why? What accounts for that? Some people say it's because there's something called ADD. And that's exactly what I say isn't the case. And people get angry, you know.

R: I don't think so. At least, I've never heard him do that. He does talk about getting in touch with your true self, though. Coming home to your true self. So I think that, in a sense, they're all talking about the same thing.

TA: When I think of the daimon, I think of sort of this wild thing inside. Very unpredictable. And then when I think of meditation, I think of this quiet place. What would it be like to cross Hillman with Thich Nhat Hanh?

The Medicalization of Education

C: You're very critical and suspicious of the diagnosis of ADD and ADHD. Yet many children in schools are given these particular labels. Why is that, and how, in your view, can educators and parents begin rethinking their assumptions about ADD and ADHD, given the extent to which learning disorders in general or ADD/ADHD in particular are now such big business? Do you think it is likely that we'll see an end to this kind of labeling anytime soon?

TA: Well, it's a difficult question. Talk about getting challenged on this one! I had just finished the manuscript for *The Myth of the ADD Child*. I'd gotten all frothed up about it and everything, and then I ran off to Europe to do some teaching on multiple intelligences. I was pretty stressed out; the trip to Europe and the jet lag and everything got me even more stressed out, and so I didn't sleep for about five days during that workshop. I actually did the five days on one hour of sleep. When I came back to the States, I started taking Prozac.

It was a real dilemma for me, because I had finished a book that talked about 50 ways to improve your child's behavior and attention span without drugs, yet I had just started taking Prozac! At one point, I almost called my editor and said, "Can we call it off?" I started pulling out large amounts of material. That was probably part of the stress, actually, because then finally the Prozac took effect and I felt fine about everything that I'd written!

(All laughing)

TA: When the ADD thing first came out, I thought, "Oh no, not again." I'd already been through this with learning disabilities. I thought, "Are people really going to buy this? Are they really going to?" And sure enough, the ADD book *Driven to Distraction* was featured on Oprah—anything that's on Oprah is going to be big, right? It also had the seal of approval from the American Psychiatric Association; then the U.S. Department of Education got behind it.

At first, in 1991, Congress voted it down. They voted not to make it a handicapping condition under the special education laws. You see, all these special interest groups came out against it. The NAACP came out saying, "You're going to start stigmatizing African American boys." The National Association of School Psychologists came out against it. Fourteen or fifteen other organizations came out against it, and Congress said, "No." But then, quietly, the U.S. Department of Education circulated these letters to all the Superintendents of Special Education in the States, saying, "Here's how you can do it through some existing loopholes and laws."

Now, with the ADD label, parents don't have to deal with relatives who say, "Why can't you control your own child?" Politicians can crow: "I support legislation for the handicapped! I voted for ADD!" And then there is all the legislation, and as you point out, the growth industry around it—the pharmaceuticals, the tests, the educational kits and the like. It seems to me that it is a disease of our time. But, like the jester who stands outside of things, I look at it and say, "If you can get a little distance, you can see how ridiculous this label is!"

For one thing, our society's falling apart. Is it any wonder that our kids might be a little more jumpy than usual? What's going on with our media? Have you seen an image on TV lately that's been on the screen for more than half a second? Probably not. In fact, they're getting faster and faster. Might *that* have something to do with it? Was anybody asking those kinds of questions? No! Everybody was so locked into "science." "*Science* says…" or "*Doctors* say..." "The medical model says..." We worship that.

We worship anything that relates to genes, and neurochemicals, and the brain. In education now, what's the big focus? It's not multiple intelligences anymore. It's "brain-based learning." I had a fantasy about doing an article on "pancreas-based learning," learning about the pancreas, its impact on our lives, (Laughing) or "liver-based learning." Aristotle would certainly appreciate that. Or the pineal gland, for Descartes.

I come from a medical family—my father was a pediatrician; my mother was a surgical nurse—so I have memories of growing up as a child with my parents having discussions at the dinner table about these diseases with long scary names. And it scared the pants off me. I think there's got to be something intrapersonally about my feeling a little angry about that, and maybe mobilizing some of that anger in a positive way towards looking at the medical model, saying, "Hey, what's happening here?"

At one time, we might have said, "Gee, this kid has an 'interesting quirk,' is an 'eccentric child,' seems to be 'very moody,' is a 'late bloomer,' or is 'all boy—always really all on the run.'" Now, we've taken that language, which to me was human, humanistic, and we've medicalized it. And it's scary. I remember as a child how scared I felt, how alienated I felt, by those words. There was no feeling in those words. As a child, living in a world of feeling, I craved words, to be surrounded by words used with feeling. I think that's what sensitized me to them when I started to see them come into education.

It concerns me because teachers now, when they see a child having difficulty with learning in the classroom, no longer ask, "How can I understand how this child learns and how can I change the learning environment to meet his or her needs?" Now the question for them is, "Does he have ADD? Should I have him tested? Should I refer him to be medicated?!"

Again, not that those questions aren't appropriate at certain points. I mean, I learned that medication can be helpful. I learned it in the most difficult way. It's really true; the drug does really help. And it gave me a whole different perspective. Before, when parents had come up to me and said, "You know, my child is dramatically improved since he started taking Ritalin," I would go, "HO! Well, that's because you haven't tried other things!" "Well, yeah..." "No, you haven't tried..." You know, the empathy was gone, was not there. And I think that life's lessons, helping me through this situation, were very valuable. Because now I can see it has its use; however, I also see all kinds of problems with medication.

My father was depressed for much of his life, and he had a horrible time with medications. Of course, they weren't as good back in the 1950s and 60s. I had a medical doctor father given medications by other doctors that screwed him up, screwed up the whole family. So as you can see, I had a lot of motivation and concern about what medication does to people, and how people can over-rely on medication. I can see how easy it could be if you were taking medication, for someone who didn't like the way you were acting—perhaps your spouse—to turn to you and say, "Do you think maybe you should have your medication increased?"

(All laughing)

TA: I think kids go through that, too. On *Wayne's World*, Garth used to go bazooko and then Wayne would turn to him and say, "Oh, you've got to take more Ritalin!" In the psychological world, that's called attributions, the attribution theory. One of the big concerns about medication is that when kids or parents start taking it they attribute the changes that they make in their [lives] to the medication, as opposed to their effort, their will, their trying.

It's very important for kids, when they're growing up, to feel that the things that they do in life are directly connected to the outcomes. For example, when they work hard at something, they need to know that they're going to be more likely to succeed. Instead, their lives may be wrapped up in their medications. They may come to say, "Oh, yeah. I did punch that kid this morning. But it was only because I forgot to take my Ritalin yesterday. So, yeah, I'll try to remember tomorrow," or, "The reason I got the 'A' is I've been taking my Ritalin very regularly the last two weeks." I think that's really problematic for our age and will continue to be so, as more and more drugs are being used to tweak our systems in different ways.

> We all find the prompting of something powerful, and yet we live in the midst of the ridiculous. We want to live the sublime but we live the ridiculous, the everyday stuff. Trying to find that miracle, that daimon in the midst of the everyday world, I think, is the big challenge.

R: Let me direct the question a little bit towards the parents. Isn't it true that parents would be forced to confront the systemic problem of public school (or public school-oriented) education if they didn't accept the medication route for their children who are diagnosed with ADD?

TA: Yes. That's what I feel. I'll tell you how the *Myth of the ADD Child* got started. I was giving a talk for a group of parents in New York State, when I was in one of my more militant "anti-Ritalin" phases. I said, "I don't know if you parents recognize all the alternatives that are out there!" and I almost got booed off the stage.

In addition to its being a painful experience, it was also a learning experience. It woke me up to this need. They booed at me, but I was convinced they didn't know. I knew what they were reading; I knew they were reading these ADD books that recommended Ritalin, behavior modification, a few educational accommodations, some counseling when it's appropriate, and that's about it. I knew there were all kinds of things out there, and I knew that the ADD world was discrediting a lot of those.

A lot of these ADD people were saying, "Unless the treatment has been sent through a double blind placebo control study, it has no proof, and therefore it shouldn't be used." Okay. What about finding out what interests our children—how are we going to run that one through a double blind placebo control study!? We'll get some parents who think they're interesting their child, but really aren't, although they don't know that. So it's a double blind study, you know!

(Laughter)

TA: And then we'll get some parents that really are interesting their child, and we'll see what happens. Well, you just can't do that kind of study. You can do it with a pill, but you can't do it with most of the real strategies, the real life strategies. That really motivated me to look at the things I already knew about and to research more alternatives.

Challenging Paradigms; Rethinking Ourselves

R: Do you assume, then, that there is such a thing as ADD?

TA: I believe that there isn't such a thing as ADD!

R: Okay, so what are these strategies being used for, then, if not for a disorder?

TA: Well, what I've said all along is that it's quite obvious that there are behaviors going on. There's movement. There's inattention. There's forgetting things. Everybody can see that!

I have a new book that just came out called *ADD/ADHD Alternatives in the Classroom,* and I use the paradigmatic approach. I talk about Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* And in my presentations, I do the thing with—I get something like…[Armstrong stands and drops a wallet.]

I say, "Okay, everybody agrees that this wallet has dropped, right? Okay, we have no disagreement about that." Okay, Aristotle would say that that dropped because it *wanted* to drop towards the earth. In fact, the closer it got, the more eager it got to get there. So that was one paradigm, right? Then Newton came along and talked about gravitational attraction; then Einstein came along and talked about equivalence of acceleration and gravity. We're all looking at the same thing, but these different paradigms are using totally different reasons to account for it.

Same thing. We can all agree—restless child. Why? What accounts for that? Some people say it's because there's something called ADD. And that's exactly what I say isn't the case. And people get angry, you know. Worried parents want to trust medical facilities and medical journals. If I were a parent, I'd probably do the same thing.

R: Why the defensiveness?

TA: Defensiveness comes out of insecurity. Imagine: Your child has been told he is dumb and stupid, and everybody's asked you, "Why aren't you a better parent?" You've taken your child to one doctor, and he says your child has *this* wrong; you go over here, and someone says something else. There's confusion. There's disillusionment. There's hopelessness. So, when you finally come on something like ADD—and there's a consistency about it, and lots of doctors support it, and there's a treatment for it, and it seems to be working—it's like, "I don't want anybody to rock this boat! I have finally got something together!"

R: Yet, few people in the alternative education movement talk about the frequency of ADD. If it's really there, and if it's in so many kids, then you would expect to see it manifested in at least some kind of statistically significant number of alternatively educated kids.

TA: You would expect so, yeah. That is interesting.

R: So the parents would have to say, "Maybe this rat race, two-income, family-fragmented, leaving-'post-its'-for-each-other-and-calling-that-communication, the television, the latch key, the whole nine yards—that's what I would have to confront. I don't want to feel guilty for being a bad parent, for making these choices, so it's easier to go with all of these authorities."

TA: Yes it is. Just as it's easier to take a couple of Tylenol when you get a really bad headache, instead of looking at the way you organize your day and all the stress you put on yourself.

Learning From History

R: So then again: Given that kind of problem, and given the extent to which learning disabilities are such big business now, what's the hope of making any kind of move that's going to really be effective on a large scale, in your view?

> At one time, we might have said, "Gee, this kid has an 'interesting quirk,' is an 'eccentric child,' seems to be 'very moody,' is a 'late bloomer,' or is 'all boy—always really all on the run.'" Now, we've taken that language, which to me was human, humanistic, and we've medicalized it.

TA: Well, the culture is going to have to change, and culture will change, because cultures always change. Circumstances are going to change. I don't know what's going to happen. One of my scenarios is that it's only a matter of time before a nuclear weapon is detonated somewhere in the world, again. Culture's going to change because of that, in some way. And there may be a closing up of family, a coming more to community.

