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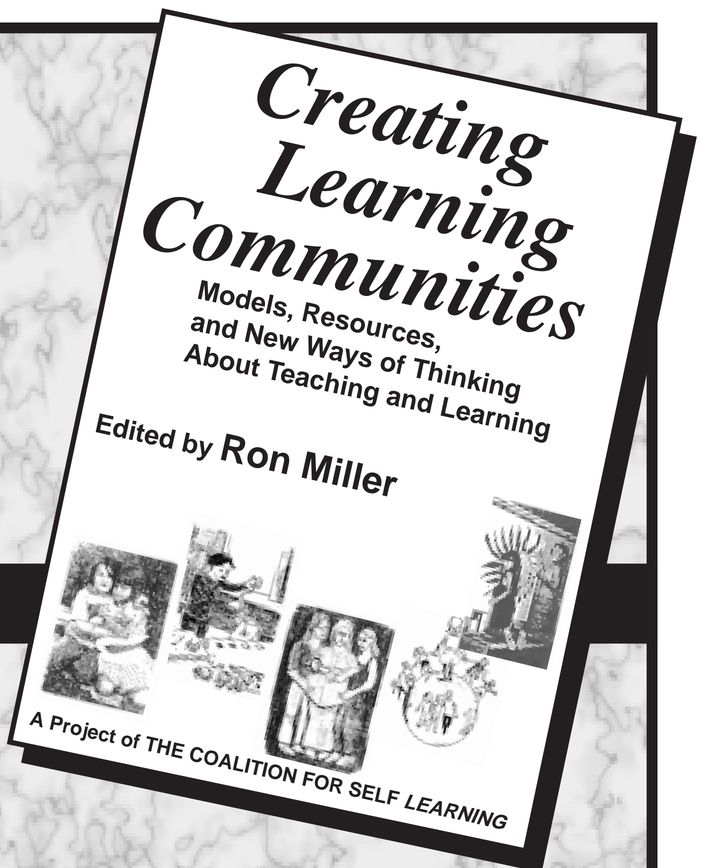

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Options for Families & Communities

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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.

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Options for Families & Communities

Issue Number 5 Summer 2000

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Cover photo, Rachael and Dylan, by Beth Shapcott, Rutland, Vermont

EDITORIAL

The Challenge of Respect, the Challenge of Trust

Dear Readers:

On our drive back from San Francisco, where we had interviewed Herbert Kohl for this issue of *Paths,* my wife and I discussed at some length the extent to which this interview ought to provide a necessary challenge to all of us in education. For those of us who homeschool our children, for example, Kohl's views make us consider whether or not we are engaged in isolationist practices and, if so, what deleterious consequences might result from such practices. For those of us who are committed unschoolers, Kohl reminds us that, for disenfranchised students who have few, if any, options in their educational paths, unschooling could provide a recipe for disaster.

Thinking of these concerns, I am reminded of Grace Llewellyn's story, which she told us in our interview with her for our second issue, about the African American young man who suggested to her that her prescription for teens' problems in school (that is, "rising out" of school) would spell disaster for him as an African American. Challenged to reconsider and expand her views, she began working on *Freedom Challenge: African American Homeschoolers*. As this African American student did for Grace, so Kohl did for my wife and me concerning our views about education—and, we suspect (and hope), so will he do for many of you.

But Kohl is far from being the only person in this issue of *Paths* who challenges us. Matt Hannebury, one of our teen authors, writes about his struggles in school and his subsequent good fortune in finding a public alternative school in which he could flourish. Matt did not find the solution to his problem by dropping out of the "system," but, rather, by finding an alternative from within the system that would best meet his needs. Similarly, across the globe, Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs writes about ways in which the teaching of tolerance can be incorporated in mean-

ingful ways within the Polish school system, a system that is in much need of reforming in this regard. Both of these writers offer insights into educational alternatives that are inclusive rather than separatist.

In this issue, we also present an article by David Stern, a teacher and administrator at The Meeting School (a co-educational Quaker school), who writes about his struggles to walk a line between giving students the freedom to create their own learning paths and guiding them on paths of learning that he, their teacher, feels are necessary for them to travel. John Lawry, in his article on spirituality and education, challenges us to move beyond the intellect, helping us to test our assumptions about the teacher-student relationship so that we can engage in deeply soulful teaching, which he rightly intimates comes from the heart. We find a similar message in James Peterson's article on Krishnamurti education, and we sense the depths of such struggles as we peruse Nat Needle's article updating us on the alternative education "scene" in Japan.

Indeed, in this issue of *Paths,* which inaugurates our second year of publication, we travel around the globe, moving from traditional public schools to alternative public schools to alternative forms of education, all the while finding ourselves deeply challenged, in the most positive of ways, about our educational beliefs and agendas. In the aggregate, all of the challenges presented here ultimately, I think, amount to the challenges of respect and trust—respect for ourselves, for others, for those with whose opinions we agree, and for those whose thinking differs from ours. In this challenge of respect, we are not called upon merely to tolerate each other. As one Holocaust survivor told a group of my students recently, he didn't want to be tolerated for who he is; rather, he wanted to be respected for who he is.

With such respect—which is deeply rooted in a consciousness of the spirit, and which emanates from the heart—comes trust. One trusts Matt Hannebury to find himself, to find his own way, as he gropes for self-respect, just as one trusts David Stern to help chart a meaningful path of guidance for his students. One's attempts to achieve and teach such trust and respect cannot be reduced to a set of teaching techniques, however helpful such techniques might be; rather, they are qualities of the heart. As I try to explain and explore in my own article, which concerns whether or not parents are qualified to teach their own children, these are, among others, the qualities of patience, of humility, of compassion—requisite qualities for anyone aspiring to be or hoping to remain a good teacher. Respect and trust, the seeds and fruits of such qualities, are the fundamental grounding and being of any meaningful, holistic educational enterprise. Ultimately, this notion is what the authors in this issue of *Paths* try to help us to understand.

In the final analysis, then, the challenge of respect and the challenge of trust go hand-in-hand. We see this interrelationship manifested in the daily interactions of the teachers and students at the Charlestown Play School, which we profile in this issue. As you read this piece, observe the love and kindness that permeate this magical place. Think about this issue's aggregate teaching on respect and trust as you watch the free play of teaching and learning that occurs at this school. And then, in your moments of doubt about your own teaching or learning paths, use what we offer you here as a way to your own joy.

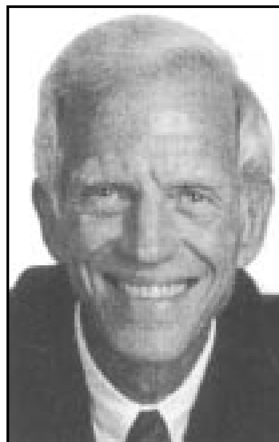
Relax. Trust yourselves. Trust the children.

Richard J. Prystowsky

Students and Teachers through the Eyes of *A Course in Miracles*

BY JOHN D. LAWRY

Teach only love for that is what you are.
— *A Course in Miracles*



John D. Lawry is a professor of psychology at Marymount College Tarrytown, NY. This article will be part of a book with the tentative title The Opening of the American Heart: Loving Our Students. *He is the author of* May You Never Stop Dancing: A Professor's Letters to His Daughter *(St. Mary's Press, 1998) and* College 101: A First-Year Reader *(McGraw-Hill, 1999).*

Although words like "soul," "spirituality," and "transpersonal" are becoming more commonplace in fields like medicine and psychology, higher education has been slow to address this trend. With the exception of Parker Palmer (1983, 1998), I know of very few writers in academe who are comfortable with this vocabulary.

Even less has been written about *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM), a document that one commentator (Miller 1997, 1) has described as "one of the most popular and perplexing phenomena of contemporary spirituality," and which the noted philosopher Ken Wilber has characterized as "an exquisitely profound teaching." This is in spite of the fact that the three-volume work was channeled to an academic, Helen Schucman, of the Psychology Department of the Presbyterian Hospital at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons and is designed in a very traditional format that should be familiar to teachers of all educational levels.

For those unfamiliar with ACIM, it consists of a 622-page *Text,* which puts forth the theoretical foundation upon which its unique thought system is based; a 478-page *Workbook for Students,* which contains 365 daily lessons that are designed to change one's belief system in accordance with the ideas in the *Text*; and an 88-page *Manual for Teachers,* which defines and clarifies terms, answers questions most likely to occur to one studying the *Course,* and contains some pedagogical insights for facilitating the teaching-learning process.

This document, described as a self-study, psychospiritual curriculum of transformation, has seen more than a million copies in print since 1976 in English and is now available in Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Hebrew. In addition to being a very profound spiritual teaching that has attracted students all over the world, individually and in study groups, it is unique in transcendental literature in that it focuses on relationships and forgiveness as a means for spiritual growth. As a result, ACIM has some very important things to say about relationships, especially those between teacher and student.

Though I have been studying ACIM for more than fifteen years, typical of most academics I kept a strict boundary between my personal/spiritual beliefs and my professional life. Therefore, I did not become aware of the relevance of ACIM for my teaching in the traditional sense until I came across two quotes from other sources almost simultaneously. The first quote is from Sharon Parks (1986, 134) in her book on faith development among traditional age college students, *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By*, "Every professor is potentially a spiritual guide and every syllabus a confession of faith." The second quote is from Clement Mehlman (1991, 306) in an article entitled *Walden Within*, "I have come to believe that students experience as curriculum what the teacher is doing inwardly and spiritually." When I read these lines, I felt as if I had been struck by lightning. I immediately thought of the real teachers in my life and realized that who they were was much more important than what they taught.

These quotes helped me to overcome my reluctance to see the obvious. I *was* potentially a "spiritual guide" to students who were desperately looking for guidance. I remember being embarrassed when I read at the end of a student's term paper many years earlier: "Thank you most especially for your openness, your non-judgmental approach to your students, and for your love. Not only will I carry with me the lessons I have been granted during this semester, but I will also always remember you as a role model of healthy living, sincere interest in your work and your students, and the expression of genuine caring. Your living out of the words you impart to others, Jai Bhagwan, has inspired me to embrace the radical transformation that has begun within me in order to be able to, as I see you do, breathe the divine with such peace and such profound joy." I think I honestly believed that no one was looking.

This is how elementary schoolteacher Betsy Mercogliano (1999, 14) recently expressed this same phenomenon: "It is moving to have kids come back to me who tell me what touched them twenty years ago that had nothing to do with the class I actually taught. *They connected to something in my essence or I connected to something in their essence* (emphasis mine). It helped them move something, shift something, hold on to something, let go of something." As Goethe is reputed to have said, it was not the most brilliant teachers who had the greatest impact on his life but the ones who loved him.

These quotes pushed me to look more closely at what ACIM was saying about teachers and teaching, my teaching. One of the very first things it says (*Manual for Teachers* 1976, 1) is that "teaching is a constant process; it goes on every moment of the day." This idea has helped expand my notion of teaching as something that far exceeds what I do in the classroom. Every contact I have with my students, both in and out of the classroom, I now realize has the potential for a "teachable moment." Body language is critical, as we know from social psychology, and in fact, one of my favorite quotes from ACIM (*Workbook for Students* 1976, 177) is, "Without your smile, the world cannot be saved." I find myself smiling a lot more with students lately, and guess what? I am receiving many more smiles in return.

In the language of ACIM, we can teach either "despair and death" or "joy and hope." In other words, I am always "teaching" joy or despair, love or fear, no matter what the subject. As mentioned, this has been documented in social psychological studies of nonverbal communication. If I teach love then I am teaching, "I care! You count! You can do it!" This may sound insignificant, but in a 1989 survey (Noddings 1992, 1) of the Girl Scouts of America only one-third of the students in the survey said that they felt that their teachers cared about them. Little wonder that Nel Noddings (1984, 181) has concluded that "many of our schools are in what might be called a crisis of caring."

Lest it be construed that colleges and universities are not included in Noddings' indictment, this is what Michael Moffatt (1989, 14) found in his famous ethnographic study of undergraduates at Rutgers University in *Coming of Age in New Jersey: College and American Culture*, contrasting students' perceptions of college faculty with their perceptions of college administrators: "Faculty members were not usually seen as impersonal institutional antagonists, however. Unfortunately, they were not seen at all. They were curious, mildly respected personages, but they were distinctly peripheral; they were very much offstage in the consciousness of the undergraduates."

This is not to say that there are not caring teachers at all levels of education. To the contrary, I believe that most teachers care about their students. Unfortunately, many teachers are so overworked that they create the perception of not caring or not caring *enough*.

If schools (and colleges) are in a crisis of caring, and I believe they are, then Parker Palmer is right to stress what he calls "the spiritual formation of teachers" as a solution. Indeed, as Palmer (1983, 107) says, "The transformation of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher." I think it is fair to say that if I am not teaching love then my students are learning "death at an early age," to borrow the title of Jonathan Kozol's early book on education.

In fact, a contemporary of Kozol in the free/open school movement, Herbert Kohl (1998, 123), reaches the same conclusion in his recent autobiography, *The Discipline of Hope: Learning from a Lifetime of Teaching*. Quoting from a teacher aide, Kohl writes: "But Bernice was right: unless you can love your students as your own children and fight for their lives and learning the way you fight for your own children's, you give them less than they are entitled to—which is, at the very least, the affection and honor of the society whose future they will shape."

Another radical idea that ACIM presents is that those who are our students are expressly drawn to us once we

have answered the vocation to be a teacher. Indeed, "The pupil comes at the right time to the right place" (*Manual for Teachers* 1976, 4). In other words, when the *teacher* is ready the student will appear, a reversal of the old maxim. Can you imagine what it is like to walk into a classroom at the beginning of the semester and see one's students as expressly sent by divine synchronicity? I have begun to work with this perception, and, to quote my daughter, it is an awesome experience.

Furthermore, ACIM has taught me that, "As you teach, so will you learn. If that is true, and it is true indeed, do not forget what you teach is teaching you" (*Text* 1976, 92). By teaching love I have learned love.

E. Grady Bogue (1991, 92) gives an excellent illustration of this principle in his paean to teachers, *A Journey of the Heart: The Call to Teaching*:

> In *The Prophet* Gibran speaks of teaching in this way: "The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and lovingness." Faith and lovingness. *These are great and mysterious gifts. These are the gifts that once given come back to the giver with greater value and beauty* (emphasis mine). Teachers have a gift to give. This is why teachers teach. This is why teachers take a journey of the heart.

A "journey of the heart" indeed, or, as Jane Bluestein (1999, viii) has characterized the vocation of teacher: "It's not just what we do. It's who we are."

Finally, ACIM reminds me that in order for real learning to occur there must be a *joining* of teacher and student: "In the teaching-learning situation, each one learns that giving and receiving are the same. The demarcations they have drawn between their roles, their minds, their bodies, their needs, their interests, and all the differences they thought separated them from one another, fade and grow dim and disappear" (*Manual for Teachers* 1976, 5).

Remarkably, Daniel A. Lindley (1993, 11) comes to the same insight in *This Rough Magic: The Life of Teaching* in a chapter titled, appropriately enough, "Calling Spirits":

> This first experience at learning to observe myself was the beginning of a long study of the craft (of teaching). But all during that time I had the sense that something more was involved. The craft could be studied, certainly, but there remained a mystery under the craft, and informing it. The mystery slowly emerged from the shadows when, many years later, I began my training in psychoanalysis. In that work, sitting in my office and (for the most part) listening, I was only incidentally a teacher; I was more a companion, albeit one who had traveled just a bit further. *Over time, though, I began to feel that the two of us, patient and therapist, were no longer even separate people, but had fused in some incomprehensible way into a single journeyer* (emphasis mine). Sometimes I would know the ending of a dream halfway through a patient's telling of it. Sometimes tears would come to my eyes just before a sad or moving account of a bit of a patient's life. In some mysterious way I was becoming equal with my patient: We had descended together into the same archetypal place. Taken over into teaching, I began to see, such a feeling of joining up with a student would lead to a paradox: The goal of teaching is not to teach "well," or dramatically, or even superbly. In fact to try to do so is actually a problem, an over-involvement of ego. Teaching too dramatically, too "effectively," takes up all the space in the classroom. The teacher would outdo the students, so there would be no joining up.

As for most teachers, I suspect, this is a hard lesson because I have always thought the more drama, the more effective, even the more brilliance, the better. Now I am beginning to realize the hazards of what Lindley calls "taking up all the space in the classroom." As my ego needs become smaller, I am creating more space in my classroom for my students.

Ultimately, what I am describing is a teacher-student relationship grounded in a profound sense of caring, of "caritas." But caring behavior, like other behaviors, has or can have its shadow side. In 1994, in an exchange of letters, Daniel Lindley and I discussed the issue of the "shadow" side of "caritas in the classroom." Dr. Lindley was responding to an earlier article of mine, "Caritas in the Classroom: The Opening of the American Student's Heart" (Lawry 1990), which I had sent to him after reading *This Rough Magic*. Having permission from Dr. Lindley to quote from his letter, I include it below, along with my reply letter, because I think that he raises some questions that readers of *Paths of Learning* might have in response to these somewhat controversial ideas.

> 18 April 1994
>
> Dear Professor Lawry:
>
> Bergin & Garvey has forwarded along to me your letter of 7 April together with its accompanying article (Lawry 1990), and I am grateful for both. I am touched by the idea that you have found my book (*This Rough Magic: The Life of Teaching*) a place in which a case for caritas in the classroom is (at least inferentially) made.
>
> Your article, I think, stands as a necessary corrective. I don't know the journal it appeared in, but I imagine it has a lot of objectivism—your felicitous term—in its pages. The fact that they had to interview you suggests to me that you made the editors anxious, and that has to be a good thing.
>
> That said, however, let me continue on to what may be an unfair caveat. It is unfair because it comes out of my training as an analyst; it would never have occurred to me had I stayed in teaching. And in describing my reservations about your article I am going to *deliberately overstate my case* [author's

emphasis]. I am doing this because if what you're doing has a long-term positive outcome, then of course that's fine. But there are two problems that your article raises for me. They derive from the (Jungian) principle that every good thing has its shadow side.

My first reservation has to do with the "size" of the transference that must develop, in such teaching, between the student and her teacher. The sort of students you have at Marymount College Tarrytown are especially vulnerable to such transference if, as I would guess, they tend to be Catholic, white, and middle class. Such students often grew up with "present/absent" fathers—fathers who were physically there, but who were preoccupied—with other children, with getting ahead, with strategies for getting away from it all (including alcohol), and so on. So I imagine that you have a number of students who are perhaps overly ready for the good father to appear on the scene. As the student wrote in her evaluation, " . . . we were a family." This is wonderful, but then what? The semester ends, the class scatters . . . and there is no one there to pick up the psychic pieces.

Teaching isn't therapy, let alone analysis. Teaching is time-limited. Therapy needn't be. That's a simple distinction, but there is a moral issue in it nonetheless. Are you willing to accept the responsibility for what has to be yet another experience of separation, frustration, loss, when the semester ends? This issue is of course suggested by your interlocutor, and you are of course right to advocate teaching the person, rather than psychology. My concern is with what happens when the course ends.

The theoretical answer in this is simple enough: one simply "manages" the intensity of the transference while the teaching proceeds. In analysis, what happens is that the analyst and the patient arrive fairly soon at an appropriate level of intensity; this may of course change over time, but with only two people in the room, the "right" level has a good chance to emerge naturally. In teaching, though, what is just right for one student may be very dangerous to another. And you never get a chance to "undo" anything in teaching. What's done is done. Class by class, student by student.

Now I imagine you would argue—and basically I would agree with you—that the game is worth the candle. That is, the students who have been nurtured in this way and who have become more comfortable with themselves have also learned something of the first importance about "psychology and religion"—the nominal topic of the course. Furthermore, if they sense, however unconsciously, that you are in fact conscientiously "managing the transference," then they should remain protected from the problem of separation. But the letters from Josephine and Erica did concern me. When Erica says, "I don't really even consider this a class," I'd be on my guard, if I were you. If the "class" has disappeared, something else has taken its place. Which leads me to my second observation.

This has to do with the question of what needs *in the teacher* such teaching may be addressing [author's emphasis]. If the students are in danger because they are set up for the Good Father, then the narcissistically needy teacher is in danger of taking more (from his students) than he has a right to do. Please don't misunderstand me; I'm not suggesting that you're narcissistically needy! I'm describing a problem for teachers in general. Originally I had a chapter in my book about this. It was called "All Those Faces Looking Up At You." I'm sure a lot of people go into teaching because it meets their own needs; I know (now) that I did. The trouble was I couldn't find a way to address people who might or might not fall into the narcissistically needy group. Furthermore, people who suffer from this in a clinical sense, those with "narcissistic personality disorder," of course can't see their problem at all. So I gave up writing about it. Nevertheless, it could be a real, if unconscious, problem for a large group of teachers. What is truly caritas in your article would unconsciously metamorphose, in their classes, into "See how fortunate you are that I am teaching you."

I think the ethical obligation the teacher has (and it is the same obligation the therapist has) is to keep constantly before him the necessity of rendering himself superfluous to the student's life and learning. Ideally, as I tried to suggest in the final chapter of my book, this is the real reward. But it is [neither] a beginner's reward nor a young teacher's reward. As T. S. Eliot said, it involves "a lifetime of surrender." It is this idea that I would add to your article. Or to your book. The danger otherwise is remaining inflated by our ability to challenge the establishment (which rewards thinking) by asserting our own feelings—our closely held values. Or remaining inflated by saying "our," but, as you said in your letter, I think the human connection between teacher and student is something we both believe in; this is where we are on common ground. I only ask you to look as well at the shadow side of that connection—the shadow of caritas.

I hope this is of some help, or at least interesting. I am reminded of Cicero's comment: "I am sorry this letter is so long. If I had more time, I would have written you a shorter one."

With thanks again, and good wishes,

Dan Lindley, M.S.W., Ph.D.

May 2, 1994

Dear Dr. Lindley:

Thank you for your warm and thoughtful letter of 18 April. It was a real pleasure to receive it and I want to

also thank you for your generous time and consideration. Indeed, I found it both helpful *and* interesting. In fact, the shadow issues you raise are so important that I would like to have your permission to quote from your letter in my book. I think that would solve for me some of the problems you encountered in trying to write the chapter, "All Those Faces Looking Up At You." It would also give me a chance to respond as I hope to do in this letter.

To begin, I think much of the answer is contained throughout the entire book and especially in the enclosed chapter, "Students and Teachers Through the Eyes of *A Course in Miracles*," which contains a long quote from your book by the way and I thank you for it. The message being that we as human beings *are* love and it is only the ego embellishments that contaminate the persona. So when I am able to be who I really am in the classroom, and see my students as who they really are, then love (caritas) is the only legitimate currency for the "(rough) magic" that is teaching (and learning).