But that's one of the neat things that I've enjoyed over the last two or three years about looking at history, seeing

how it continually changes. What's hot today is not hot tomorrow. I think I've eased away a little bit from wanting and needing to change society. Spending a bit of time with the French Revolution will do that to you. And again, maybe it's because my nature is to stand outside and look, and maybe it's both with comfort and trepidation to think things are going to change. Okay, we know they're going to change. They're going to get better; they're going to get worse. Maybe it'll get worse before it gets better; maybe it'll just be different. But it will change.

And so ADD is going to go away. I don't know about medications. The real concern I have now is with the bioreductionism of our culture, the way in which—with greater and greater scientific knowledge, and as we map out every aspect of the human genome—we are going to be in a position to change the structure, the genetic makeup. We're going to be able to use drugs to do all sorts of things that we can only crudely do now.

> Pay attention to your dreams. Remember your childhood, in whatever ways. Remember what you were doing, because your genius was alive then.

However, that pattern may be disrupted at some point. I mean, science is really relatively young. Somebody just wrote a book about the end of science, saying, "Well, we have reached the end. We can look back to the Enlightenment and see how, in that period, they thought, 'Well, we know everything there is to know!' Then, whoops! We slide into something else!" And so, I'm thinking that although now we're in a highly scientific paradigm, we're going to slip into something else. I just don't know what it is.

R: There is a lot of emphasis on the spiritual now. Do you think we're heading there?

TA: Do you mean that we're going to slip back into the Dark Ages?

(Laughter)

TA: That's another thing. I'm not sure I know what is right anymore, from reading about things. I used to think the Dark Ages or the Light Ages. I've been getting excited reading about science again, because when I was a kid I wanted to be a scientist, worse than anything. Sometimes I think, well, all this religious fervor, isn't it just a call for ignorance and superstition? For example, look at what's happening in Kansas with evolution. People want to just totally bury it. Still, I sometimes go through periods of being angry at science—feeling that science is an apparition of our minds. In fact, I wrote a little sketch about this a few days ago, about the birth of reason. About 600 B.C.E., there's this Greek farmer. He's worshipping the gods, and his goat is about to be sacrificed. All of a sudden, a cosmic ray comes and zaps him and he says, "What am I doing?! I need this goat! I could make a lot of money from this goat! Okay, get these irrigation canals going!"
(Laughter)

TA: Sometimes I think that perhaps rationality is just this mutation that happened relatively recently that will lead to our self-destruction. Then there are other times, particularly when I think about what's happening in Kansas or what happened with Galileo—what he went through in relationship to the church—that I begin to feel, "Well, science, all right!" Look at the courage it took to pull out of that incredible period of religious frustration. Think that one thousand years after Aristotle nobody ever bothered to check out a few things that he said about falling bodies and such. You have to wonder about that kind of thing, you know? That's why I go both ways on religion, too. There are times when I feel this is the renewal and the awakening, and there are other times when I feel like saying, "This is just more of church about to happen."

R: I want to go back a bit. You talk about media in some of your work. We're in an age in which we can sit at home for long periods of time, using our computers to gain access to all kinds of information that, previously, we couldn't obtain easily, if at all. For some of this information, at one time we needed to be where the source of the information was (in a classroom, for example), or else we had little or no chance to obtain the information. What about computers in schools, in classrooms, and in our homes? Do you think that the school evolution will get to the point where we're more or less out of that traditional, sitting-at-a-desk, listening-to-a-teacher classroom structure?

TA: I would certainly like that. Somebody asked me last night, "What is the perfect school?" I said perfect is not a word that I particularly like, because the clinical literature suggests that there's a link between perfectionism and depression. Again, I'm questioning some of my idealism, because idealists are always bound to be frustrated. The perfect school. I told her that the best schools are the ones that look like real life, that are like real life. They can take any shape or structure, but the more they look like real life, the better they are! It's just as simple as that. So that's why I like Illich's book *Deschooling Society* and Holt in his later work, when he got into homeschooling. I like the idea of taking the walls down, looking at the way life is organized—'cause that's the way education originally was; that's the way it really should be, any way that happens.

So, certainly I find that the Internet is positive, although there's a lot that can be said negatively about it. In a positive way, it's helped. I'm a really self-motivated, intrapersonal learner, so I love to do things on my own. But it's stressful! We were not biologically programmed to sit in front of these glaring screens. And yet, at the same time, I'm sorry, I can't take one side or the other! You have to be amazed by some of the things we've come up with.

R: I want to make sure I ask this: What can you say to our readers to help them find and follow their own paths to compassionate, mindful teaching and learning?

TA: Mindful, compassionate teaching ... that sounds kind of Buddhist.

R: Mindfulness, however, isn't necessarily Buddhist. I don't think you have to be Buddhist to live mindfully.

TA: No, not at all. I am just trying to feel the words. I am sensitive to the words, so maybe if you could throw a few more words at me, because when I think "mindfulness" and "compassion," I just go back to Spirit Rock and think of Jack Kornfield.

R: Yeah, it is beautiful there.

TA: But there isn't a lot happening. They're walking and chopping wood.

R: Well, maybe that's it, you know. Maybe you have already answered it about getting back to doing the things that we really want to do. We are hoping to reach readers who really care about family, community, and mindfulness in their living. So I am sort of asking you for some of those words of wisdom. But I am sensing in you the Coyote; you are the kind of teacher who is the Trickster. I am hesitant, but I need to see what you are going to say.

TA: Well, I am used to giving a patterned response: "Well, Richard, compassionate mindful teaching is something that we must always strive for in our lives. I feel that if parents are able to wake up each morning, saying that this is the first day of my life and of my children's lives, then they will be able to take joy in the day and make each moment an opportunity for learning. Learning can emerge, essentially, like a lotus flower." But if I talk like this, it is missing something.

(Laughter)

R: Well, authenticity is one of the things that it is missing! Profundity is also missing!

TA: So, talk to me, talk to me!

R: Okay, let's say that I am a reader of *Paths of Learning*. Maybe I am a homeschooler or maybe I want to start a free school in my community. Maybe my kids are young and I am looking at Waldorf or Montessori, and so forth, but you know, I am caught up in this problem: I have to work and my husband works, but I don't want to do the public school thing. What do I do? You have challenged all the dominant paradigms that I have either accepted or that I am trying to challenge, but I am not quite sure how to challenge or change them. I am not sure where to go from here. What would you tell me?

TA: Well, weren't we talking about the daimon, the genius, the voice that speaks within?

R: I don't know how to tap that, though. I don't know how to get to that.

TA: Well, who told you to read this magazine? Who told you to question these beliefs? Who told you to be dissatisfied? If you are dissatisfied about something, then obviously there is something else that you want, that you are looking for, so that is the place you start: "I am looking for something that allows my child to be who he is."

R: Okay, let me ask you this: My kid was diagnosed with ADD. I want to listen to you. I want to listen to my inner voice. I don't want to harm my child. And my fear is that I will do the wrong thing.

TA: I was at an ADD conference, and I couldn't believe this. I took this workshop on ADD and math, I think, and somebody said, "What if my child is off medication for two weeks while he is learning the times-tables?" And the response was, "Oh, that could be irremediable damage during this critical time." I couldn't believe it! The thing is, you are in the reality.

I started out the *Myth of the ADD Child* with a metaphor from the *Chronicles of Narnia* about one of the wicked witches that would send out this smoke that would cause everyone to forget Narnia. One character, Puddleglum, could just barely hold on to the memory that there really was Narnia. But that is all that it took. He started to kind of rustle people up.

Perhaps everyone else is suffocating, but as long as there is one person who has just enough consciousness to start grabbing people and getting them some air … You know what I am talking about?

I am alluding to our suspicion that there is not enough air. We are alive, alive enough to know what is going on, but when we are in the middle of it, we feel afraid. What if Calvin (the theologian, not the cartoon character!) was right? What if, before we were born, some of us were destined to be damned and some of us were destined to be saved? What if that's really true? How can I think about my life now? In fact, in Weber's book on the Protestant ethic, he talked about the kind of anxiety that that provoked. The counselors, the clergy had to spend all their time dealing with the anxieties. In fact, that is how the church formed, trying to cope with the anxieties of people, given the nature of Calvin's proclamation.

So that is what it is. I am afraid because I am in this world that believes that I can damage my child by removing him or her from this oxygen-deprived coal mine—or from Plato's cave—into the sunlight. What if there are monsters waiting, or what if the sun burns his

skin and he gets melanoma and dies?

It takes a lot of courage. But how do you do anything differently? Look at Socrates' example. Socrates could have walked away from the table. He could have gone off to Corinth for a few months. By the time he got back, everybody would have forgotten the situation. But no, his daimon said no. And he had to be true to that. His whole life was based upon that.

R: That is absolutely right. And it was more important than the physical manifestation of his being. He said, in effect, "The question is, is it morally correct for me to escape?" And he went on, "Haven't we agreed that the important thing is not to live, but to live well? And that to live well means to live honorably and rightly?" And Crito answers, "Yes." And then Socrates says, "Well, then, we have to decide whether my escaping from jail is the morally right thing to do, or whether my staying in jail is the morally right thing to do." He makes a wonderful point because he says that we have a moral disjunction on our hands if we say, "I believe in doing x but I'm going to do y anyway."

TA: And if he abrogates the moral responsibility, then what happens to everything else that he had said and what happens to the moral fabric of the whole society? But I'm no Socrates, you know. I like the going off to Corinth option. I would have walked out in a minute.

You know, there are many metaphors that talk about how difficult it is to go into the unknown and to take the leap. You recall the one that says, "I led my students and I told them to LEAP! And they flew!" It gets a little sugary, but the first time you hear it, it can be very powerful.

R: So, do you have any final words?

TA: Just one: Joy!

Non-Standardized Education:

Bold Thoughts Inspired by *Making it Up as We Go Along*

BY RON MILLER

For a few years in the 1960s, Americans were willing to consider the outlandish notion that education might serve purposes other than national defense and the manpower requirements of the corporate economy. Hundreds of thousands of readers pondered startling critiques of modern schooling by authors such as A. S. Neill (*Summerhill*), John Holt (*How Children Fail* and *The Underachieving School*, among others), George Dennison (*The Lives of Children*), Paul Goodman (*Growing Up Absurd* and *Compulsory Mis-education*), Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, James Herndon and others who argued that education should nourish every child's individual personality, creativity, love of learning and pursuit of meaning. Intellectual publications—especially *The New York Review of Books*—as well as popular magazines such as *Life, Look,* and *Saturday Review* provided an important forum for their unconventional ideas about education, ideas which previously had been voiced only by isolated romantics, bohemians, anarchists and largely disregarded progressive educators.

We might wonder how people could give any serious attention to children and schools when their society was facing massive disturbances on so many other fronts—civil rights and Black Power movements, urban riots, the Vietnam War and increasingly desperate protests against it, assassinations, campus unrest, and the rise of feminist and environmental movements, to name a few distractions. In fact, these cracks in the self-contented complacency of post-World War Two American culture provided a rare opportunity to reflect on the practices and underlying goals of the nation's system of education. Alarmed Americans wanted to know what we had done wrong to plunge into cultural turmoil, and for the radical education critics, the answer was obvious: our schools had beaten down the creative, meaning-seeking, life-affirming energies of young people with a suffocating technocratic regime of impersonal, uncaring competition,

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Ron Miller is president of the Foundation for Educational Renewal (publisher of *Paths of Learning)* and the author of *What Are Schools For? Holistic Education in American Culture* and other books and articles on alternative education. He was the founding editor of *Holistic Education Review* and the book review publication *Great Ideas in Education* and has recently finished a new book on the history of the free school movement. He is Director of The Bellwether School near Burlington, Vermont, and teaches part-time at Goddard College.

evaluation, and control. Schooling, they said, did not serve the organic needs of human growth but the coldly economic demands of a mechanical system.