To go on, Marymount College Tarrytown is much more diverse today than your characterization of "Catholic, white, and middle class." That was the Marymount where I began teaching in 1965! However, the point I would like to make is that there is probably always a certain amount of transference going on in *any* classroom, as Pajak (1981) at the University of Georgia and others have written about, not just *my* students or *my* kind of teaching. Also, it takes two to make a transference and to suggest that the "size" of the transference is the same for everyone in the classroom strikes me as naïve, especially in the small, intimate classes we have at Marymount. My perception is that most of the students are able to manage the "size" of the transference just fine. Finally, surely teaching is no more "time-limited" than therapy in this era of short-term therapy and managed care.

As for the letters of Josephine and Erica, what they are describing, I believe, is a classroom community of caring that people like Noddings (1992), Sapon-Shevin (1991), Trebben (1995), and others have argued is necessary for real, i.e., authentic, learning to occur, the kind of learning that Bernadette Roberts is quoted as saying did *not* occur in her first two years at the university nor for most of us I suspect.

Indeed, it is a fine line between teaching and therapy but I am inclined to agree with social psychologist Nevitt Sanford, who in his Murray Prize address (1982, 900) made the following observation:

> During most of my professional life I have been at pains not to mix teaching and psychotherapy. Now I am not sure that we need to worry about that—certainly not if we approach therapy as primarily an activity for promoting individual development. Freud himself never made any clear distinctions between education and therapy, or between these two activities and research.
>
> There is quite a bit of literature that urges us to regard the student as a person and to see that cognitive development is not really separable from moral and emotional development. Yet almost all classroom teaching at the college level consists of imparting technical information.

I suppose the second paragraph is not as true today as it was in 1982, but I believe the point is still well made. Perhaps Freud was right not to make too clear a distinction between (authentic) education and psychotherapy! Indeed, I obviously believe it *is* "worth the candle," especially since I can honestly say that I have never had anyone "fall to pieces" in any of my classes and, if anything, they have probably derived some therapeutic value as witnessed by Josephine and Erica and Alyssa, cited above.

As for the "needy teacher," what can I say? Yes, it is a real possibility and who among us has pure intentions? Nevertheless, the narcissists among us will not become more narcissistic by reading my book. I am addressing that large group of teachers who are allowing fear, etc. to prevent them from being who they are and loving their students. I am addressing the J. T. Dillons (1990, 52) who can acknowledge:

> I try to be a real person towards my students, the person who is me. I try to be me with them and let them see me, but I often fail because I am often frightened.
>
> I am often a teacher rather than me. The me-teacher often keeps the me-me from teaching because I am afraid to be me. I am afraid of myself, and I am afraid of students. I am afraid that I will be a flop. More than just about anything else in life, I want to be a good teacher—a really good teacher, a great teacher—one who can assist another person to grow. I know that the only thing in me that can teach another person is me, but I frequently hide myself behind all kinds of non-me's. Sometimes I am afraid that students won't like me, or that I am not good for them—that if I crowd them with myself or impose myself on them, they will be hurt, confused, or harmed.

In closing, I couldn't agree more with you and Katazankis, as paraphrased by Buscaglia (1982, ix), "who suggests that ideal teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own." There are too many students waiting to cross the bridge for me to get over-involved with last year's students. Only occasionally do I hear from a former student and when I do, it is usually good news sometimes coupled with an oblique thank you for being me, and that seems to be good enough. J. T. Dillon is right! The only thing in me that can teach another person is me.

Blessings,

John D. Lawry

I hope the above exchange of letters helps to clarify some of the issues surrounding the "shadow" of caritas in the classroom. I personally feel that the climate has gone too far in the direction of the "don't touch the student" taboo. I believe we have to "touch" our students' hearts and souls as well as their minds, if not their bodies.

If you tend to be incredulous about what ACIM is saying about teaching either "despair and death" or "joy and hope," then I suggest you ask your students to write (anonymously if necessary) what they have learned in your class at the end of the semester/year. If you have the courage to look for residues of love or fear, you will begin to recognize the validity of what ACIM is saying. I have, and it has changed my teaching, my life.

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Resources

For those interested in learning more about *A Course in Miracles*, it can be purchased in a new hardcover, one-volume, second edition (New York: Viking Press, 1996). All quotes are from the first edition.

In addition to Miller's (1997) book above, the following are recommended:

Perry, R. 1987. *An introduction to a course in miracles*. Fullerton, CA: Miracle Distribution Center.

Wapnick, K. 1991. *Absence from felicity: The story of Helen Schucman and her scribing of a course in miracles*. Roscoe, NY: Foundation for A Course in Miracles.

School Troubles

BY MATT HANNEBURY

Matt Hannebury is 16 years old and a grade 10 student at Lacombe Outreach School in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. Born and raised in Newfoundland, Canada, he moved with his family to Alberta in May of 1998. Matt's future plans are to graduate and then enroll in a photography program at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary, Alberta. Some of Matt's interests include playing guitar, reading and writing poetry, and playing hacky sack, as well as hanging out with his friends. Matt looks forward to completing his education in Alberta and getting a good-paying job.

Elementary school was a breeze for me. I didn't have to study, never did homework, and got the highest grades possible. However, things rapidly changed for me when I hit grade seven.

Trouble was my middle name when I hit junior high. A big change for me was that I had more freedom and the teachers didn't baby-sit me. I had the opportunity at lunchtime to leave school grounds and skip the afternoon. I had the choice of going to the wash-room whenever I wanted and not going back to class. I started hanging out with people who smoked, did drugs, and hated school. Pretty soon I became a rebel and disobeyed every rule in the book and hated every teacher. Being class clown was what I enjoyed doing. I remember I used to skip classes and go to an alley a few blocks away from the school to smoke and make out with different girls from the school. I would cause as much trouble in class as possible. Talking out of line, sleeping, not doing work, and disturbing others when doing their work were fun to me. When my report card came in June, I wasn't surprised that I had failed horribly.

The following year I buckled down, and many lectures from my mom made me realize school was there to benefit me and not to drive me crazy. Trying my best and actually realizing school was all right, that it was there to give me a profession and a future, I received the most improved student award for the whole school at the end of the year.

It felt great being a success when I repeated grade seven, but the next year in grade eight I switched to a new school where there were 500 students as opposed to the 100 students in my old school. Feeling like the school was against me because of the rules and because of the teachers I thought hated me, I caused trouble. Skipping when possible, going to school high, fighting other students, and driving teachers crazy were what I enjoyed. I thought that causing trouble was the reason people accepted me. I remember once being called into the principal's office for walking out of school the day before after telling off a teacher. The principal told me if I did something like that again I would be in deep trouble. Hearing this I got up and walked out again. Needless to say, when June came I failed English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. I had taken another school year and another year of my life and screwed it up.

That summer I moved from Newfoundland to Alberta and with my mom's help of pulling some strings I started my grade nine education through homeschooling. It started off great. I thought I would fly through the school year with no problems at all, but eventually I lost my motivation, got bored with doing school work at home, and started doing drugs and drinking again. When August came around I found myself at sixteen years old without a grade nine education. That's when I discovered Lacombe Outreach School, a public alternative school in central Alberta, Canada.

Lacombe Outreach School is a type of school that gives students who have problems learning in other schools a chance at a different type of learning. You work at your own pace doing one course at a time. Every time a person finishes a course they can draw a picture on a tile, which gets put up on the ceiling in the school.

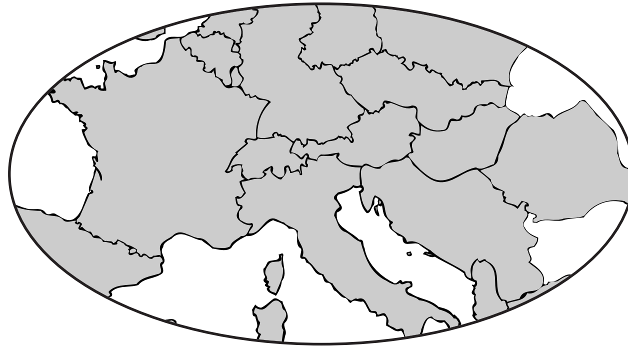
The school is housed in two separate buildings. The junior high school program, located in one building, offers courses to students in grades seven to nine. The high school program, offering courses to students in grades ten through twelve, is situated in another building, which is two doors down the street from the junior high. For students in both programs, this school offers a great way of learning to those who want it.

I was accepted into grade ten and am working with friends of mine from this town, some of whom are in situations like mine. This school is different from other schools in many ways. Everyone who attends day school works in one big classroom alongside everyone else. School is also open every Tuesday night from 6 to 9 p.m. for those students who want to attend night school. Students do their work at their own pace in modules that explain very well what they're learning. If a student has a job, he/she can work out a schedule that allows him or her to do school work and work at the same time.

The school is great and teaches you a lot you need to know about life. We get a different speaker each Tuesday afternoon to talk to us about things like sex, drugs, and suicide. The teachers are great and you get lots of help whenever you need it. We go on field trips to places such as zoos, science centers, museums, and theatres. Each student who attends this school is required to do ten volunteer hours throughout the school year, which gives the students the chance to help others in the community.

Now I am proud to say that school is much better and I'm doing great while having fun at the same time. I now realize school is important and very valuable if you want to finish your education and have plenty of choices for a good career.

I've set up a goal to finish high school next year and go on to college doing photography. I've never felt so secure in school as I feel now. I love the feeling that I know I'm doing something with my life. It's great, I love it, and it's making me a success in life.



Developing Teaching for Tolerance Programs in Central and Eastern Europe

BY JOLANTA AMBROSEWICZ-JACOBS

Searching for social reform on a grand scale has not brought the expected results. Through such remedies we can approach each other, but we cannot become people who care about each other. The lack of respect for the rights and freedoms of other people can be illustrated by one small statistic: 22.4% of the students I surveyed in six schools in Cracow disagreed with the statement that skinhead attacks on foreigners are wrong and unjustified (Ambrosewicz-Jacobs 1996). The fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe has brought to the surface the problem of xenophobia in this part of the world.

"It is hard to deny that there is still a lack of tolerance, and that it makes its greatest advances due to indifference to what people think and do rather than to a growing understanding of their 'otherness' and discovering that this 'otherness' enriches us" (Szacki 1998). No doubt one prerequisite for tolerance is maturity—maturity of both the individual and society. The development of tolerance is hindered by social and ethnic stereotypes, generalizations based more on suppositions and misleading information than on facts.

We learn stereotypes as children, listening to the comments of parents, teachers and our peers, absorbing their opinions, observing their behavior, watching TV, listening to music, reading textbooks and comics.

Beginning with Allport's book *The Nature of Prejudice,* published in 1954, academics have conducted many studies and experiments to determine the reasons for intolerance. Many results support Allport's main idea that we are all born with the potential for tolerance or intolerance. Whether we become tolerant or intolerant depends to a great extent on how we are treated in our families.

Children who are raised without strong family ties, consistent discipline, and a model for moral behavior become adults who are focused on themselves, with fears, insecurity, and mistrust. Children who are certain of parental love, have consistent moral indicators, and witness tolerance in everyday practice in their own families are more likely to become open and compassionate adults. What parents say to their children is not as important as how they treat them. The less safe we feel, the more desperately we need to define our place in the world and the more afraid we are of the world (Bullard 1996).

Prejudiced people are prejudiced in similar ways. They share certain common features:

- ▲ they generally are afraid of failure
- ▲ they are not able to deal with changing situations and with frustration
- ▲ they lack self-awareness
- ▲ they do not know that they are the primary victims of self-intolerance
- ▲ they have low self-esteem—to have any self-esteem at all, they have to consider themselves stronger, smarter, or better in some other way than those around them
- ▲ they lack trust in themselves and in other people
- ▲ not feeling safe, and not being able to deal with ambiguities, they construct a worldview and a vision of

themselves that masks their real feelings and gives them a false sense of belonging

- ▲ some of them need to hate in the same way that others need to abuse painkilling medicines
- ▲ some of them became addicted to hate and to the hate-object
- ▲ for some of them the level of their hate toward the group picked for scapegoating reflects the intensity of their unconscious self-hate (Bullard).[1]

The results of a survey of 16,000 European Union citizens show that the average European does not like strangers. Every third inhabitant of Europe confirms racist and xenophobic attitudes to a "significant" or "very significant" degree, and the next 30% admit they are racist "to a certain extent, though not always" (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 23 December 1997, p. 13 quoting from *International Herald Tribune*). Even in Sweden, one of the most tolerant countries, with only 2% declared racist (even though 1.6 million of their 9 million people are of immigrant origin), there are cases of black people being kept out of restaurants. In a country that wants to see itself as an example for the world, the topic of racism is now being debated. In the quoted survey, EU citizens enthusiastically supported democratic values and freedom, but 48% of them agreed that their country would be better off if not for the foreigners from countries outside of the EU. The research confirmed that racism and xenophobia are reactions to social frustrations.

We often think of intolerance as a social phenomenon, that is, as the effect of prejudices and negative stereotypes aimed at a group of people. Intolerance also appears in everyday activities, and also in indifference toward discriminatory behavior. "In Poland the indifference is worse than the racism," says Mamadou Diouf from Senegal, living in Poland for fourteen years. No one reacts when groups of teenagers bother black people (Wolkowycka, Kozubal, and Stasik 1997). Sociologists say that in post-communist Poland there is a lack of socially accepted and culturally developed patterns of reaction toward human diversity (Nowicka 1996), and Polish society, characterized by rather closed attitudes toward religious minorities, is poorly prepared for contact with members of other cultures (Nowicka and Nawrocki 1996).

Poland is in transition from a monologue to a dialogue of cultures. Creating a space for such a dialogue requires multidimensional educational programs for children, youth, and adults. The goal of such education is to introduce the idea of diversity, and to counteract damaging stereotypes and ethnic and religious prejudices, creating positive contacts between the majority and minorities.

Although there are regional initiatives dealing with educational programs to teach tolerance, often they are unknown to the state administration authorities and regional boards of education. Innovative teachers, authors of alternative education programs, often have found sponsors and made all the arrangements themselves. An investigation concerning the presence of programs to teach tolerance in Polish schools was made in September 1998. School superintendents in 49 provinces were asked if they knew of any programs in their districts, and only 22 of them answered at all. With the exception of Warsaw, the answers did not contain information about any particular programs aimed at enhancing youths' tolerance. The Warsaw Board of Education listed four high schools with such programs. Most of those who answered did not know anything about structured school initiatives dealing with the diversity of people. It was stated that such topics are present in the curricula in history, social science, foreign language, and religion classes. Most of the information about other cultures is taught in foreign language classes. In many high schools, contacts with high schools in other countries have been established, allowing class exchange. For example, High School No. 4 in Nowy Sacz has such a link with a high school in Nathania in Israel. These Nowy Sacz youth were interested in Jewish culture and Polish-Jewish contacts. Other high schools have established contacts and exchange between Polish students and French, German, Italian or Israeli students. A high school in Jablonka, where Polish and Slovak students attend, undertook a program of regional education. The Association of Lemkowie conducts a regional education program for some high schools in southern Poland in Gorlice, Krynica, Biecz and Hanczowa. At a few high schools the topic of "European education" is part of the curriculum (for example, at a high school in Janów Lubelski), or there are elements of civic education (at a high school in Lomza).

Initiatives to educate young Poles for Poland's entry into the EU can be found, but the fact is that teachers, even teachers very active in this field, often do not know each other, do not communicate, do not exchange their ideas, experience, and expertise. Teachers who attend teaching methodology conferences keep asking desperately for help, advice, and materials for classrooms. Listening to those questions, it seemed a natural next step to create a center where at least some of those needs could be fulfilled. Since there is already collaboration between the Jagiellonian University and the Center for Intercultural Study at the University of Ghent, Belgium, it occurred to me that the structure from Ghent could be adapted to serve teachers making changes in schools in Poland and in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well.

The Center for Intercultural Education in Poland will consist of three units: Research and Development, Training, and Publishing. This model could be replicated in other Central-Eastern countries directly or in modified form. The Center's goal will be to prepare children and youth for life in a democratic, multicultural society; to foster positive attitudes toward ethnic, religious, cultural, and social diversity; and to prevent and counteract prejudice toward minorities. These goals can be approached by providing teachers with tools and skills for communication in a diverse world.

The philosophy of the planned Center is based on the concept of "intercultural communication competence." It is the approach of the Ghent Center, and it began not from theory but from participant observation of how children of many different backgrounds interact in the classroom.[2]

What is an intercultural education?[3]

- Teaching targeted at coping with cultural differences within the society
- Instruction in intercultural communication skills and problem solving
- Promotion of tolerance, attitudes of mutual respect and understanding, open-minded attitudes towards culturally, ethnically, nationally, or religiously different individuals and groups
- Fighting against racism, xenophobia, discrimination, prejudice, and negative stereotypes
- Supplying teachers with proper tools and teaching them skills that would enable them to work effectively in ethnically diverse classes and schools
- Intercultural education is not a separate subject, but a general principle, a perspective pervading all compulsory subjects in the school curriculum.
- Intercultural education is part of general education and it is addressed to all students, teachers, and schools without exception.
- Presence of immigrants in class is not a necessary factor or a condition for teaching intercultural education.
- Intercultural education is more than just education for migrants and ethnic minorities.
- Antiracist education ought to be part of intercultural education and not an alternative for either multi- or intercultural education.

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Children are witnesses to changes in society, such as globalization, diversification, and search for identification. Because of changes in Polish demographics and its political situation (i.e., heterogeneity of society and the growing number of immigrants coming to Poland), it should be realized that its educational system can no longer avoid the reality that Poland is becoming more and more a multicultural and multiethnic country. Schools, teachers, parents, and students face numerous problems stemming from rapidly introduced reform (in the school year 1999-2000; based on a British model of school construction) that does not deal with the topic of interculturalism at all. The new model was introduced because decades of the communistic model of education was found completely ineffective, encyclopedically knowledge-based, and incompatible with EU countries' educational systems.

Without doubt there is a great need to include in Polish, Slovak, Czech, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Hungarian and also in many other countries' school curriculums (at all levels) an aspect of intercultural education. But because of complete lack of knowledge, methodology, materials, and professional trainers in the field of intercultural education, a real need exists to establish an institution that will be able to answer to these inadequacies. There are already some existing projects trying to include some aspects of multicultural education, but they are still only accidental and operate on very small scale.

Many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)—especially those that are minority-based—would like to take part in such an initiative. Teachers who are very often the members of NGOs and who heard about the subject want to get real professional training that is based on scientific research and provided by specialists. Most Polish teachers are ready to develop their own materials, such as manuals and textbooks (in a reformed system they will have a lot of freedom and independence to be able to do so), but they must have examples that do not exist in Poland yet. Primary and middle education will be provided in a blocked subjects system; for instance, the humanistic block will include subjects such as Polish literature and grammar, history, and art and culture—natural places for including multicultural aspects of education.[4]

Children from Western, Central and Eastern Europe need to learn to cope with diversity through the development of intercultural competencies. Schools should support this development instead of ignoring it, as they are currently in the countries of the Central-Eastern region.

The immediate task for Polish society is to integrate with other European societies. Teaching languages is a basic activity to fulfill this goal but not the only one. Another is to make students open toward the values of other nations and cultures without losing connection with their own culture, national identity, and tradition (Bujak 1996, 134). Change in education through incorporating a multicultural approach should be accompanied by abandoning authoritarianism in education. Teachers' authority should be a result of knowledge, wisdom, the ability to cooperate with students, and leadership (Bujak 1996, 141).

As an argument for introducing the concept of intercultural education and the structure that will serve its purpose, one can speak of the findings of the empirical study. The project "Alternative Methods of Education in Overcoming Ethnic Prejudices"[5] was aimed at assessing the level of ethnic prejudices and determining the results of educational programs already introduced. The question was whether and how the extent of tolerance and cultural openness changes under the influence of elements purposely included in the curriculum during a set period of time. The effect of these special curricula developed for high school students was examined.

The following hypotheses were confirmed:

1. Polish students generally are not familiar with concepts of minorities, do not know much about minorities currently living in Poland, and are not aware of problems between the majority and minorities occurring in different parts of the Polish socio-political landscape.
2. Ethnic prejudices exist among adolescents. The level of prejudice, measured on a social distance scale—a modification of the Bogardus scale, which is used to measure social distance in empirical studies, invented by Emory Bogardus (1959), and used since then; I modified his scale, bearing in mind that my target group consists of adolescents—correlated with general acceptance of others, openness, self-acceptance, willingness to learn about minorities, and a supportive pattern of parenting.
3. Educational programs make a difference in attitudes of students toward minorities and can reduce ethnocentric and anti-Semitic attitudes.
4. Students with high self-esteem scores also tend to accept others, to feel accepted by others, and are likely to be less ethnocentric and anti-Semitic than students with low self-esteem scores.

Taking into account that Polish youth have limited knowledge of minorities living currently in our country and that problems of minorities are peripheral to their awareness, I did not expect students to be unaware that in the past our country was multiethnic and multicultural, and that it provided refuge to people of different religions persecuted elsewhere. Asked which statements of the questionnaire were the most difficult for them, students answered those dealing with the topic of minorities. Asked to give names of great Poles whose ancestors belonged to other nations, they evidently had a problem with the answer. This finding, based on a nationwide survey, indicates that the Polish education system changed insufficiently after 1989, the date marking the fall of communism in Poland and the beginning of similar changes in central Eastern Europe.

The preliminary analysis of the Ethnic Identity Development Exercise[6] also shows that the identity of most young Poles is built around traditional, "national" values such as the Church, victories over national enemies, and national heroes taken from history textbooks. A national identity with a multicultural perspective remains wishful thinking at the moment. At the same time it calls for attention from educational policy makers, particularly now, when the Polish educational system is undergoing reform giving much more freedom to teachers.

Unfortunately, the number of Poles completing higher education is low, so the worldview of our citizenry is constructed largely at home. So far school does not correct the misinformation or attitudes brought from home. Relations between neighboring countries are seen as hostile rather than friendly. School solidifies what divides rather than what connects us, and does little to create open attitudes or a positive image of human diversity. Although this idea is not new, as it is familiar from my own experience in school, this study, undertaken twenty years later (and ten years after the fall of communism), has confirmed that Polish education is changing much more slowly than political and economic structures are.

Objectives of the Planned Center

The objectives of the planned Center are the following:

- Preparing younger and older schoolchildren to live in a democratic, multicultural society
- Shaping positive attitudes among youth towards ethnic and cultural diversity within a society
- Instructing teachers and prospective teachers to enable them to integrate their pupils—children of migrants and children belonging to ethnic minorities
- Evoking interest in the new strategies and trends in teaching intercultural education.

Among the planned activities are:

- Interdisciplinary courses for prospective teachers and students of teaching courses, pedagogy, sociology, and psychology
- Training and consultations for teachers
- Workshops for students
- Instruction in conflict resolution in schools
- Publication of database of educational materials.