Thousands of people acted in response to this discovery. By the early 1970s several hundred free schools—perhaps as many as seven or eight hundred—were opened by small groups of disillusioned educators, parents, and even high school students themselves. In 1970, Charles Silberman's *Crisis in the Classroom* confirmed the radicals' argument that schooling inflicted "mutilation of spontaneity, of joy in learning, of pleasure in creating, of sense of self" but urged reform within the public school establishment,[1] and in the following years public education was enriched by numerous innovations, including open classrooms, public schools of choice, mini-schools and schools without walls, and other forms of "humanistic" education. State commissioners of education supported these new models, major foundations funded them, and academics and journalists paid them a great deal of attention.

We know what happened to most of these radical alternatives and liberal innovations; as education scholars such as Ira Shor and Michael Apple have pointed out, the 1960s were followed by a period of "conservative restoration" in which the interests of national defense and the corporate economic system were convincingly reaffirmed. The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* by President Reagan's commission on "excellence" in education was a major blow against progressive and humanistic educational reform, and in the years since then, virtually all discussion of educational goals and policies in government, academia, and the media has been concerned with the economic value of schooling: We hear endlessly about competition, accountability, objectives, outcomes, and standards—and nothing at all about creativity or joy in learning, about personal identity or the need for a meaningful life. Neill, Goodman, Holt and their peers are forgotten, consigned to the historical ranks of romantics and eccentrics, as though their passionate advocacy of a humane and nourishing education had nothing to offer educational discourse today. American culture is again in a phase of self-congratulating complacency, and we have no need of radical critique.

PHOTO SAMARA MILES

Or so it appears. In truth, the vision of an organic and liberating education has not died out, and unless our present technocracy evolves into a fully repressive fascism (which is, of course, entirely possible), there will always be sensitive souls who rebel against the standardization of children's growth and learning. There appear to be well over a million homeschooling families in the U.S. today, and anyone who dismisses this movement as a right-wing fundamentalist uprising is mistaken; many thousands are not motivated by theological concerns, but by a search for more natural, child-respecting forms of education. Besides, whether they are religious conservatives or not, homeschoolers are making the distinct statement that they reject the authority of the technocratic state to mold their children's minds and spirits.[2] In addition, although most of the free schools launched during the heyday of the counterculture expired within a short time, several hundred alternative schools are alive and well in 2000, joined by informal networks and Internet connections, thoughtful publications, and frequent meetings and conferences.[3]

Of the hundreds of free schools founded thirty years ago, a few hardy ones have endured, guided by visionary leaders or cohesive communities of teachers and families. The Free School of Albany, New York, founded in 1969, has been sustained by both. Mary Leue began the school, not out of counter-cultural activism so much as from parental concern, because her son was miserable in the public school. Yet, like many others drawn to free schools, Leue had been affected by the civil rights movement and was sensitive to issues of power, authority, and freedom. Trained as a nurse, she became aware of how social and psychological repression take hold of the body, obstructing the natural flow of life energy, and she was attracted to the work of the radical psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, who described this process in detail and identified its political dimensions. Reich had been a friend of A.S. Neill and strongly supported the libertarian pedagogy Neill practiced at his Summerhill school. Like many other alternative schools of the time, the Free School shared Summerhill's mission of liberating children's life energies from the destructive forces of regimentation, repression, and control. Influenced as well by the communal anarchism of Kropotkin, Leue held this vision passionately and drew together a committed group of young teachers and parents who fashioned a thriving community in a racially mixed working-class neighborhood.

Chris Mercogliano is one of these teachers, and he has been a part of the Free School community for twenty-five years. His first book, *Making it Up as We Go Along*, is not only an engaging and poignant story of the children he has taught and his life with them in an unusual and vibrant community, but also it is a ringing manifesto for a decently human education very much in the tradition of Holt, Dennison, Kohl, Kozol, and Herndon.

> Practically speaking, we are all shaped and bounded by myriad influences, such as inherited traits, the attitudes of parents and society, and political and demographic realities. But the question I continue to raise is this: What real value does what we call education have if it is anything less than the means by which we each arrive at the fullest expression of ourselves for the limited time we have on this earth?

The Free School, writes Mercogliano, "exists to be a medium for everyone's growth"—for the continuing personal development of adults as well as children. Human growth, he observes (following Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, among others), is a mysterious inner process; it does not proceed according to an institution's arbitrary timetable and may not take the form mandated by a standardized curriculum. The emergence of a human personality is unpredictable, organic, and highly dependent on a nurturing community environment. The growing child takes in the world through metaphor, play, imagination, trial and error, and testing of limits—and must be given freedom to explore these realms if his or her truest self is to find expression.

Consequently, teachers at the Free School (like most alternative school teachers and homeschooling parents, says Mercogliano) follow

> a model of learning which, above all, honors the personhood of the learner. It reviles against coercion and respects the right of the learner to codetermine the conditions under which he or she will engage in process . . . It maintains a bedrock faith in every child's inborn desire to learn and grow, to become knowledgeable, effective, and competent.

At the Free School, teaching is often indirect, by example or by inviting students to participate in activities (Mercogliano gives examples such as reading, painting, boat-building) in which the adult is purposefully immersed.

> Teachers teach by modeling, not by instructing, managing, or evaluating student performance . . . Teaching can no longer be viewed simply as a process whereby one person more skilled than another breaks down a subject or a procedure into small enough pieces for the student to digest successfully. We urgently need a new vocabulary to describe the teaching/learning interface. The old Western scientific, cause-and-effect paradigm doesn't suffice anymore, . . . since [teaching/ learning] is a form of interactive collaboration occurring on many different levels.

Here, Mercogliano intuitively touches on ideas that are currently emerging in the academic field of curriculum theory; William Doll, among others, has specifically begun to provide a "new vocabulary"—drawing on Whitehead's process philosophy, dynamic systems theory, and other postmodern ways of thinking—to describe teaching/learning as an "interactive collaboration."[4] The Free School has been practicing a "postmodern" form of education for years before the notion was conceptualized.

A key element of this nonlinear, non-controlled approach to teaching and learning is spontaneity—well captured in the title of the book. The Free School does

not operate according to rigidly established routines, rules, grade levels or curriculum, but involves an ongoing encounter between persons who truly make up the character of the school as they go along. Although the teachers are well versed in educational and psychological theory—they can quote Dewey, Piaget, Reich and many others—they recognize that "even the best of ideas tends to turn toxic when practiced in a worshipful, fundamentalistic way." Thus, they are not only postmodern in their outlook but also aligned with Deweyan instrumentalism, both in their resolve to test all ideas against the claims of lived experience and in their continuous efforts to reflect on the meaning of their experiences.

Indeed, meaning is a central motif of Mercogliano's book. He repeatedly emphasizes that young people, as well as adults, need to experience a sense of purpose, connectedness, and significance in their lives. What they are learning must make sense to them, must meet actual needs or address real problems. Their education must link them to the experiences, feelings and concerns of other persons, to the social, economic and political forces that impinge on their own lives. Otherwise, it is merely mechanical, sterile, and spiritually deadening, and robs them of their wholeness.

In a series of potent, tightly argued chapter essays, Mercogliano takes on some key issues that are generally neglected, trivialized, or highly politicized in the context of public education: God, Race and Class, Sexuality, Community. He explains how each of these vital dimensions of human experience arise naturally from children's questions, conflicts, and events in the daily life of the school, and how teachers respond to them through the medium of the authentic personal encounter. For instance, spirituality: Every young person, says Mercogliano, desperately needs to experience "the transcendental dimensions of existence"—a "sense of being connected to something greater than oneself," but rather than providing specific religious instruction, the teachers participate with children in festivals representing their diverse religious backgrounds and often gather together for prayer or healing circles to help a member of their community. There is no curriculum unit on racism, but it is confronted directly by means of the accepting and supportive environment that permeates the school.

> Engendering a sense of "somebodiness" is perhaps the best thing we do in our school to reverse the side effects of race and class prejudice. In an environment where everyone is viewed as someone special, where everyone gets a chance to lead, and where everyone is free to set one's own challenges and to pursue one's own genius, children with damaged self-images often recover a positive, confident sense of themselves very quickly.
>
> In an atmosphere of genuine, as opposed to theoretical, equality and democracy, the symptomatic expressions of prejudice . . . have so little function or relevance that they simply atrophy from lack of practical application.

Similarly, Mercogliano tells us that sexuality is not treated in the clinical fashion of public school sex education courses, but is discussed candidly in response to students' real questions, experiences, fears, and misinformation; the teachers share their own feelings and recollections and emphasize a respectful and caring relationship as central to a healthy sexuality: "Above all else, we remind them how crucial it is for them to learn to remain aware of and to trust their own feelings and instincts—about themselves, the other person, and the situation."

These delicate issues can be handled naturally and honestly in the context of human encounter because the Free School is, above all else, a genuine community, a point Mercogliano particularly emphasizes. It is a place, he says, where "no one is ever left out." This supportive, caring environment is the heart of the school's success. Mercogliano tells touching stories about children diminished by poverty, family dysfunction, chronic school failure, and the indifference of a materialistic and superficial society, who found new life and new hope at the Free School. The

school, he writes, is a therapeutic environment—not because it diagnoses or treats specific disorders, but because it gives young people the safety and encouragement they need to get to know themselves and explore honest, authentic relationships with other persons. Children who would be labeled "hyperactive" and given behavior-controlling drugs to conform to the routines of conventional schooling are, in the Free School, given freedom from constraint, democratic council meetings to work out conflicts, and adult mentors and role models who care about their inner struggles.

In an especially lyrical chapter, Mercogliano describes a retreat at a camp owned by the school outside the city: It is early spring, and the teachers and children are making their own maple syrup—an arduous process requiring concentration, patience, and collaboration. Children are called out of their habitual behavior patterns by this group endeavor and discover hidden sources of joy, wonder, and commitment. In another chapter, the author relates how a group of children worked through tough problems of identity and self-knowledge by writing and publicly staging a play filled with metaphoric and archetypal meaning.

Mercogliano deliberately contrasts this organic human engagement with the lack of contact, connection, and community that most children experience today. He points to the breakdown of families, economic stress, and the influence of television as serious barriers to young people's normal development and recognizes that race and class injustice stemming from "the capitalist economic model" comprises a severe handicap for many children. He acknowledges that the Free School community is not an all-purpose solution to these complex problems. It is, however, a compelling alternative to the dispiriting learning environments that our society provides children.

Modern schooling, he claims, is driven by fear—fear that the nation's economy is not keeping up with competition, fear that children are not learning what we think they should know, fear on the part of parents that their children will not succeed in school or careers. Mercogliano echoes John Holt's observation thirty-five years ago that schools saturate children with these fears, perverting their love of learning into an alienated routine of producing "right answers," however meaningless or irrelevant, or shrinking into rebellion or "learning disability." For very many failing children, the problem is not some inherent defect, but a crippling fear that Mercogliano, like Holt, argues is "biologically incompatible with learning." The problem behaviors that children exhibit in schools with increasing frequency, such as so-called "attention deficit disorder," often function as a mask, he says, a psychological defense against intolerable feelings of fear, depression, grief, anger, and disappointment—feelings that children in a fragmented, meaningless, and harshly competitive society are bound to suffer. Mercogliano writes of one child with particular difficulties:

PHOTO CHARLIE MILES

> What she did need from us was patience and tolerance for her distinctive personality and her personal development timetable, not some bizarre Orwellian label affixed to her permanent record. That cowardly practice is only another way of blaming the victim. Professionals who engage in such labeling should have heavy stones hung around their necks so that they can begin to get a feel for what they have done to already vulnerable children in declaring with all of the formidable weight of their position that they suffer from some sort of pathological condition. What damnable nonsense.