Ongoing and planned projects of the Center in Kraków are as follows:

1. "Alternative methods of education in overcoming ethnic prejudices"—Polish nationwide survey conducted on a representative sample of 1002 secondary school students; evaluation of three experimental educational programs targeted at increasing tolerance among young people conducted in

- the multicultural class in Lyceum VIII in Cracow
- the experimental class in Lyceum LXIV in Warsaw
- the class with a European integration curriculum in Lyceum I in Lomza

The longitudinal study aimed to measure the levels of ethnocentrism and openness toward others started in September 1998 and will last until February 2001.

2. Translation of educational materials for teachers from Dutch into Polish, workshops for Polish teachers led by Belgian experts, evaluation of curricula which have introduced elements of multicultural education into instruction in cooperation with the Centre of Intercultural Education in Ghent, Belgium

Now What?

A Resource List for Teaching Tolerance Programs

Explore for yourself teaching for tolerance programs in both Europe and the United States, recommended by Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, to decide which ones offer useful insights for your own school or community.

European Programs

The Center for Intercultural Education at the University of Ghent (Korte Meer 5, B-9000 Ghent, Belgium)—the largest institution focused on intercultural education in Europe. Website: http://www.flwi.rug.ac.be/sico/

The Spiro Institute of London for the Study of Jewish History and Culture (The Old House C/O King's College London, Kidderpore Ave, London NW3 7SZ)—involved mainly in teaching about Jewish history and culture and the Holocaust. Website: http://knowledge.co.uk/spiro/

International Cooperation Programs

The Violence in Schools Project—a one-year program in which students were urged to draft non-discrimination codes, starting from the diversity in their own classes. For more details on this and other programs see: http://www.flwi.rug.ac.be/sico/eng/index.html

Process Work Center, formerly the Global Process Institute (2049 NW Hoyt St., Portland, OR 97209, USA) with branches in different parts of the world, organizes large group seminars annually to study such topics as racism, ethnic, class and religious conflicts, using group facilitation methods. Website: http://www.processwork.org/

Grassroots Movements—Spontaneous Actions

Peacemaker Community is an interfaith community for training, empowering, and connecting peacemakers around the world, started by Bernie Glassman. Extensive website: http://www.peacemakercommunity.org/

The Bridges-Gesharim project, led by Ladislav Snopko, began in 1991 when young people, Jews and Christians, came together spontaneously to reconstruct a synagogue in the Slovakian town of Liptovsky Mikulas. Slovakian website: http://www.gratex.sk/mosty/gesharim.htm

Programs in the U.S.

Teaching Tolerance Institute—founded in 1991, an educational arm of the antiracist Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, Alabama, helps teachers promote interracial and intercultural understanding in the classroom by distributing curriculum materials nationwide at low or no cost to teachers, by publishing a resource magazine, and by providing in-service teacher training. Website: http://www.teachingtolerance.org

Anti-Defamation League: A World of Difference Institute—with a diversity-awareness training program designed to combat racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice, in which more than 230,000 educators have participated, impacting an estimated 15 million students (Anti-Defamation League Annual Report, 1995, p. 17). An extensive website: http://www.adl.org/

Resolving Conflict Creatively—a comprehensive project of Educators for Social Responsibility in conflict resolution and intercultural understanding targeting K-12 students in New York public schools, including teacher, parent, and administrator training, classroom intervention and peer mediation. Website: http://www.esrnational.org/about-rccp.html

Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation—reaches 600,000 students per year and provides services and resources for educators to counteract xenophobia with lessons of empathy and critical thinking, going beyond teaching children about historical events towards developing a sense of social responsibility. Based in Massachusetts, they also have a branch in Switzerland and are internationally very active. Website: http://www.facing.org/

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has emerged as one of the leading human rights agencies in the world, focusing on the dynamics of racism and prejudice in the United States, and on Holocaust remembrance through social action, outreach and education. Jolanta highly recommends the Wiesenthal Center's teacher's aid: "The Holocaust, 1933-1945. Educational Resources Kit." Website: http://www.wiesenthal.com/

The Human Rights Advocates Training Program and the Religious Freedom and Human Rights Program were both created by the Center for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University (1108 International Affairs Bldg., Columbia University, New York, NY 10027). The Center provides training for human rights advocates in Africa, Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet states. Center's website: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/humanrights/

If you would like more detailed descriptions of these and other programs, 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 websites and books as well. For a printed version of this Online Action Guide about teaching tolerance programs, just call 1-800-639-4122.

3. Symposium of Israeli and Polish teachers in Cracow in cooperation with the Polish Embassy in Tel-Aviv
4. A project of teaching about the Holocaust based on contacts with people who survived the Holocaust in cooperation with the Simon Wiesenthal Center in New York and the Association of Children of the Holocaust
5. Creation of a database of intercultural education materials.

The projects mentioned above are crucial to continue or develop in Polish context. In other countries the structure of the Center could be adapted by the development of the projects, but one should always consider the particular situation, whether it be Roma children in the Czech Republic, Turkish and Roma children in Bulgaria, children from different ethnic and religious background in countries with one dominant religion, or as in the Polish case, a general lack of minority students. Some countries need more specific approaches for resolving cases of inter-ethnic and inter-religious intolerance. Some other countries might be more interested in projects teaching social responsibility as it is done by NGOs in the U.S. For example: "The Anti-Defamation League," "A World of Difference Institute," "Resolving Conflict Creatively, a project of Educators for Social Responsibility," "Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation" counteract xenophobia and explore racism, bigotry, and anti-Semitism with lessons of critical thinking. However, lack of central funds and the tradition of private sector sponsoring in Central-Eastern Europe make adaptation of existing U.S. projects impossible.

As argued earlier, the best place to learn tolerance is the home, and the best time is early. The second-best place to teach how to deal with differences in society in a structured situation is the school. Intercultural education (with the emphasis on "inter" rather than on multi-culturalism) is not a separate topic but a general perspective, a rule to apply to all curricula. Intercultural education is part of general education and is addressed to all students without exception, all teachers, and all schools. Thus the presence of immigrant or other minority students is desirable but not essential for it.

Becoming more tolerant means learning new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. This is a difficult and deeply individual process. To work with this process we need help. Prejudiced attitudes and behavior often have their source in fear, insecurity, and anger, feelings that we all share from time to time. When we recognize our feelings we can become aware of our rationalizations and then we can start to develop tolerant habits.

Notes

1. This fragment will appear in the chapter "Facilitating Freedom of Religion and Belief through Education" in the forthcoming book *Facilitating Freedom of Religion and Belief: Perspectives, Impulses and Recommendations from the Oslo Coalition,* edited by Tore Lindholm, Bahia Tahzib-Lie, and W. Cole Durham, Jr.

2. As the Ghent Center formulated, intercultural education encourages students to cope in a positive and active way with social and cultural diversity. As such, intercultural education prepares all children for living together in a democratic, plural society and contributes to the provision of equal opportunities. One of the possible tools to implement intercultural education is provided by the Cooperative Learning in Intercultural Education Project (CLIP). Based on Complex Instruction (CI, Stanford University, California) CLIP creates conditions for students to cooperate in heterogeneous groups. CLIP organizes the learning process in such a way that students learn by cooperating with each other. To this end, the method introduces open, challenging, and complex tasks. These are structured in a way that makes it necessary for students to cooperate with each other in order to complete assignments. The teacher facilitating a CLIP session no longer dominates the interaction in the classroom. She or he becomes a coach managing the interaction among the students themselves.

3. In the meaning used in the Center's projects.

4. The author would like to express gratitude for the information provided by Monika Koszyńska of Lauder-Morasha School in Warsaw.

5. Funded by The Open Society Institute, grant RSS 122/98.

6. Students were asked to draw or write all factors that influenced them as members of a particular ethnic group.

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Editorial introduction: In this issue of *Paths,* we profile the Charlestown Play House, a center of learning and growing for very young children, located in the village of Charlestown, near Phoenixville, in southeastern Pennsylvania. In the best tradition of holistic living and learning, this warm and inviting place uses the talents of creative and dedicated teachers and parents all working on behalf of the children in their care.

A Magic Place: A Profile of the Charlestown Play School

BY SANDY HURST

Charlestown Playhouse

I'm going to Charlestown Play School
Gonna have a lot of fun,
Gonna run in the grass,
Gonna play in the sun,
They've got a big old tire,
Swingin' from an old tree,
And there's lots of little children
Gonna be friends to me."
— Michael Bacon

In a chest in my daughter's living room there is a small woven rag rug with a hole in it, and among her two little children's toys is a well worn cloth bag decorated with the name of Charlestown Day Camp and a scene of bunnies and children. They remind me of happy four and five year olds weaving rugs in Miss Carol's room at Play School and paddling in the creek at day camp, wearing underpants and bare feet. No one worries about whether the children get dirty as they collect stones and sticks to build dams and fill their buckets. Teachers and helpers are there to protect them and help them in their exploration of the water and the plants and creatures they encounter.

When Betty Stonorov, then Elizabeth Foster, said to her sister in 1936, "Let's get some children to come and play" (twenty-fifth anniversary booklet), and when the children did come and literally take over her Broadwater Farm home, she could not have imagined how many children like my daughters would grow up to treasure those symbols of a magical time in their lives.

As the children came, riding tricycles on the porch, invading the library and kitchen, playing music and dancing through the house and barn, Miss Betty's father, Frank B. Foster, recognized that this was a serious endeavor. He decided to hire an architect to develop a plan to create a "house for children" in the abandoned First Presbyterian Church of Chester County, built in 1734 near the town of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. Oscar Stonorov, a young architect who would become Miss Betty's husband and go on to design great sculptures and buildings, took on the task. That old church was transformed to include expanses of glass and rooms built into the side of a wooded hill, with even a slide and fire pole running from upstairs to down. It stands as a tribute to those forward-looking people who believed with Miss Betty that "the ideal community must be built around the training of children" (twenty-fifth anniversary booklet). And it stands, still, as a tribute to the thousands of families that have been nurtured within the loving arms of this community.

In time the community also included a summer day camp for children from six to about twelve, where play is the order of the day and where arts and crafts as well as swimming in pool and creek, nature exploration, drama and games reign in an open and relaxed atmosphere of complete accep-

tance. Here, older teens, most of them veterans of day camp, act as junior counselors and learn from master teachers and counselors the value of free play and unrestricted time for growing children.

Charlestown Play House is committed to the belief that children learn best through play, in a nurturing environment where loving people attend to the children's physical and emotional needs as well as to their intellectual and artistic growth and development. In the booklet prepared for its twenty-fifth anniversary, Playschool's position was described this way: "The thread that runs continuously through it all is our belief in children; they are our hope, and each one must have the best experience possible to further his ability to take his place in our democracy, and to learn to live with love for his fellow man."

Sandy Hurst *is the Director and one of the co-founders of Upattinas School and Resource Center in Glenmoore, PA, which was designed by its families and staff to emulate Play School in its philosophy and approach to children as they grow through elementary and high school. Miss Betty was her mentor when Sandy was a young mother and teacher at Play School, and this article is a labor of love that only touches on the rich learning of those years.*

Known to most people in the area simply as Play School, this buzzing hive of little people from two to six or seven (the school includes Kindergarten) overflows with energy and creative imagination. The day is from 9:00 A.M. to 11:45 A.M., and there is an optional afternoon care session during which children have lunch, rest, and play while parents are at work. Play School is a nonprofit corporation organized as a parent cooperative. Each family is expected to spend 120 days each year helping in the classroom and 30 hours helping with maintenance. There are a few long-term substitute helpers who might be paid to take the place of parent helpers in unusual circumstances—for example, when a parent is too ill or when business takes both parents out of town. The year begins in October and continues through about the middle of July. Groups range in size from fourteen in the Twos to twenty in the Kindergarten. Thus, Play School is essentially a pre-school that includes Kindergarten. The Twos have two teachers and two parent helpers. Each other group always has at least one certified teacher and at least two parent helpers. The school also offers consultation with a licensed psychologist.

In each group, described according to the prevailing age (twos, threes, etc.), children are encouraged to explore their environment, both indoors and in the play yards. Over many years of "work parties" parents have contributed to these varied spaces and yards. Set apart from the others, surrounded by a solid fence, is the Twos' Yard, sheltered by a huge oak tree and complete with tiny structures for climbing and sand piles full of tools. The other yards are centered around riding toys and Miss Betty's old jeep, swings and climbers, water fountains and sand with real shovels and rakes, and structures in the woods including log houses and a theater. When a tree falls, it becomes a part of the yard. The children climb on it, examining all the roots and branches that remain and often dragging other building materials to make a fort around and within the branches.

Rooms here are functional, with space to hold hundreds of unit blocks. These are the wooden blocks that many of us remember from our childhood. They offer the opportunity to build vast towns of houses and roads and high towers, while they also contribute to the development of the understanding of spatial relations and linear and geometric concepts. Because each block has a mathematical relationship to the others, children learn through their muscles and bones about halves and wholes and ramps and arches, and spheres, cones, cubes, and pyramids.

The twos develop their imaginations and make memories.

Large climbing structures as well as dress-up and house play corners full of clothing and jewelry for both boys and girls encourage cooperative play and experimentation with adult roles in life. Tables and easels hold the tools—such as paint brushes, pencils and markers, and puzzle blocks—that will help to develop small muscle coordination. All sorts of found materials, like seeds and pine cones, styrofoam pellets, and popsicle sticks become parts of collages and small sculptures or tools for counting and grouping in mathematical sequences. In the hallway there is a wonderful closet complete with labeled boxes and crates full of all manner of interesting "stuff," ready for the teachers to use at a moment's notice. Who knows when a box of corks or buttons or old shoelaces will come in handy—offering just the right ingredient for a work of art or a science experiment?

One never knows what at the school will offer an opportunity for exploration and imagination. An old piano, ready to be hauled away, is taken apart by the five year olds. Using screwdrivers and pry bars, they carefully dismantle this magical instrument. It becomes a source for understanding the size and tension of the strings as they make music high and low, loud and soft. And then it becomes a harp and the hammers are incorporated into art and sculpture.

Paints and paper are the means for exploring color and texture. When the paint powder is mixed with milk or starch, or even soapsuds, all kinds of interesting effects are created. The results of this exploration contribute to the child's understanding of color and what happens when it is mixed with things other than just water. Although many of the pictures the children make are truly works of art, the value of this exploration by young children lies in the process of creating and experimenting rather than in the final product. A paper filled with the color of mud shows that the child has found out what happens when we mix all the colors that we have.

When I was the teacher of the Kindergarten, I had a child who painted a city picture with a greenish yellow sky. When asked about that sky she said, "That's how the sky looks in Conshohoken, where I live." How easy it might have been for someone to have simply thought that she did not know her colors!

Top left: Exploring the earth. Bottom left: A favorite spot for everyone, the tree swing. Above: Betty Stonorov enjoying navigating the school's yards. Right: Stuffing Thanksgiving turkeys.

Big lumps of clay or piles of play dough may be used for making things, but they may also be used to pound and beat and stretch and pull out all the frustrations and anger that sometimes come to school with a child. In the woodworking area there used to be a big log full of nails pounded into it by children who needed to work out their troubles physically before they could talk them out. And sometimes, after such a physical workout, or maybe even without it, one can see a child wrapped in the arms of a loving teacher as the child cries out that frustration we all encounter in our day-to-day living.

Throughout the day at Play School one finds an undercurrent of care for the emotional well-being of the children. They are encouraged to express themselves through conversations and stories, plays made up from books and from their own imaginations, artwork, and physical play. Children learn to talk out their problems and to cope with the outcome of their actions through small group interactions as well as within their group's daily Circle Time.

Cooking provides one of the built-in opportunities for group sharing and interaction. Everyone cooks at Play School. Each group has a day of the week to use the kitchen, which is very small, but complete. Projects like pretzels and bread or cookies and puddings are put together in the classrooms, cooked or baked, and brought back to share and take home to families. In the fall, families and friends with apple trees provide cider for juice time and for sale to support the school. In the spring children and helpers hike to the top of the field to collect wild raspberries and blackberries to bake into their pies and other goodies. At Hanukkah there are potato latkes and at Christmas there are cutout cookies.

Thanksgiving is a special occasion. Each child brings something to include in the meal. On the day before the celebration, bread, celery and onions are cut up, seasoned, and stuffed into chickens and turkeys. Little hands wield the knives under the watchful eyes of their teachers and parent helpers. They slather the birds with butter and salt for the parent helpers to take home to roast for tomorrow. On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, the special people who have helped Play School during the previous year are guests for this feast in the Old Fours' room. The children set the tables and everyone gathers 'round. One day I remember, knowing that the Twos had four chickens to stuff and only three were on the tables, we searched everywhere before finding one in a child's cubby. He had put it there because, since he helped to make it, like an artwork, he thought he should take it home.

A typical Play School day will begin with Miss Betty greeting each child at the car and welcoming her or him to the day. The children climb the short hill to the school and go to their classrooms where they have time to play with the other children or by themselves, at any pursuit they choose.

Sometimes this will be the continuation of a group project from the day before and sometimes just exploration of toys or structures. Often they go directly to the easels to paint. It might be a time to take out the classroom guinea pig, bunny, or hamster and cuddle with it or sit with a favorite book or toy brought from home. In any case, the teacher will be watching and noting the mood and needs of each individual child and planning or re-planning the day according to the needs and interests the children bring with them.

After the initial playtime there will be a call to Circle Time, when all the children and helpers gather to talk about their day and their lives. This is a sharing time and often it is the opportunity to tell stories of life at home or in the play yard or to air grievances that need the help of the group in finding a solution. Children speak and are listened to, encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings as well as to show what they have brought. There may be singing, or there may be writing of the stories on large storyboards, depending on the ages and the mood of the day in the group. During Circle Time, the teachers remind the children of things available to do that day and what they might expect if there are time constraints to their play because of a special occasion like going swimming in the summertime or having a visiting storyteller or musician. It might also be a time to remember and act out an episode or create a short play about a trip from the previous week. As the children get older they are expected and encouraged to come and stay for the complete circle, although there may be days when the teachers allow a particular child to stay away. Children in the youngest groups may go off to play as they lose interest.

Circle Time is followed by free time with activities like those described above available on the tables or in centers around the room. In this school, although there are many toys and activities that help to build the concepts needed for academic learning, it is assumed that the play of the children is their work. The point here is not to teach the child anything, but to offer the opportunity for learning through direct experience with the tools and materials that promote the development of understanding in its own time. When the children help with cooking no one is thinking about whether they can read the recipe or understand what ½ cup means. They are just cooking and enjoying the use of interesting equipment and ingredients, with a close eye out for sharing the outcome and taking a treat home to their families. Again, the children learn through their muscles and bones. They feel and see the difference in volume and weight between a half and a whole cup of water or milk. They know how it feels to pour liquid as opposed to solids such as flour or chocolate chips. And when it is time, as they grow and develop in understanding more abstract ideas, they will remember and know the reality of the concepts traditionally taught only through the use of a pencil and paper. It is so much more fun when you learn through doing a task, rather than through just being told about how to do it. It is so much more meaningful when you are allowed to use real tools and equipment, like the things grown-ups use. And when the experience includes close contact with others and requires sharing and talking about what you are doing, there are so many opportunities for rich learning to take place.

Even the experience of not having your project work out as you wanted it to is a rich learning experience. In fact, the learning that comes out of failed experiments is the basis for most of the medicines we now use to cure our illnesses. Disappointment and failure, when coupled with lots of encouragement to try again and many successful experiences, help us to learn the patience and determination so necessary as we face the challenges of growing up. When children are allowed to create buildings out of boards and boxes and what many people call junk, they learn about what works and what doesn't work—being careful of splinters and the ends of long pieces of board, sharing tools and equipment, articulating their ideas. Sometimes their buildings fall down and there are tears. Sometimes they try again with stronger walls. And sometimes they draw pictures and write stories about their buildings and learn to spell the words they need to say "Girls (or Boys) Keep Out!" But sometimes the children abandon the task, having learned what they needed for the time being and going on to other projects and ideas. No one here considers this a failure. Adults often do not continue with a project that is not satisfying or one that they don't enjoy. Why should children?

Because outdoor play is important, not only in early development but as part of a healthy life, the groups spend some time out of doors playing, building, riding, swinging, and exploring each day. All the children are encouraged and expected to do this because the teachers and helpers are needed in the play yards, but there may be occasions when a helper stays indoors with a few who are busy with a project they want to finish or for other individual reasons. Just outside the back door there is a great oak tree upon which, for many years, hung a big rope swing. When I was a teacher at Play School in the late '60s and early '70s, a young man who had grown up with Play School and its Day Camp, and was beginning his career as a professional musician, created a song about that swing that has become a Play School theme song. His name is Michael Bacon, and he has since graced many stages with his music, sometimes as soloist, and sometimes with his very famous brother and another Play School graduate, Kevin Bacon.

At the end of the Play School day the children wait in their groups for their parents or car pools to arrive. Because the road is busy, Miss Betty is there again, to see each child into the car safely and to say, "Good-bye."

For some people, it is not easy to accept a philosophy that includes the belief that a building made from all kinds of blocks and construction materials is just as wonderful as a story written in a child's own hand. The child who reads at

Now What?

A Resource List on Other Early Childhood Programs and Information

Beyond Charlestown, are there still places like the Play School available for children? How do we find them or create more like them? Below are a few resources that you can explore to help as you investigate more deeply into the needs of early childhood and the kinds of programs that might match those needs.

Magical Books On Helping Young Children

Some of the following books are now out of print but that doesn't lessen their value. Check your local library for copies, or try the Internet at http://www.bibliofind.com for great bargains on used books.

How to Help Your Child in School, by Larry and Mary Frank (1959, Viking Press). This is one of the books by Larry Frank that Miss Betty credits greatly for informing her approach to parenting and education.

The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon, by David Elkind (1988, Addison-Wesley Publishing). Illustrates how social forces within families, schools, and the media serve to make children the unwilling, unintended victims of stress.

The Magic Years, by Selma Fraiberg (1996, Fireside). This is another book and author that greatly influenced Miss Betty and the tenets of the Play School.

Magical Child, by Joseph Chilton Pearce (1977, Penguin Books). Many chapters focus on the birthing process and infant years, both of which lay the foundation for developing well-bonded relationships during the preschool years.

Natural Learning Rhythms, by Josette and Ba Luvmour (1997, revised edition). Presents tools for more fully understanding child development so parents and teachers can better support how children grow and learn by being aware of their "stage-specific wisdom." For more information about obtaining this book, contact EnCompass, listed in the Resource Directory at the back of this magazine.

Teacher, by Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963, Simon & Schuster). Tells the story of a now well-known teacher in New Zealand who listened closely to the needs of the native Maori students and what they cared about, and then invented new ways to teach based on a deep respect for the children she was teaching. This work has influenced many teachers at the Play School and worldwide.