This is fierce. Is Mercogliano overstating his case here? Is it desirable, or even possible, to simply toss out the established practices of highly trained and experienced professionals in psychology and psychiatry without producing chaos in classrooms? Probably not—yet Mercogliano's argument is not merely overblown rhetoric; it is rooted in his twenty-five years of relationships with young people. He is telling us that there is a whole other way to think about the purpose of education and about the meaning of young people's behavior. Clearly, though, this blunt critique will be very difficult for our present edu-

cational system to accommodate. From the perspective of the professional school establishment, it would no doubt be said that the Free School approach is dangerously anarchistic and even (as so many progressive and free schools have been dismissively labeled) "anti-intellectual." But Mercogliano addresses this charge directly, again from his experiences with young people:

> The reason we pay so much attention to emotional and interpersonal issues is that we have found, over and over again, that when these issues are given sufficient value and attention, academic learning tends to flow like water. When children have the freedom to know themselves, like themselves, and belong to themselves, academic learning requires amazingly little time, not the countless thousands of hours conventional schools spend.

Indeed, Mercogliano reports on various students—many of them public or parochial school failures—who left the Free School and returned to traditional schools with a new sense of self-confidence and passion for learning, and then succeeded academically. For alternative educators, this is not news. Holt and Dennison eloquently argued that it is simply counterproductive to coerce learning, and that genuine learning takes place when adults provide an atmosphere of caring and acceptance. A generation earlier, the "eight-year study," which had tracked graduates of experimental progressive schools, determined that students from the most unconventional learning environments did the best in college, even in select universities.[5]

Alternative educators insist that human growth unfolds optimally in all dimensions—including intellectually—when young people feel that they do, indeed, "belong to themselves."

Why can't the education establishment understand this simple truth? A school system that is fundamentally designed to make youths belong not to themselves but to the corporate economy cannot acknowledge that freedom, open emotional expression, and authentic community do in fact lead to academic achievement, because this system is not fundamentally interested in learning but in control. Such a system will never willingly surrender its testing, grading, standardizing, and other fear-inducing functions, for they are the heart of its essential mission. This is the reason for the amazing disregard of young people's own interests and diverse ways of learning in technocratic directives such as *A Nation at Risk* and, more recently, Goals 2000 and efforts in every state to mandate educational standards and outcomes through legislation.

Making it Up as We Go Along offers a persuasive alternative to the mechanistic education we are force-feeding our children today. More correctly, it will be persuasive only to those who still believe that the human being possesses a rich and creative interior life traditionally called a "soul" and is not merely a machine for producing and consuming economic goods or ingesting computerized heaps of information. Mercogliano makes it clear that our choice is not simply between more or less structured educational methods; rather, it is between a soulless, superficial culture that entrances its young through television, advertising, and mechanical schooling, and a life-affirming culture that enables young people "to become autonomous adults capable of authoring satisfying and meaningful lives."

In his foreword to this book, Joseph Chilton Pearce (who has himself been arguing along these lines for twenty years[6]) declares that "this is one of the most unusual, extraordinary and enlightening books I have had the privilege of reading." It is unfortunate that this book, which is indeed enlightening, is, in fact, unusual. Unlike the brief period of cultural self-examination thirty years ago, today very few books are published for the general public that raise such probing, fundamental questions about the human consequences of our educational policies, and the few that do appear are widely ignored.[7] Look at the education shelf of most bookstores, and you will find E.D. Hirsch's lists of facts that children must learn at specified grade levels, William Bennett's moralistic admonitions, and jeremiads on the desperate need for standards, accountability, and excellence in order to keep our economy competitive. Mercogliano's book is an invigo-

rating blast of fresh air, and it deserves to be pondered by educators, parents, and anyone who thinks children should be enabled to grow into whole human beings.

Notes

1. Charles Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom* (Random House, 1970), p. 10.

2. Of course, religious authority can also be repressive—or more so. But this authority is voluntarily chosen (by parents, anyway) for purposes of spiritual practice; in our age, despite the activism of the religious right, the coercive power of the state (e.g., the authority to hold everyone's children to particular academic or behavioral standards) is commanded by economic, not ecclesiastic, interests. We suffer from technocracy, not theocracy. For a thorough and thoughtful discussion of the modern politics of public schooling, see Stephen Arons, *Short Route to Chaos: Conscience, Community, and the Re-Constitution of American Schooling* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

3. In addition to *Paths of Learning*, two publications serving alternative educators are *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* (P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733) and *The Education Revolution*, published by the Alternative Education Resource Organization (417 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Heights, NY 11577). AERO has also published a comprehensive directory of alternative schools.

The National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (1266 Rosewood, #1, Ann Arbor, MI 48104) can provide information about its member schools.

4. William E. Doll, Jr., *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum* (Teachers College Press, 1993).

5. See Wilford M. Aikin, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study* (Harper, 1942).

6. See, in particular, Pearce's *Magical Child* (Dutton, 1977), *Magical Child Matures* (Dutton, 1985), and *Evolution's End* (Harper San Francisco, 1992).

7. For example, the following titles, which present substantive and provocative alternatives to contemporary school policies and practices, are almost completely unknown by both the education profession and the public at large: *Transforming Public Education: A New Course for America's Future*, edited by Evans Clinchy (Teachers College Press, 1997); *The Universal Schoolhouse: Spiritual Awakening Through Education* by James Moffett (Jossey Bass, 1994); *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* by David Orr (SUNY Press, 1992); *The Common Vision: Educating and Parenting for Wholeness* by David Marshak (Peter Lang, 1997); *Growing Greatness: Six Amazing Attitudes of Extraordinary Teachers and Parents* by Lynn Stoddard (Zephyr Press, 1995).

Write for PathsofLearning

The editors of *Paths of Learning* are looking for thoughtful, publishable articles about

- the educational struggles and successes of special needs students and
- the later experiences of alternative education students as they have gone on to college or to a job.

Submissions are encouraged from the students themselves or from other observers. Articles or inquiries may be sent by mail to Richard J. Prystowsky, Editor, Paths of Learning, 420 McKinley Street, Ste. 111-437, Corona, CA 92879-6504, or as a Word attachment to an e-mail to rjprys@ix.netcom.com.

Don't Miss A Beat:
Why Rhythm Is Used in Waldorf Education

You first within the brain discerned
The meaning of its ordered ways
And man of his own nature learned
To thread the labyrinthine maze.

Poet, you saw the vibrant nerves
Subdued to metrical control
By which each one in rhythm serves
The guiding purpose of the whole...

—*Lord Brain*

Some classrooms look familiar. They remind us of what we had as kids. But some classrooms seem different. A Waldorf classroom is definitely different. The teacher seems more like an orchestra conductor than a lecturer. One can almost see the group's energy expand and contract by the vigorous, and then calm activities they engage in throughout the morning.

For instance, in the earlier grades the morning hours are spent in what is called main lesson. Here's a sample of "morning lesson" in the third grade. The children stand, and then in unison, sing-song voice greet their teacher, "Good morning, Mr. Smith." Then as a group they sit. With a word they quietly take out their recorders from inside their desks and following the teacher's first note, they join in for a few simple tunes. Then with another simple word of command, in a great show of energy, strength and organization, the children jump from their chairs, systematically push their desks from their rows to the edge of the room, and begin a circle dance with lively foot stomping, hand clapping and recitations.

Finally, with another few words as to what's next, the children realign their chairs, sit down, and pull out what is called their main lesson books, which are student-created records of much of their work containing among other things, math problems, stories with drawings they have copied from the teacher's words and drawings on the blackboard, and verses they have learned.

The children move throughout these two hours gracefully, in sync, like a baseball team making a double play. There's a sense of rhythm in the air. There is a repetition of activities that expand and then contract the breath, day-to-day, and year-to-year. The children know what is always ahead, but more importantly the work of the day is a carefully planned rhythm of inward work, such as listening to a story told by the teacher, and outward work, such as reciting verse together.

The two most important rhythms of the human being, according to Steiner, are breathing and the cycle of sleeping, dreaming and waking. These basic rhythms are the foundation for Waldorf education. In a personal communication with the author, Rena Osmer, an early child Waldorf education expert, said that the rhythm of the Waldorf method of learning is "consciously meant to mirror the inward and outward nature of our own breath, our skeletal structure, our circulatory and nervous systems, and the composi-

Author's Note: The author wishes to give special thanks to Richard J. Prystowsky, Rena Osmer and Douglas Gerwin for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

by Peg Lopata
Peg Lopata is a freelance writer and painter with two school-aged children, one in a Waldorf school. Her work has appeared in *Mothering, Plain, SageWoman* and numerous other publications. She is a contributing writer for Seacoast Publications in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

tion and functioning of all our inner organs." But does this rhythmic education prepare children for life? And how?

The answer lies in the never-ending motion of waves, the beauty of falling leaves, or the beating of a newborn's heart. All around us and inside us is rhythm. The waning and waxing moon, the cycle of sowing and reaping, our own breathing—all happen rhythmically, meaning there is an ordered recurrence of high and low, strong and weak, coming and going, ascending and descending.

To build the mind, body, and soul of the child, Waldorf educators feed that inherent nature in humans to live rhythmically through a rhythmical education. Osmer further explained in communication with the author, "In essence, a Waldorf education is aimed at teaching two things: teaching the child how to breathe, and teaching the child the right relationship between sleeping and waking." The goal of this education is to steady the child's growing body, soul, and mind by developing an inner balanced rhythm that later in life is the grounding force that can carry an adult through the vicissitudes of life with more grace and ease than they might otherwise have had.

Growing Up Rhythmically

According to Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), the creator of Waldorf education, from birth to seven years of age a child's growth energies are directed primarily in the metabolic, or limb and digestive system. In these first seven years children acquire the ability first and foremost to move their bodies, breathe air, and eat foods and solids. The jerky movements or the irregular breathing of an infant's own body disturb her as she tries to gain orientation in the airy space around herself. We can calm a baby by rhythmic movement, such as rocking or simply by holding her close to our heart, which of course is beating rhythmically. We can see how little children have not yet mastered the simplest of rhythmic activities: a toddler can't pump a swing, skip rope, or play hopscotch.

From the beginning, Waldorf teachers use rhythmic activity to

help children find an inner balance, a crucial quality needed to adapt to life. For example, the kindergarten teacher at a Waldorf school uses a wide variety of rhythmic activities—such as jumping rope, swinging, singing and dancing, having a different grain for snack each day of the week that repeats every week, and following seasonal festivals throughout the year—to promote the internal rhythms toward better balance.

The elementary school years continue these same activities, but they grow in complexity and include hand clapping while reciting multiplication tables, knitting and sewing, and singing in rounds. And even at the high school level, rhythms are continued. In a personal interview with the author, Cedar Oliver (1999)—a math, physics, and computer science teacher at Pine Hill, a Waldorf high school in Wilton, New Hampshire—explains, "I try not to introduce anything in a one-sided way." In other words, as in a Beethoven concerto about moonlight, material is presented in the varied ways it can be expressed or understood.

Oliver uses the following example to show how rhythm can be used even in presenting mathematical concepts. If Oliver introduces fractals he might first bring the idea of fractals to his students and they play with the idea like a thought game, but it has no obvious significance or real purpose. Then after at least one night's rest they revisit fractals by going outside and picking a fern or leaf and find a fractal that matches it. After another night or two of rest on that experience he might share John Elton's theory on fractals with his students to let them see that one can view reality through this idea. Now fractals can be seen as having real significance. The rhythm that is at play is threefold: first, abstraction; second, experience the abstract concretely; third, feeling the concept as a tool for a greater understanding of humanity. In between each approach is the opportunity to sleep on what's happened and digest it on a different level. Steiner believed that by processing material in the waking, sleeping and dreaming state one's understanding of humanity deepens because the material's been digested, so to speak, in a rhythmical, i.e., fundamentally human fashion.

From kindergarten through high school, Waldorf teachers follow a predictable routine that aims to "unfold" the child, so to speak, like water, air, and light unfold a blossom. Waldorf teachers follow a pattern of rest and play, contemplation and discussion, quiet time and noisy time, and so on, meeting the needs of the naturally rhythmic nature of human beings to develop their humanity.

Our Rhythmic Nature

Steiner noticed that we are rhythmic beings and that our world is rhythmic. In one of his lectures, for example, Steiner said, "Rhythm is implanted in matter by the spirit; man has rhythm as a legacy of his spiritual origins" (Berlin, 21 December 1908). Waldorf education is so strongly rhythmic because it is based on Steiner's spiritual or cosmic understanding of the human being as a rhythmic being.

Because Steiner noticed that the spiritual world or cosmic world is ruled by rhythm, he argued that the child grows and adapts to the material (i.e., not the cosmic or spiritual world) world naturally if a rhythmic environment is provided. If we let a baby sleep all day and then entertain it all night, we do not help it adapt to our sense of day and night. Babies not lifted up and down, carried along by an adult's body, moved from one position to another, quickly fall behind developmentally, even if there is companionship nearby. In a 1999 interview with the author, Thomas Simmons, a neurodevelopmental consultant in Westmoreland, New Hampshire, said, "Without early rhythmic activity, i.e., hearing the human heartbeat, being carried, swung, lifted, put down, routines of sleeping, waking, eating, crawling, etc., body orientation doesn't develop well."

Keeping a rhythmic lifestyle is still good for children later in life as well, say Waldorf educators. So with the older child, homework could be done as soon as we get home, bedtimes are at the same time every night, and curfews are set for teens, for instance. In some families, weekly rhythms might be eating pizza and seeing a movie every Friday night, doing some food shopping every Saturday morning, and going to church on Sundays. In today's world it is challenging to make our activities truly rhythmic—as Steiner might have understood rhythmic activities—but repeating certain activities the same day of the week at the same time, for instance, is a good way to bring some kind of rhythm into our lives. Since we have few opportunities to do rhythmic physical labor, such as threshing fields, or have cultural gatherings, such as dancing in the village square, even simply repetitious activities, such as reading a story every night to our children before sleeping, can be healthy. We can now circumvent the world's seasonal rhythms, gather information instantaneously, and perform the vast majority of our jobs in a non-rhythmic way, because our machines do them for us. Our children are for the most part not leading rhythmic lives, yet Steiner believed all humans need rhythm for healthy development. So, Waldorf educators intentionally instill rhythm into their daily and

year-by-year curriculum and in the school year calendar.

In fact, Steiner says that children's (and adult's) growth patterns are ruled by the rhythmic world. The movement of the planets, the shift in tides, the activity of the sun and moon all influence how we grow, according to this philosophy. Bonnie River, former Waldorf kindergarten and class teacher, is now an education specialist helping children with learning difficulties and one of the founders and teachers of Gradalis Seminars, an anthroposophical adult education center in Boulder, Colorado. In a 1999 personal interview, she explained, "The aim for Waldorf educators is to work in a harmonious relationship with the rhythms of the macrocosm, because every child is a microcosm of the macrocosm." We are mirror images of our world, according to this view.

Since our world is rhythmic, according to Steiner, the rhythms of the school year should also be rhythmic. Waldorf education therefore places a great deal of importance on celebrating festivals and other events throughout the year. For example, in Waldorf schools plays are always performed each year in the spring, and certain holidays are celebrated for their connection to and reverence for earthly rhythms. The underlying feeling of many of the festivals held throughout the school year is a sense of joy in the predictable changes in the natural world, a respect for the natural rhythms of life, and a sense of security for what lies ahead.

The First Classrooms

But do our children's classrooms need to be rhythmic? What is good about rhythm? For starters, a rhythmic environment is dependable and predictable. A dependable and predictable place is like the tree declared home base in a game of tag. It is the safest place. With a secure anchor holding a child's sometimes rocky boat, she can begin to explore the world outside the home. If teachers surround a child with rhythmic activity and routine, the child learns to trust this new environment away from home. "Trust," said Susan Steppick, educational kinesiologist in Henniker, New Hampshire, in a 1999 personal interview, "is essential before a child can reach out to the wider world, because when they feel assured, such as through a daily rhythm, they can reach out, and take the risk to learn unfamiliar things."

Steiner explained that from seven to fourteen years of age, the growth energies of the human are focused on what he called the rhythmic system or the circulatory and respiratory systems. So in the elementary years, Waldorf teachers follow a curriculum that works these systems. Thus the early years are full of singing, playing musical instruments, dancing and physical labor and games. These kinds of activities stimulate the circulatory and respiratory systems more than let's say, discussions, reading, and writing.

And finally, fourteen- to twenty-one-year-olds' growth energies are focused on the nerve (brain) system. So, for example, Waldorf teachers for this age group encourage independent thinking, debate, and analysis. Although teens are notoriously arrhythmic in lifestyle because they seek novelty and avoid a rhythmic way of living which is dependably repetitive and routine, Waldorf teachers still conduct the classroom in a rhythmic way, as Patricia Ryan, an English teacher at High Mowing, a Waldorf high school in Wilton, New Hampshire, explained in a 1999 personal interview with the author: "One of the ways in which a teacher works with rhythm at the high school level is by having a sense of repetition." And, adds Ryan, "Just as young children don't

like you to change the stories you tell and will remind you when you've used a different word than the day before, high school students remind you when something is not rhythmical."

For example, a recitation might begin each day even in high school. Ryan tries to work a rhythm into the material over a two to three day period, for instance, by first presenting new materials on day one in a certain way, then on day two, perhaps writing about it, and on day three talking about the material that was read. In this way, explains Ryan, on day one the emphasis is on thinking, on the second day it is on feeling, and on the third day it is on willing, which is the word Steiner used to describe the drive in all of us that results in taking action. By calling upon students to use different ways of responding to new material, they use the different bodily systems in a rhythmic way, first one system, then the next and then the next and then the three systems are worked again, over and over, again and again. And again, sleeping, dreaming and waking—our basic daily rhythm—all work on the material each night after the day's learning, every day, all year long.

The Rhythmic Nature of Learning

Steiner took great pains to explain the process of learning so that his first teachers would understand how this type of education would reach a child at his basic nature, which again, he believed was rhythmic. He believed that learning is a process of perception being transformed into comprehension and memory.

This transformation can be accomplished with greater ease, according to Steiner, by stimulating our circulatory and breathing systems through movement, for example in body and voice through recitations of verse and dance.

Steiner argued that perception alone teaches nothing. Our perceptions only tell us what we think *is*. Thus we can know food is called "food" but know nothing of its uses, how it is made, or where it's from if we live with our perceptions alone, never seeking to transform our perceptions into comprehension. Without comprehension—such as seen in the imaginative thinking of very young children—food is something you can move around in your mouth and then spit out, or something you can pick up and throw at the wall. For our very survival as infants, comprehension grows from our perceptions, such as acquiring language to get our needs met, rather than crying.

The path to greater wisdom or comprehension requires incremental, sequential steps. We don't walk before we crawl, we don't speak sentences before we say words. Today's educators say sequencing is a vital basis for learning.

Sequencing is the ability to add new bits of information to old bits of information. We do this by recognizing patterns. Sequential processes, whether it's a plant growing or a ball being hit with a racket, all have rhythm. Rhythm helps us to sequence. Thus, Steiner postulated that acquiring new mental and physical skills, and retaining them, could be more easily accomplished when done rhythmically because not only has our nervous system been worked, but our circulatory and respiratory systems have been engaged as well. For many people, and especially children, whose mental and physical selves are not fully integrated, learning is easier when more of our entire physical and mental systems are involved in the learning process.

According to Steiner, when we comprehend through our rhythmic system, we truly remember. Teens can remember all the words of their favorite songs for years because of the songs' rhythms, but they forget what their chemistry teacher said about ethers in a chemistry class lecture yesterday if the teacher's words had no rhythm.

Perhaps it is not just coincidence that we say, "I know it by heart," when we have truly memorized something. The words seem to enter our circulatory system. Or we breathe a sigh of satisfaction when we finally understand something difficult. "Ah ha," we say. (What a rhythmic expression! One breath is even a reverse of the other.) We credit our brain with the powers of thinking, but Native Americans, for example, believed we think with our very rhythmic heart.

"Some say," according to Clive E. Robbins, Ph.D., director of the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Center at New York University and one of the pioneers of modern music therapy, "that the brain is fundamentally programmed so that the organic connections are symphonic rather than mechanistic" (Marwick 1966, 268).

To aid the child in learning, Steiner advised teachers to use the body's rhythmic system (i.e., the respiratory and circulatory systems). Steiner said, "All comprehension is transmitted through the rhythmic system of man. It is through breathing that we are able to comprehend" (Steiner 1974, 33).

According to Waldorf educators, when something is learned while the body is moving and breathing fully, it will be truly understood and remembered more easily, and of course, the learning process will be more fun. "Waldorf teachers," says Rena Osmer, an early childhood Waldorf educator, "look for ways to enliven the body." In other words, they use physical means that get the blood flowing and the breathing working in a rhythmic way while

they are learning. So, for instance, rote academic skills that must be memorized, such as multiplication tables, are often recited along with physically rhythmic activities, such as hand clapping.

Neurologists now understand that rhythmic activity, especially cross-pattern movement, such as crawling, helps the right and left hemispheres of the brain communicate with each other, and helps our brain work in smooth coordination with our bodies. Learning disabilities specialists are discovering that they can help children with learning difficulties by having them crawl and climb as if the children were toddlers again. The importance of cross-pattern movement in early childhood is a new field of inquiry in exploring how we learn that is beyond the scope of this article, but current research does seem to substantiate Steiner's theories of the great importance in activating what he called the metabolic or limb system in a rhythmic way for healthy development.

Rhythm is Multi-Sensorial

Rhythm is not just found in music. The veins of a leaf form a rhythmic pattern, a well-written story has its rhythm of introducing the characters, setting the stage, developing a conflict, and ending with a resolution; a painting makes our eyes move over its surface in a rhythmic way.

One of the most unusual ways a Waldorf teacher brings rhythm into the classroom is by stimulating children's emotions. Most educational systems pay little or no attention to aiding emotional growth using rhythms. But, as we all know, our emotions have rhythms, too. Elation doesn't last forever; it subsides into another state. We all occasionally feel depressed. But when any state of emotion becomes entrenched, or fluctuates too wildly, we suffer from mental disease.

As any parent or teacher knows, children's emotions are highly unpredictable and can swing wildly or can be inappropriately non-reactive, such as children who seem to show no remorse when they've committed a crime. One way in which Waldorf teachers help children's emotional systems to develop so that their emotions serve them, but don't overwhelm them to incapacity, is by paying attention to the type of material they are presenting. As Steiner said,

> If we allow our lessons to be carried along by an alternation between humor, sentimentality, and tragedy, if we pass from the one mood into the other and back again, if we are really able, after presenting something for which we needed a certain heaviness, to pass over into a certain lightness, not a forced lightness, but one that arises because we are living in our lessons, then we are bringing about in the soul something akin to the in and out breathing in the bodily organism. (Steiner 1974, 13-14)

In teaching, our objective is not to teach merely intellectually, but to be able to really take these various moods into consideration. For what is tragedy, what is sentimentality, what is a "melancholic" mood?