Other Programs for Preschoolers

Play Mountain Place—described in detail in Issue #4 of *Paths of Learning*, this school is considered by Sandy Hurst the West Coast equivalent of Play School. Website: http://www.playmountain.org/

Montessori Schools—Maria Montessori believed that young children learn best by doing, not by passively accepting other people's ideas and knowledge. Hundreds of Montessori schools now exist around the country based on this premise. For an index of several large informational websites developed by Montessori organizations, visit http://www.inspiredinside.com/learning/info-montessori.htm

Reggio Emilia Approach—The essential basis of the Reggio Emilia approach is a profound respect for the child's active, inquisitive, and vitally creative engagement with the world. In this book, twenty-six American and Italian educators—including Howard Gardner, Lillian Katz, and the visionary founder of the Reggio Emilia schools, Loris Malaguzzi—reflect in depth on the origins, philosophy, teaching methods, and policy implications of these delightful learning centers. In contrast to Americans' emphasis on logical and verbal skills, this approach cultivates "the hundred languages of children"—the numerous artistic and kinesthetic (as well as verbal) ways in which children make meaning of their experience and express their discoveries. For more details, you may wish to read *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education* by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Forman (1993, Ablex Publishing).

Early Childhood Development Websites

These are not necessarily resources that are in line with the philosophies of *Paths of Learning*, but you might explore them to see for yourself what you think of their content.

Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children—an organization to which Play School belongs and sends delegates to conferences. http://www.dvaeyc.org/

Early Childhood Educators' and Family Web Corner (sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children)—http://users.sgi.net/~cokids/

Early Learning Center (New Horizons for Learning)—section of an extensive website designed especially for teachers wishing to keep up with leading edge research in the field. http://www.newhorizons.org/fifth_kids.html

ERIC: Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education—a national clearinghouse which includes special search features for parents. http://ericeece.org/

The Future of Children (sponsored by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation)—http://www.futureofchildren.org/

The National Association for the Education of Young Children—a membership organization with online resources for parents as well as for persons seeking professional development, and a special section on "Young Children International." http://www.naeyc.org/

Preschoolers Today—a resource and community created to support parents of kids ages 3 through 5. http://www.preschoolerstoday.com/

From Reflection to Action...

To understand children deeply, adults can begin by spending more time with them, as well as by being fully present with them when they are together. Often, paying attention to a child and listening to her or his needs without imposing one's own assumptions about what needs to be learned can be quite challenging, to be sure, but ultimately very rewarding for both children and adults.

If you would like more reflections and action ideas to supplement this resource list, 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. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide to supplement *A Magic Place*, call 1-800-639-4122.

Above left: Horsemen on patrol. Below left: Sandy Hurst's grandson. Above: A cool but refreshing dip.

PHOTO BY SANDY HURST

four is not considered more advanced than one who shows no signs of being ready to read at five. Everyone here believes that given the time and opportunity to freely explore all aspects of their world, each child will come to what is usually thought of as "learning" in his or her own time and in his or her own natural rhythm.

This author can attest to the validity of this belief. My three daughters all spent years, including Kindergarten, at Play School and then went on to a school called Upattinas School, which was designed by three Play School teachers to follow that philosophy into elementary and high school. My girls are now adults, with college educations, including one master's degree. And, more importantly, each is enjoying a productive and fulfilling life and raising wonderful children. Play School children who go on to public or other private schools also do well. People often wonder whether these children don't have a problem adjusting to the more structured experience of public school. In my experience with children over the past thirty-five years I have learned that children are infinitely adaptable and, with loving adults in their lives, they are able to adjust to all kinds of situations. I have known many Play School children through the years I was a counselor in summer day camp and in my home as friends of my daughters. They are wonderfully "normal," but I often think that they may be more creative in their thinking and more open to trying new experiences than other people.

Long experience with children helps the teachers at Play School to reassure parents who are buffeted about by the pressures of the times. It is difficult not to be concerned when you read about what every child must know or do, or where he or she should go to school in order to get into the "right" college or university. Many people believe that the only way to be successful in the world of adults is to be able to climb to the top of the ladder in a major corporation or profession. What about all the rest of the people who do not fit on that top rung? At Play School all those rungs are valued, as are the people who choose to live in other ways—off the grid, like tool and die makers and forest rangers. Parents here are farmers and stonemasons as well as doctors and lawyers. Children are encouraged to dream about becoming firefighters and bakers as well as stars in the business and entertainment world.

At the same time as there is unequivocal support for the children at Play School there is also that same kind of support for its teachers. Through monthly staff meetings that include the school's psychologist and Miss Betty, teachers compare notes and share both joys and frustrations. They discuss new ideas and ways to work with the children and parents, always with Miss Betty's support and encouragement. In fact, Tina, a long time teacher of the Threes, once said, "And if one of us were found running around the square in Phoenixville naked, Miss Betty would say that she was sure we had a good reason." Although the school's underlying philosophy never wavered, we were always as free as the children to explore and improve upon the basic underlying structure. Miss Betty listened and encouraged us to try new ideas and to introduce new experiences, as long as we did not forget the importance of free play in the lives of the children. In effect, we were also

free to play—with new ideas and experiences—and to grow and learn along with the children.

When asked about how she learned about this kind of approach to parenting and teaching children, Miss Betty gives credit to her old friend Larry Frank, who taught and wrote about helping children to learn (*How To Help Your Child In School*, now unfortunately out of print). She also remembers her experience as a young woman helping in a nursery school in a public housing complex in Philadelphia, although she did not think that the style of that school was right for her because it was too structured and limiting in its approach to children. She spent a year in New York City, during which time she went to Bank Street College of Education on Fridays and watched and learned all she could about teaching young children, even though she was not enrolled there. But mostly, she says, "It just happened." And what happened became a laboratory for students who came from Bank Street to observe, as well as those who came from many local colleges. Even Eric Erickson, again an old friend of Miss Betty's, sometimes came to visit and included his observations in some of his research about children and their learning and growth.

In the words of Selma Fraiberg, whose writings, along with those of Larry Frank, gave voice to many of the basic tenets of this school, these are *The Magic Years* and this is, indeed, a magic place (Fraiberg 1959).

References

Fraiberg, S. 1996. Reprint. The magic years: Understanding and handling the problems of early childhood. New York: Fireside. Original edition, 1959.

Frank, L. and M. Frank. 1959. How to help your child in school. New York: Viking Press.

UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE, ALL PHOTOS BY JEAN LACY.

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For anyone without easy access to the Internet or who prefers print materials, please call us at 1-800-639-4122 for an offline request form.

To contribute stories or research about more holistic learning options, write to: robin@PathsOfLearning.net

Three Poems

by Lennon Morgan

Flip Side

Cling to the latter rung
of telephone psyche fun.
An "our glass" fossil
6 hour right wing apostle.
Semblance of somber
An insatiable monger.
Nebula Neuron transmitter
Just in time for the prick of the litter.

1 More Year

1 more year left
until 4 more start
Line to line word for word
Study, acknowledge, it's understood
Classes in the public, 45 minutes - 1 hour
After so much free time it gets sour
But I have stairwells and "important diplomas"
it's the same, except what I eat for lunch has a
delectable aroma

Blank Slate

Overlapping the city's charm
is where the civilians sound the alarm.
Stockpile rations of greens and water
Take up the heirlooms; hide the keys from the daughter.
Penance—a pharmacy, over-the-counter purchase
Dollar signs at last minutes notice.
Take the stanza out of context
Modify it and replenish correct.
Speak your volumes at low decibels
A reservoir of resources accessible?
Stash away the soiled laundry
Too mordant for slap-stick comedy.
Double wide entry, released corridor
The placid dosage, (get out), just a money lure.

Lennon Morgan is a 16-year-old homeschooled high school junior. He lives in Busy, Kentucky with his mother, father, and older sister, McKinley. He plays guitar and writes poems, songs, and horror stories/screenplays.

Democracy and Hope in Public Education:

An Interview with Herbert Kohl

BY RICHARD J. PRYSTOWSKY AND CHARLIE MILES

In February, *Paths* editors Richard Prystowsky, Charlie Miles, and Samara Miles spoke with Herbert Kohl in San Francisco, at his apartment. A tireless advocate for public school reform for the past three decades, Herb is the author of many influential books, including *The Other Classroom*, *36 Children*, *"I Won't Learn from You" and Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment*, *Growing Minds*, *Should We Burn Babar?* and, most recently, *The Discipline of Hope*. Warmly provocative and poignantly candid, he talked with us about his own past, his ongoing efforts to enfranchise students—especially those who are traditionally disenfranchised—and his views and visions of the goals of public education.

The interview began with a brief discussion of school vouchers.

Herb Kohl: You know I think that vouchers are just another reactionary agenda. Some hip people enjoy supporting the idea of vouchers, but in effect, this will do nothing but damage poor kids.

Charlie: Why is that?

HK: Well, let's just think about it, and if you want to get some real documents on it, take a look at Rethinking Schools in Milwaukee. [http://www.rethinkingschools.org/] They've done a whole book on the voucher movement and they have done some really extraordinary work on the voucher system in Milwaukee.

Why is that? Well, let's see. What are we spending now on public education for kids, on the average? About $6,000 year. Vouchers? $2,000 to $2,500 a year. That's why. The big question. Let's say that it is *your* family. If *you* are going to take that $2,500 a year, you're going to know how to do it. You're good middle class people and have a very clear sense of how to get the best for your kids and can, most likely, find a way to supplement that money so that you can choose a good school. Now, if you're poor and you're going into a school that charges $6,000 a year for tuition and all you have is a $2,500 voucher, where are you going to make up that difference? You're not.

Not only that, but the good private schools aren't going to accept you. With a $2,500 voucher, you're not going to The Dalton School that charges $18,000 a year, unless you are at the top 2% of your class. So who's going to be left behind in the public schools? The poor have no choice. And who is going to be abandoned?

The same people who are abandoned right now. So this is not something that is going to improve things.

In addition, in a democracy, if you have a voucher then everybody qualifies for that voucher, right? In New York City, there are approximately 350,000 students currently enrolled in Catholic schools, all of whom will, then, qualify for vouchers. So, now we take $2,500 times 350,000 students who are currently outside of the system. Are you going to pay more taxes to keep the same money in for those kids who stay in the system? No.

Vouchers are part of a strategy for the privatization and demoralization of public education, based—from my perspective—on an abandonment of poor kids and the cynical idea that they can't learn. We don't need them to learn; they are disposable. To me, this is just another right-wing strategy that some hip people have adopted.

However, the idea of choice within public school systems makes sense. On the other hand, if you want to deal with charter schools and all, you have to worry very seriously. I was listening to National Public Radio this morning, and I heard that a charter bill passed which basically removes the idea that charter schools have to have equity clauses built into them in order to be established. In other words, a lot of the charter schools, especially in the South, are ways to shift money from public education into the old white citizenship, into those segregationist private schools that were established after the civil rights movement. At that time, whites removed their kids from public education and put them into private schools in order to maintain a segregated system.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Richard: Some people accuse homeschoolers, and maybe others in the alternative education community, of abandoning public education—abandoning the kids, abandoning the system—instead of supporting the idea of a democratic public school system. How do you feel about that accusation?

HK: I think it is to a large degree true. First of all, let's take the homeschooling movement. This is not one single movement. There is a fundamentalist Christian part of the homeschooling movement that is very strong and that is definitely abandoning public education. It definitely has an anti-democratic, Christian, fanatical vision of what kind of country this should be. Given that I'm not a Christian, it frightens the hell out of me. Now that doesn't mean that there aren't very good homeschools, because some are more ecumenical. Probably there are some Universalist Unitarian homeschoolers.