> It is just the same as breathing in the organism, the same as filling the organism with air … It is not always advisable to go straight over into something humorous when we have just had something serious or melancholy, but if we can always have in our lessons the means of preventing the child's soul from being imprisoned by the serious, the tragic, we will free it so that it can really expe-

rience this breathing in and out between the two moods of soul. (13-14)

Of course, as most educators know today, there are many other senses besides our emotional sensors, and learning is more effective when taught by appealing to many of our senses. Just listening in the classroom to a teacher's explanation of how a colonial fort was built might be boring to some students, and what is said could be easily forgotten. But a history lesson at a recreated historical settlement is a memorable experience for many students, according to Waldorf educators, because it is visual, aural, tactile, and perhaps could even be oral, for example, by eating some type of food that early settlers might have eaten.

Steiner argued that learning both physical and mental skills is achieved more successfully when our rhythmic systems are engaged. Children can jump rope more easily while singing a chanting-type song. Repetitive physical work was always accompanied by singing. Why? Because the breath of singing rhythmic chants or songs brings to the physical action of labor greater rhythm, thus making even hard labor easier. Successful athletes break down a difficult movement, such as a lay-up in basketball, into small steps and then practice these steps over and over until they have the rhythm of it inside their bodies. Dumping a ball in a basket is practically like ballet when done by a seasoned professional!

To help the different senses work together smoothly, Waldorf students, for example, sing songs while folk dancing, do complicated hand clapping one-on-one while reciting simple verses, or do eurthymy, a rhythmic-type dance, sometimes described as visible speech, which uses the whole body and is particularly unique to Waldorf education. In eurthymy, the children might move in a geometric pattern they are drawing on paper in class or express a verse they're reciting in class.

Waldorf education, through rhythms that engage all the senses, aims to help children access *all their senses* to solve problems. When we engage all of our senses simultaneously, imaginative ideas flourish. As Robert S. Root-Bernstein, author of *Discovering* and a physiologist at Michigan State University (East Lansing), explains, "Through an act of imagination the observer identifies with that subject and dwells within it.

Now What? Reflections by Robin Martin

As Lopata did such an excellent job of painting pictures of how all learning in Waldorf schools is built around rhythms, her article draws forth a number of other questions on related topics:

How can rhythms and arts be integrated more fully into classrooms (within and beyond Waldorf schools)?
What other organizations and learning programs use rhythms as a core part of their philosophy?
Beyond their rhythms, what are Waldorf schools like?
Where can I learn more about training to become a Waldorf teacher?
Where can I learn more about research that supports rhythms in education?

Related Resources for Exploring

In beginning to address these questions, I discovered that the Internet is full of wonderful resources and organizations. Here is a sampling of what I found.

Rhythm Applications in the Classroom

Anthroposophy in the Arts summarizes how Anthroposophy has contributed insights into many arts: speech and drama, painting, sculpture, music, and the new art of Eurythmy, and lists independent organizations for studying each art. Website: http://www.anthroposophy.org/arts.html

Explore It Science Center in Davis, California, has developed an online Teacher Enrichment Resource Packet called *Rhythmics* which is well worth exploring. Website: http://test.dcn.davis.ca.us/go/explorit/terp_list.html

New Horizons for Learning has an extensive listing of *Resources for Integrating the Arts and Education*. Website: http://www.newhorizons.org/bibartsintegr.html

Rhythms of Learning: What Waldorf Education Offers Children, Parents & Teachers, a book by Rudolf Steiner and Roberto Trostli, published by the Anthroposophic Press.

Other Rhythm-Based Organizations

EnCompass: The Center for Natural Learning Rhythms is "a family centered system of human development that presents a way of being with children which evokes both their inner wisdom and our own." Website: http://www.encompass-nlr.org/

Healthy Sounds: Links gives a list of drumming, rhythm and music organizations that use the power of music as therapy for healing and motivation. Website: http://www.healthysounds.com/links.html

Kindermusik International offers integrated music education programs and joyful learning experiences for

Thus, for instance, Einstein pictured himself inside a falling elevator with a ray of light bouncing back and forth between opposite walls in formulating his ideas about the influence of gravity on time" (Root-Bernstein 1990, 13). This type of thought process is now called kinesthetic learning.

While many classrooms across the country are becoming multi-sensorial, few integrate the most naturally rhythmic activities—dancing and singing—into academic subjects. Waldorf educators use music a great deal throughout the day because singing and dancing use our rhythmic systems, which Steiner said were crucial for the development of our comprehension. Modern brain research is just now beginning to study the marvelous effects music has on thinking. For example, according to Thomas Simmons (1999), a neurodevelopmental consultant in New Hampshire, Ingal Steinbach of Germany, a premier sound therapy expert, has found that when children listen to high-frequency (such as violin strings) instrumental music on a repetitive basis and those frequencies are done in a good, constant rhythm, the brain starts redeveloping the connections it never made when the child was very young.

Although a Waldorf education is multi-sensorial, it is unlike most educational approaches because it is more aural than visual. In most schools, knowledge is gleaned from written or visual material. But unlike traditional aural schooling methods that had the teacher speaking almost continually at the children, the Waldorf teacher rarely lectures. Through teacher-led story-

the whole family, not just for young children.
Website: http://www.kindermusik.com/

Tribal Rhythms has developed after-school programs offered in New England for "Creating the Village: A Curriculum Guide for Building Community with Children." Website: http://www.tribal-rhythms.org/

Waldorf Education

To explore Waldorf Schools more deeply, visiting one is often most effective. The *Association of Waldorf Schools of North America*, (3911 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Tel: 916-961-0927) offers a Directory of Affiliated Schools and Training Programs which lists over 100 schools.
Website: http://www.waldorfeducation.org

Another good contact for information about Waldorf education is the Rudolf Steiner Library, RD 2 Box 215, Ghent, New York 12075. Tel: 518-672-7690.

Other great online resources for Waldorf Education include:
Bob & Nancy's Services, http://www.bobnancy.com/
The Peridot Journal,
http://www.waldorfshop.net/theperidot/
Rudolf Steiner Press, http://www.rudolfsteiner.co.uk/
Rudolf Steiner Archive, http://www.elib.com/Steiner/

Moving From Reflection to Action…

> "In the meetings of the Anthroposophical Society a great truth can be experienced. When human beings meet together seeking the spirit with unity of purpose then they will also find their way to each other— they will find the path from soul to soul."
>
> *—Rudolf Steiner*

Whether you get involved in the Anthroposophical Society or simply want to learn a little more about Waldorf schools and rhythms in education, Steiner's philosophies become more concrete as you talk about them with others or see the schools in action.

If you would like more ideas to supplement these resources as well as links to many additional resources, we invite you to visit our Online Action Guides at http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about Rhythms and Waldorf Education, just call 1-800-639-4122.

telling, verse recitation, song and instrument playing, the children learn basic academic skills along with, according to Steiner, how to be good, truthful and noble.

Steiner understood that an aural education had its advantages because the ear is a more sensitive instrument than the eye for recognizing patterns, and rhythmic sounds in speech, music, and nature are more effective media than printed material for learning than visual information, according to Waldorf educators. Says Douglas Gerwin (1999), a Waldorf teacher at High Mowing (Wilton, New Hampshire) and a teacher trainer at the Center for Anthroposophy (New York), "An education given orally rather than visually is easier for the young child to assimilate into his feeling life. Those memories most strongly retained are those that have stimulated our *feeling*" (personal interview with the author). Dr. Antonio Damasio, a neurologist and author of *The Feeling of What Happens* (Harcourt Brace) recently was quoted in *Time* magazine (October 19, 1999) as saying that "our emotions are much closer to the wellspring of consciousness than is language." He believes, as did Steiner, that consciousness "is the feeling of knowing that we have feelings." For education to transform us, it must tap into that wellspring of consciousness.

A Rhythmic Education in an Arrhythmic World

We live in a world that is in constant motion. How we sense that motion affects how we move, think, and act in the world. If we are bombarded by flashing lights, or a monotonous thump, such as the thump of a drumbeat that we might hear in a gambling casino, we are, according to Simmons (1999), "neurologically dumbed-down." Our senses become confused by the constant barrage of lost patterns or sequences.

For example, we can't find the door we came in within minutes of entering a casino because of the flashing lights. The flash!flash! flash!flash! of lights has disabled our orientation system, and we can no longer remember our previous steps.

This kind of disorientation happens to children while they are watching television, playing computer games, or being dashed about from activity to activity. Because children's systems are still developing, they cannot comprehend what they perceive as well as adults. Their immaturity means that they have neither the greater experiences that adults have to sort out confusing situations, nor the sensory blocking ability of adults. They also usually cannot control what comes into their sensory systems as well as adults can because children are often at the mercy of us adults. We control what situations they end up in, and therefore what stimuli reach their senses. They are then, according to Waldorf educators, affected more deeply in an adverse way because they feel less able to control what happens to them.

When children are confronted with confusing stimuli, their very keen senses try to make sense of everything that's coming in, but without the powers of control, discrimination, and shut-down, they are more deeply affected because they use their emotional powers to rationalize their confusion.

As any adult knows from experiencing something in a purely emotional state, it's very scary when you feel you *can't think* something through. When we react with *only* our emotions and no thought to stimuli, an event or episode in our life, we are deeply affected, feel out of control, often make bad decisions, and sometimes never forget what happened. For children, these situations are even more frightening.

For example, disorientation can happen when a child watches a movie that is very exciting and scary. The child feels two conflicting impulses: to stay and watch the excitement *and* to run away because their flight instinct tells them to run from danger. But, usually a child doesn't run. When we override our natural instincts to protect ourselves from danger, many psychologists say we deeply damage our innate self-protecting system.

If a child's sensory system is overly excited over and over again, and the child thus feels confusion over how to react to the excitement because his/her reactions are in conflict, he/she can end up feeling deeply angry at (when we're confused, we're apt to get angry because we feel out of control), apathetic towards, or eventually numb to whatever he/she is feeling. Because children have little experiences to call up from their pasts to interpret what is happening in the present, and because they are more sensitive, i.e., their sensory systems are more acute, they can be more easily disoriented. An intentionally rhythmic education can counteract the inevitable disorientation of our usual way of living by giving children a feeling of control over their world because by stabilizing their breathing through activities that promote healthy breathing, and by grounding in earth time their connections to natural cycles, such an education helps to create a world that is predictable and safe for children.

Where We're At, Where We're Headed

We push our kids to remember their after-school schedule, but never to memorize a prayer or poem. Their bodies learn to perform sophisticated athletics before they've learned how to climb a tree, do a two-step, or

catch a leaf. Teachers often can see the results. Baseball coaches can spot the "Nintendo kids" by the ungraceful way they move. Leading engineers, such as Henry Petroski, professor of civil engineering and history at Duke University (Durham, North Carolina), says, "Some engineering educators are coming to assume that virtually all incoming students are deficient in *real* tactile, spatial, and mechanical experiences" (Petroski 1999, 212).

Our world has become increasingly arrhythmic and visual. Steiner noted in *The Study of Man* that the earliest forms of education achieved rhythm in a simpler way—through habits. He observed that long ago we learned mostly through stories that were part of our routine, night after night, year after year.

Today, our children might hear a different story every night and perhaps see a different movie every weekend. We rarely make them do anything habitually. To a great extent we've lost touch with our rhythmically natural world that says there is a season for everything. We say we can do anything—no matter what the season. We escape our winters by flying south to sun ourselves on warm beaches; we eat hot-house grown strawberries year-round, forgetting the constrictions of a limited number of growing days; we ski on mountains in summer to ignore what our own summer weather brings us; we sleep through sunrises and stay awake long past sundown. We rarely dance, sing, play a musical instrument, swing an ax, or lift a hoe.

Our world is moving very quickly—but not particularly rhythmically. Yet as Douglas Gerwin (1999), a Waldorf high school teacher, optimistically puts the matter, "Our times are incredibly arrhythmic and that's good because we have to be more conscious to be rhythmic in our day" (personal interview with the author). According to Steiner, this intention-driven need to be more *conscious* in how we live our lives is part of humanity's evolutionary process. Steiner foretold of the development of a healthy human being that would become increasingly evolved because of a greater consciousness, a human who would be, so to speak, in a more fully aware state. He believed his educational philosophy could help further this evolution.

Waldorf education is not about making children able to score well on tests or become good receptacles for the regurgitation of information. A rhythmic education is not about training children to be tomorrow's productive workers. It is more about awakening and growing an active, inquiring, imaginative mind, a healthy body for a lifetime of use, and a heart of compassion. One way it does this is by tapping into the natural well of our rhythmic natures. As Steiner said, "We can …both strengthen and elevate our children's capacities if we can consciously develop our sense for rhythm."

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Note: A study guide for this article can be found online at http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm.

School Daze

BY JENNIFER THORNTON

Jenny is a 16-year-old who lives juicy. She is especially happy when reading, painting, creating, camping, playing guitar, singing, and watching the sunrise from her rooftop. She looks forward to working on an art degree and traveling. Perhaps one day she will work abroad in Ireland and Jamaica, or join the Peace Corps. Her life goals are to leave the world a little better than she came into it, and to be happy.

Jennifer Thornton

After spending a short time in high school (I attended public school my whole life), I was able to identify with the phrase "School Daze." Looking back, I remember unconsciously responding to the bell; its clamor triggered me to walk from class to class, period after period, day after day. The routine never changed. Most of the time my mind wandered. I was unhappy and growing increasingly frustrated. I felt as if I were "doing time." I did not feel that I was getting a quality education.

Throughout my freshman and sophomore year, my GPA ranged from 3.65 to 4.0. Still, in each class I felt as though I came away with minimal understanding. Being spoon-fed busy work failed to capture my imagination. I became an expert in regurgitating information, only to forget it a week after the test. I was not attending for me. I wasn't alone; an overwhelming group of young people did not want to be there either. Many released their frustrations through bitterness. This was apparent every time I had to go to my locker. Being assaulted with dirty looks and subjected to foul language I assumed was part of the high school experience.

I complained to my friend Sam that high school was a "joke," an unoriginal, unfunny crack. I told her it is all about jumping through hoops and that I wished I could be homeschooled like she was. Sam lent me a book by Grace Llewellyn, called *The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education*. I identified with so many things that were said, I even cried once or twice while reading it. That book made

me realize that not everyone has to follow the same path, that I have options. It strengthened my resolve to find a better way. I looked into homeschooling and organized information to approach my parents with. They said, "No." I was crushed, thinking about spending the next two years in a traditional high school environment.

Shortly thereafter, my former teacher/friend/mentor/sage Ms. Naglee informed me about something called the Middle College High School Program. I had confided in her about my discontent with high school. This program was designed for students who aren't happy with the traditional high school setting. Sixty students from our local southern California school districts were to be chosen. The first step in the application process was to obtain two letters of recommendation from two different teachers. Then we were to turn in an MCHS application in addition to an application for the local community college. With each of these steps, the group was narrowed down. Next, we had to take RCC (Riverside Community College) assessment tests and complete an admissions essay. Semi-finalists were selected, and we were interviewed individually by a panel of four. Finally, we were notified of our acceptance status.

The MCHS program, which is offered on the various RCC campuses, provides a significantly freer learning environment than did public high school. The usual restrictions of high school are absent: Hall passes are not required. If we need to cross campus, we are permitted to do so. There are no bells and few clocks. We participate in designing our own schedules. Some of the students prefer to have morning classes and get out in the early afternoon. Others prefer to sleep in and leave school later. We have control over how much time is left between our classes. These breaks are excellent for studying, doing research or completing homework. Self-motivation is necessary; learning the material is each individual's responsibility. We are told neither what to do nor when to do it.

Each morning that I take the city bus to the college campus I am grateful for having been given this opportunity. No longer do I feel as if I am invisible, insignificant in the sea of an over-crowded high school, and wasting time. I love the fact that I am learning alongside people of varied ages and assorted backgrounds. I have had adult classmates share their life experiences with me. From them, I have learned about things such as life in Spain, the hardships of a young mother raising her children alone, and the struggle for employment without a high school diploma—things I would not have been exposed to in the homogeneous environment of high school. The college classes I take are transferable to not only the campuses of the California State Universities, but also to the University of California system. I am currently working on my lower division requirements. When I have enough units to transfer, I plan to attend Humboldt State University and earn a Bachelor's degree in Art. Afterwards, I would like to go on to get a teaching credential.

In addition to our college classes, the program requires that those of us in the MCHS program take two high school classes this year: U.S. History and Junior English. Both are taught on campus, by caring and enthusiastic teachers. Mr. Hale teaches history. He covers a lot of material fast, and keeps our interest by thinking up new and creative ways of teaching. Mr. Solorio has a refreshing sense of humor and teaches us about more than English. For example, last week he gave us an assignment that required us to read an article to gain insight into modern Native American culture. I am glad they will be our teachers throughout this year and the next; being in these two classes together allows those of us in the program the opportunity to connect with each other. I never had a group of friends I enjoyed spending time with in high school. Now, however, I have gotten to know most everyone in the program and have built friendships with many. There is a warm atmosphere, a kinship between us all. We form study groups and meet in the library. We meet in the Tiger's Den (our on-campus cafeteria) to eat, chat, and do homework. We even have the option of leaving campus to go out to lunch together. Currently, we are talking about planning a field trip to go camping. Had it not been for this program, I would not have had the good fortune of getting to know these people.

Directory of Resources for Educational Alternatives

Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education (ALLPIE)
P.O. Box 59
East Chatham, NY 12060-0059
(518) 392-6900
allpie@taconic.net

The Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education is a parent-to-parent organization which assists people who wish to be involved in their children's education—public, private and home schooling. Services include a catalog of resources, workshops and conferences, a mail-order lending library, phone consultations, and ALLPIE mailings.

Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO)
417 Roslyn Rd.
Roslyn Heights, NY 11577
(800) 769-4171
http://www.edrev.org

The major clearinghouse for information, contacts, and consulting on alternative schools of diverse types, community learning centers, home education, and international alternatives. Produces a nationally distributed radio talk show, *The Education Revolution*, an informative newsletter, numerous videos, and the most comprehensive directory (over 300 pages) of alternative schools and learning resources.

Antioch New England Graduate School
40 Avon St.
Keene, NH 03431
(603) 357-3122
http://www.antiochne.edu

Graduate programs in education include specialties in environmental education; Waldorf education; and the Integrated Day, a progressive approach that makes connections between the life of the child and the life of the classroom.

Association of Waldorf Schools of North America
3911 Bannister Rd.
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
(916) 961-0927
http://www.waldorfeducation.org

The major organization linking Waldorf (Steiner) schools, teacher education programs, publications, and other resources. Publishes *Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education*.

Association for Experiential Education
2305 Canyon Blvd., Suite 100
Boulder, CO 80302
(303) 440-8844
http://www.aee.org

Promotes experiential learning in numerous settings, especially through outdoor adventure programs. Publishes books, directories and the *Journal for Experiential Education*. Sponsors conferences.

Autodidactic Press
P.O. Box 872749
Wasilla, AK 99687
(907) 376-2932
http://www.autodidactic.com

A small press and website advocate for self-education and lifelong learning. Dedicated to the proposition that lifelong learning is the lifeblood of democracy and a key to living life to its fullest, and to the autodidactic philosophy that an education should be thought of not as something you get but as something you take.

Center for Education Reform
1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 204
Washington, D.C. 20036
(800) 521-2118
http://edreform.com

A nonprofit advocacy group supporting fundamental reforms in schools, with an emphasis on high academic standards, more parental choice, and greater local control. Provides numerous resources on charter schools, including research, state-by-state reports, and materials for planning new programs. Offers a comprehensive database on educational reform and several publications, including *The Education Forum*.

The Center for Inspired Learning
http://www.inspiredinside.com/learning

A website created to help people connect with other people and ideas related to more holistic and community-based forms of learning. Contains links to pages describing different types of schools, a library of reflective articles, and more.

Designs for Learning
1745 University Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 649-5400, ext. 3009

Coordinated by Wayne Jennings, director of five charter schools and the originator of the St. Paul Open School, this contact has research on principles of learning and charter school designs, relevant to creating alternatives in both the private and public sectors.

Down to Earth Books
P.O. Box 163
Goshen, MA 01032
http://www.crocker.com/~maryl/index.html

Publisher and online bookstore specializing in education, psychology, spirituality, poetry and other topics. Titles include back issues of *SKOLE* (the journal of alternative education that preceded P*aths of Learning*) and the three volume *Challenging the Giant: The Best of SKOLE*, along with *Making it Up as We Go Along*: *The Story of the Albany Free School*, and *Real Education*: *Varieties of Freedom*, a book from Great Britain not readily available in the U.S. Website also features reviews and articles.

Educational Futures Projects
P.O. Box 2977
Sacramento, CA 95812
(916) 393-8701

Coordinated by Don Glines, creator of the well-known Wilson and Lincoln public alternative schools, this clearinghouse has information on the original philosophy of alternatives for everyone, the history of the movement, and publications on how to create alternative programs.

***Education Now* and Education Heretics Press**
113 Arundel Drive
Bramcote Hills
Nottingham, England UK NG93FQ
www.gn.apc.org/edheretics
www.gn.apc/educationnow

Education Now is a quarterly newsletter on alternative schools, homeschooling, visionary learning systems, and person-centered education. The Education Heretics Press catalog features original books and monographs on diverse paths of learning. Though published in England, the philosophy and most of the issues are relevant to American concerns.

Endicott College and The Institute for Educational Studies (TIES)
(877) 276-5200
http://www.tmn.com/ties

Graduate program in Integrative Learning. Colloquium-based, low residency and innovative online learning community. By addressing human and ecological issues through a systemic approach, these studies emphasize the need for congruency between what we know and how we act. Students develop practical strategies for designing learning environments that meet the needs of a culture in rapid transition.

EnCompass
11011 Tyler Foote Rd.
Nevada City, CA 95960
(530) 292-1000

A nonprofit, holistic learning center dedicated to the psychological and emotional health of children and families. EnCompass teaches and models the NLR (Natural Learning Rhythms) approach developed by Ba and Josette Luvmour through an integrated program of workshops, classes, internships, retreats, Family Camps, Outdoor Education, special programs, conferences and publications.

Genius Tribe
P.O. Box 1014
Eugene, OR 97440-1014
(541) 686-2315

A mail order library for unschoolers, homeschoolers, and other people committed to education in the fullest, freest, most joyful sense of the word. Book and resource reviews by Grace Llewellyn, author of *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*.

Goddard College
Plainfield, VT 05667
(802) 454-8311
http://www.goddard.edu

Graduate program in teacher education emphasizes alternative, progressive, and holistic approaches. All graduate as well as undergraduate programs regard each student as a unique individual in charge of his or her own learning.

Great Ideas in Education/Holistic Education Press
P.O. Box 328
Brandon, VT 05733-0328
(800) 639-4122
http://www.great-ideas.org

Publisher and distributor of books in the areas of holistic and progressive education and the journal *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*. A partner with the Foundation for Educational Renewal (publisher of *Paths of Learning*).

Growing Without Schooling
Holt Associates
2380 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 104
Cambridge, MA 02140
(617) 864-3100
http://www.holtgws.com

GWS is a bimonthly newsletter linking homeschooling families, filled with resources, information, and personal stories. Holt Associates offers consultations; sponsors an annual conference; and publishes the catalog John Holt's Bookstore, containing tools and ideas for independent learning.

Haven
http://www.haven.net
http://www.haven.net/edge/matrix.htm

Haven is a web-based global learning center with personal inquiry, dialogue, collaboration and service as guiding processes. Focus is on 21st century "edge-ucation," right livelihood and sustainable business, deep ecology, and the interconnections between them in our daily lives. Offers online salons, mentoring, and apprenticeships for teens and adults.

Heinemann
361 Hanover St.
Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912
(800) 793-2154
http://www.heinemann.com

Publisher of numerous titles on whole language approaches to literacy and other student-centered methods of teaching, including several excellent books on alternative education. Titles include *Making it Up as We Go Along: The Story of the Albany Free School* by Chris Mercogliano, *One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational Standards* by Susan Ohanian, and *Round Peg, Square Hole* by John Gust.

Directory of Resources for Educational Alternatives

Home Education Magazine
P.O. Box 1083
Tonasket, WA 98855
(800) 236-3278
http://www.home-ed-magazine.com

Published since 1983 by a second-generation homeschooling family, this is an in-depth and well balanced general interest homeschool magazine. Ten columnists and over a dozen feature articles in every 68-page issue. *H.E.M.* website offers an extensive online library of articles; a database; discussion forums; and more, including the American Homeschool Association, a nonprofit networking and service organization with a newsletter, writers' clearinghouse, and information on home education laws in all 50 states. See http://www.home-ed-magazine.com/AHA/aha.html.

John Dewey Project
on Progressive Education
535 Waterman Building
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT 05405
(802) 656-1355

A policy research institute promoting ideas such as justice, equity, human development, creativity, care, ethics and community in public discussion of educational issues. Publishes studies and position papers, sponsors conferences and forums.

Jola Publications
2933 N. 2nd St.
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 529-5001

Publishes the periodical *Public School Montessorian* and an annual *Montessori Community Directory*, a comprehensive listing of hundreds of schools across the U.S., as well as organizations, teacher education centers, publications, materials suppliers, and other resources for Montessori education.

Alfie Kohn
http://www.AlfieKohn.org

A useful website featuring articles, books, videos, and lectures on teaching and parenting by Alfie Kohn, one of today's most astute observers of schooling. (His best-selling titles include *No Contest* and *Punished by Rewards*.) Also lists national and state-by-state resources and contact people to build a campaign against the educational standards movement.

National Association for Core Curriculum
1640 Franklin Ave., Suite 104
Kent, OH 44240
(330) 677-5008

Promotes integrative, interdisciplinary studies, team teaching, block scheduling, and other learning-centered approaches. A network of innovative educators influenced by the principles of progressive education. Newsletter lists conferences, resources, and research support for these methods.

National Association for Year-Round Education
P.O. Box 711386
San Diego, CA 92171
(619) 276-5296
http://www.NAYRE.org

Year-round education represents an alternative way of thinking about the school's relationship to the community as a whole, encouraging experimental programs and lifelong learning. NAYRE publishes books, articles and monographs, and sponsors an annual conference.

National Coalition of Alternative
Community Schools
1266 Rosewood, #l
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 668-9171
http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8187/ncacs.htm

NCACS is a nonprofit network of schools, groups and individuals committed to participant control, whereby students, parents, and staff create and implement their own learning programs. NCACS sponsors a directory and other publications, conferences, exchanges, accreditation, and alternative teacher education.

National Coalition of Education Activists
P.O. Box 679
Rhinebeck, NY 12572
ncea@aol.com

NCEA is a multi-racial network of parents, school staff, and others involved in public school issues. Its purpose is to promote a progressive and equitable vision of public education and to help local activists acquire the information, skills, and support they need to make this vision a reality.

National Community Education Association
3929 Old Lee Highway, #91A
Fairfax, VA 22042
(703) 359-8973
http://www.ncea.com

Supports schools (primarily public schools) and community leaders working to provide expanded learning opportunities in response to individual and community needs. After school and extended day programs, social services, alternative schools, and lifelong learning approaches are among the models promoted. Based on principles of local control and self-determination. Publishes books and other materials.

National Home Education Network
info@nhen.org
http://www.nhen.org

Encourages and facilitates the vital grassroots work of state and local homeschooling groups and individuals by providing information, fostering networking, and promoting public relations on a national level.

New Horizons for Learning
P.O. Box 15329
Seattle, WA 98115
(206) 547-7936
http://www.newhorizons.org

An online resource for educators concerned with the fullest development of human capabilities. Explores ideas not yet in mainstream educational practice. Online journal, books and other materials, networking for people and organizations.

Northeast Foundation for Children
71 Montague City Rd.
Greenfield, MA 01301
(800) 360-6332
http://responsiveclassroom.org

A nonprofit organization providing workshops, consulting, publications, and other resources dedicated to the improvement of K-8 teaching. Strong emphasis on the social context of learning and understanding of children's development. "Responsive Classroom" approach has been used successfully in hundreds of schools.

Pathfinder Learning Center
PO Box 804, Amherst, MA 01004
256 North Pleasant Street
Amherst, MA 01002
(413) 253-9412
plc@valinet.com
http://www.pathfindercenter.org

Supports teenaged unschoolers and their families. Offers strategic consultations for families considering teen unschooling or interested in improving their unschooling. Publisher of Liberated Learners, in which two teen homeschoolers tell their story each issue. Locally PLC provides a wide range of activities for unschoolers to learn and play.

Rethinking Schools
1001 E. Keefe Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(800) 669-4192
http://www.rethinkingschools.org

An activist publication for teachers, parents, and students concerned with urban education. Views classrooms as "places of hope" and empowerment. Also publishes books and resources on particular topics.

Zephyr Press
P.O. Box 66006
Tucson, AZ 85728-6006
(800) 232-2187
http://www.zephyrpress.com

Publishes books exploring "new ways of teaching for all ways of learning," including multiple intelligences, brain-based learning and integrated curriculum. Sponsors workshops and an annual conference.

Dear Paths/Dear Readers

In general, we've received very favorable comments from you, our readers, concerning how we're doing with Paths. Most such comments give us hope and encouragement, telling us in one way or another to keep up the good work with this important venture. To all of you who have contributed thus, please accept our sincere thanks for your comments and for your being a part of our Paths community.

To engage our readers in an ongoing discussion of the articles that we publish, we present, below, some of the feedback that we received concerning our second issue. We invite those of you interested in participating in discussions of any of these topics to send your responses to our editor at the address indicated on page 1 of the current issue.

Dear Editor,

I enjoyed your recent interview with Grace Llewellyn. I admire her work and highly recommend it to others. But I am disappointed to learn that she dislikes the terms self-education and autodidactic, as if these terms amount to a mere "teach yourself" methodology. In my experience, a genuine autodidactic philosophy of life is a reflection of a deep interest in life, perhaps best demonstrated by what I would characterize as "a controlled rage to know."

HOWs are an elementary consideration, if your WHYs are strong enough. We could help young people internalize an ethos of embracing life, instead of waiting to get it from others, if we focused on thinking of an education not as something you "get" but as something you take.

We become so hung up on terminology and the meaning of words like education, home schooling, and unschooling, that we forget the only effective defense we have as individuals against being overwhelmed by our culture is to live our lives as if we are truly interested in them. Grace Llewellyn talks about "rising out" versus dropping out, but our interest and need to understand is the motivation through which we rise to any occasion.

This interest—this autodidactic philosophy—becomes the driving force necessary to move us beyond appearances to find not only meaning but our reasons for living.

Charles D. Hayes
Autodidactic Press

Paths of Learning:

While I appreciate you including unschooling, you do much harm in not mentioning Carl Rogers's student-centered learning.

And the Sudbury Valley School is still compromising *learning* (author's emphasis). I wrote Mary Leue [the editor of *SKOLE*, the precursor to *Paths of Learning*] many years ago about this.

Sorry you are not there yet, and probably cannot be.

Sincerely,

Don Stevens

Founder, The Alice Berniece Warner Boardman Stevens Institute of Trio-Rhythmic Psychology

Paths of Learning:

I enjoyed Volume 1, number 2 more than Volume 1, number one. Out of eleven articles in Volume 1, number 2, I chose to read six:

1) "Finding the Teacher: A Fable" is wonderful, easy to read, light but deep, and a pretty good Western version of my understanding of Eastern thought on wisdom.

2) "An Unschooler's Lament: What's So Hard to Understand?"—What I appreciate most is Griffith's calm attitude toward skeptics. She answers rationally, and even welcomes people's questions.

3) "Rising Out to Freedom: An Interview with Grace Llewellyn"—I love her comment, "Sometimes people who are free to develop their own lives just lead an ordinary life. If people are really healthy, perhaps they have less to prove in the world." Sometimes I think I just want an ordinary, *but free*, life.... I think it is important that adults be recognized as unschoolers, too.

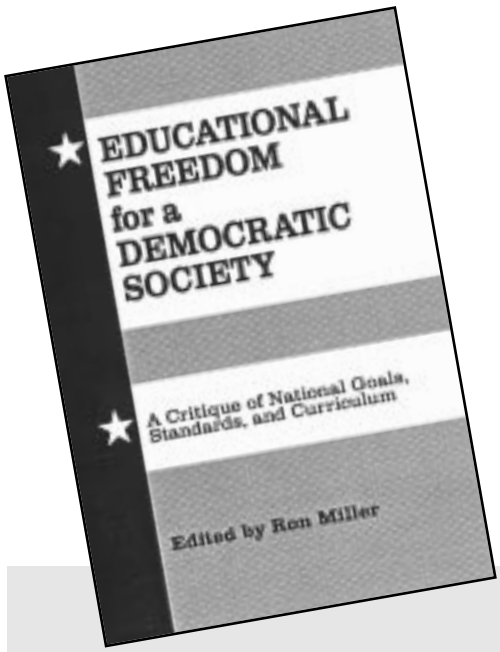
4 & 5) The two parts of the Sudbury Valley School profile were my favorite articles. I could whine about, "How come I didn't get to go there?" but think it will be more constructive for me to simply steal their ideas freely—and put them to use in my own life.

6) "Three Gymnopedies"—Carsie really packed a lot of story onto one page. She grabbed me right away, and even had the good grace to leave me with a happy ending.

I'm looking forward to receiving future issues of *Paths of Learning*.

I still don't completely trust you guys not to try to lead everybody back to public school, but I'm willing to keep reading and hear what you have to say.

Julie Watsek
Simi Valley, CA



Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society

A Critique of National Goals, Standards, and Curriculum

Edited by Ron Miller

Contents

Goals 2000 and other standards-setting initiatives represent a massive shift of educational authority from families and local communities to federal and state bureaucracies, from teachers and learners to commissions of "experts" and policymakers. They replace intellectual freedom and cultural diversity with a narrow, economy-driven vision of standardization and uniformity.

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A sampling of features in the next issue of

Paths of Learning

Options for Families & Communities

- An interview with radical and influential public school teacher, educational theorist, and author Herbert Kohl, some of whose many books include *36 Children, The Open Classroom, I Won't Learn from You!* and, most recently, The *Discipline of Hope*.

- James Peterson, a veteran teacher of 30 years and the author of *The Secret Life of Kids*, gets to the core of the "methodless method" used in Krishnamurti schools.

- Sandy Hurst, the Director and one of the co-founders of Upattinas School and Resource Center in Glenmoore, PA, writes a profile article on Charlestown Play House, an innovative, magical center of learning and love located in the village of Charlestown, near Phoenixville, in southeastern Pennsylvania.

- Dr. Jolanta J. Ambrosewicz, of Jagiellonian University's Research Center on Jewish History and Culture in Poland and Head of the Sociology and Ethnography Section there, discusses the development of "Teaching for Tolerance Programs" in Central Europe.

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