Then there is the second part, which is the hippie homeschoolers, the post-hippies. There are a lot of people who really understand the injuries and wounds and damages that can be created by authoritarian schooling, who want their kids to have a freer, more open way of functioning. These people feel that because they have, for the most part, the qualifications, the education, and the money, they can provide adequately for their children at home without having to have their children "suffer" the public schools. They also have the social nexus and the time so that they can socialize their kids with other kids and with other parents who are similarly placed. These people tend to be white and politically fairly progressive. They would totally, and I think appropriately, deny that they have any mal intent towards the children of the poor or people of color. They just tend not to associate with them, just tend not to hang out with them, and the word *them* comes up a lot. So that's another part of the homeschooling movement.

And then, you know, I guess that the third part of the homeschooling movement is made up of people who are just dropping out, people who are just interested in their children to the exclusion of others. There is also a tiny, tiny strand of people who are concerned with social and economic justice, though I think that this is rather a smaller group.

There are people within the homeschooling movement for whom I have great respect. For years, for example, I have been trying to push Pat Montgomery, who I know and respect, toward dealing with the whole question of equity and justice in the homeschooling movement and towards the idea—the lack of which to me is the one thing that I find depressing in homeschooling—that there is a responsibility not just for your own children, but for other people's children as well. If you have no responsibility for other people's children, then you have no regard for democracy.

Now, if you're poor and you're going into a school that charges $6,000 a year for tuition and all you have is a $2,500 voucher, where are you going to make up that difference? You're not.… So who's going to be left behind in the public schools? The poor have no choice. And who is going to be abandoned? The same people who are abandoned right now. So this is not something that is going to improve things.

My kids, all three, attended public schools from kindergarten through high school. They did not always have good experiences. Some of it was really quite frightening. Some of the teachers were terrible—all of the ceremonies of humiliation, all of the battles.… I, too, graduated from public schools, in New York City, and my wife went to public schools in Cleveland, Ohio and in California. We all went through good and bad times, but there is a kind of deep sense of socialization, the ability to know people who are different than you are, the capacity to be friendly with people who you never thought you would encounter in your life.… And given that I come from a Yiddish background, I don't think that pain is all bad. I really don't think that it is always good to be happy; besides, I don't even know how that could happen.

C: It is nice to imagine, even though you might never find it.

HK: If you even tried to find it, though, you would hurt yourself, because if you want to find total happiness, then you get into real trouble.

R: What would you say to a homeschooling family who might say, "Well, we homeschool because we don't want to sacrifice our kids to a system that does not have their best interest at heart. We think that by taking care of our own family, and by engaging our family in the larger community, we *are* helping other people. We aren't just looking out for ourselves. Also, the question of socialization is such that, if there is any reason not to send our kids to school, then that is it. *We* don't have metal detectors at our front door; we don't have security guards in our driveways." And so on. In

other words, there is a large segment of homeschoolers who, I think, might respond to what you are saying by saying, "It is precisely because we care so much about family and community and the future generations that we do this." What would you say in response to them?

HK: The first thing I would say is that it is not my business to tell people what to do with their children. In other words, I won't make *any* decision for anybody else's family because I don't think it is appropriate. The second thing I would say is that if they see other people's children going to these terrible schools, what are they doing to change the schools? In other words, are they simply dropping out of them, or are they engaging in some effort, some public and political dialogue to change the schools in some way.

Under circumstances that are very difficult, I have great compassion and sympathy for people who choose homeschooling over something else. I think it is a question of *how* you're willing to fight, *what* you're willing to fight, how you do that engagement. It is just that I am much more humble about something like that. I have my own passions, but I don't like to legislate other people's. I've also been around long enough to know that you can't.

One can create what I would call a small, so-called democratic community in the midst of a non-democratic society, or a society that is struggling towards democracy. But, what are they doing beyond themselves to deal with the anti-democratic trends in our society right now?

R: What about people who choose some of the other alternative education routes—free schools, democratic schools, and so on? Would they be subject to a similar charge of abandoning the system?

HK: Well, it depends upon who you're talking about, because I know a bit too much about all of those things to think that there is any single way to describe them. El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice [http://usanetwork.com/functions/justone/puente.html] hasn't abandoned the public schools, nor have the New Visions High Schools, nor have many of the schools in Chicago, nor the schools that are beginning to develop in L.A. and out here in San Francisco. It is not a monolithic thing. It's where you engage yourself, what your principles are, what your beliefs are, how consistent you try to be with your beliefs—because no one can be totally consistent with their beliefs. People make compromises all the time. I think it is a trap to make very broad judgments about free schools and alternative schools, because they differ so much.

R: Well, let me ask the question very specifically, then. We've published some profile articles on the Albany Free School and on the Sudbury Valley School. Dan Greenberg, at Sudbury Valley, as you know, talks very specifically about SVS' approach as a democratic approach. Sudbury Valley was established precisely because he felt that the standard system was anything but democratic. And there are lots of Sudbury Valley clones, as you know, around the country. What would you say to folks who are pursuing that angle in terms of their possibly "abandoning the system?"

HK: Well, you know, in some ways they're absolutely right. The question is, what is their public engagement? In other words, one can create what I would call a small, so-called democratic community in the midst of a non-democratic society, or a society that is struggling towards democracy. But, what are they doing beyond themselves to deal with the anti-democratic trends in our society right now?

And if people choose to go that route, the question is, what else are you doing? It is not enough to simply say, "I have a little democratic school somewhere and we are all happy and democratic." They're not, because they're going to walk into the supermarkets, and they're going to walk down the streets, and they're going to avoid certain neighborhoods, and you know, they're part of the world.

How do you situate yourself in the larger world that is not as fully democratic as you think you are? I say *as you think you are* because some schools are fully democratic, but some are not democratic. Some are run by autocrats. Some are run by people who put a very heavy hand on democracy. Some are run by people who truly do believe in democracy. There is an entire range from some of the Summerhillian ideas to what might be called a *pedagogical democracy,* which comes from the adults to the kids. You get punished if you're not democratic.

So, what is your engagement, what is your engagement in the larger world that you live in? This is not to judge any of those schools, because I haven't been there, I haven't visited them. I have a high regard for the work and effort and energy that they put into what they do. I am just raising questions, just a bit of a troublemaker.

C: You said that when your children were in school, they had bad experiences and that sometimes their teachers weren't the best. How did you respond when your kids came home and said they were unhappy in the classroom? Did you involve yourself with the teacher, identify yourself?

HK: I was on a school board for a while. I got on the school board and fought, sometimes successfully but most of the time unsuccessfully, to change things. I taught in the schools. We ran a summer camp at our place in Point Arena. Our family life outside of school was rich enough so that the kids got a lot of things and we supported them.

But, I have to say that, as our kids got older they fought their own battles. We have three kids. The youngest is 29 and the oldest is 32. They are all doing wonderful things, all wonderful people. When they got to high school, they didn't want us to fight their battles for them, although we certainly supported them in their battles. They fought battles against racism, against sexism, sexual abuse. By the way, they all went to college, and they all have B.A.'s. Not a computer scientist or, by the way, a schoolteacher among them!

Certainly, the school authorities would never come to us and say, "Look your kids are acting up," when they were acting for some form of justice, because they knew that Judy and I would support the kids and their friends. But, in a sense, what was very good was that they fought their own battles, with support from us and from many of our friends. When our kids were growing up, we lived in a complicated, interesting social environment, with many wonderful people around. We had a very diverse group of friends, from all over, who themselves were committed to the same issues that we

were. The kids saw this happening in everyday life and had an understanding of struggle.

R: I want to push you on something here.

HK: You can push me on anything.

R: One of the things you are very sensitive to is the extent to which people with privilege get privilege in the system and the extent to which people without privilege have a harder time. When your kids were involved in a particular kind of demonstration and so on, did it ever cause you any kind of anxiety—the fact that you are Herbert Kohl, the fact that school officials knew who you were, the fact that you were on the board? Did your standing give your children a kind of privilege and protection that someone who was poor and who didn't have connections wouldn't have had?

HK: It gave them more visibility, but not more protection, I guarantee you.

C: Perhaps it made it worse for them?

HK: That's right. It did make it worse for them. They were targets because of that. We had to talk about that. There isn't any protection when you are in such a minority and when things are so charged. But, if you know something about my background....

GROWING UP IN THE BRONX

HK: I grew up in an immigrant family. I lived in the Bronx in New York with my grandmother and grandfather who were both immigrants, fleeing from Eastern Europe. My grandfather was an old socialist, a union person, and we all lived in the same house—my grandfather, my grandmother, my two uncles, their wives, my mother, my father and myself, and then eventually my brother and sister. The notion of struggle was there from the day I was born.

Remember, these people were struggling for the establishment of unions. My grandfather was in the Carpenters and Joiners. I used to work construction with my grandfather when I was a kid. This was a working-class community that had its struggles; anti-Semitism was ripe. On my mother's side of the family, there were people that were Italian, Native American, and who knows what. My mother's mother was a suffragette and used to work for Vito Marc Antonio, when he was a congressman from East Harlem.

None of this seems out of the ordinary to me; it isn't anything that I invented. It is just something that I grew up with. We weren't a very religious family, and of course there were different religions on different sides of the family. For me, the idea was that a person makes these struggles. If I didn't, my grandparents would be very angry at me, so I didn't have to justify it on complex moral grounds. It just seemed like what ordinary, decent human beings would do to help each other.

R: So, your childhood helped influence your sense of affiliation with people who are struggling. Yet, to what extent might a poor black kid from South Central L.A., for example, say, "What kind of a ghetto are you talking about?"

HK: Well, let's put it this way. We have had as much hatred in my family from Jews as from not Jews. I've never had any feeling that Jews are immune from hatred and vitriol and rejection. Remember, as I have said, on my mother's side of the family there were many people who were not Jewish, and these two sides of the family did not particularly love each other. Nor did they particularly talk to each other, except on occasion.

If, on the other hand, I am smart enough, ingenious enough, crazy enough, surprising enough to get kids engaged in things that they otherwise wouldn't be engaged in, I'll try. I've done this, most of my life.

Look, if kids in L.A. say to me, "You're not worth anything to me," I will say, "Okay." I will go away. I am not a fool. You don't help people who don't want to be helped by you. If, on the other hand, I am smart enough, ingenious enough, crazy enough, surprising enough to get kids engaged in things that they otherwise wouldn't be engaged in, I'll try. I've done this, most of my life. And I haven't had much trouble. Well, you always have some trouble with some kids, but nobody has ever said that to me. But also, I've been living in a multiracial, multi-cultural world probably from the time I was three years old.

R: I get the sense, when I read about your growing up in the Bronx, that your own sense of seeing the Bronx, as you say in one of your pieces, contextualized in a larger world, and so on—that you want very much to help other struggling kids be able to contextualize their own worlds similarly. Can you talk about that drive in you, where it comes from, and so on? Am I right about that, that there is a lot in your background that...

HK: Sure there is. I said that before. I said that that came with the chicken soup, you know. It is something that I think I have always known that I have to do.

My family benefited from public education. Even though my mother and her sisters never finished high school, there was a deep sense of loyalty. They didn't finish high school for one reason only; they had to go to work. There wasn't any choice. It wasn't like homeschooling, where you can choose this kind of thing. When you grow up really poor, you have to work to support the family. My mother's father died when he was young, as I understand in an industrial accident.

When you destroy public education you destroy the capacity for people to grow in public consciousness and to feel some connection with the society as a whole.

I went to public schools. You may not believe this, but when I was a student at Bronx High School of Science, in 1954, I was head of the New York City Inter-GO Council, which was the student body that represented all the high schools in New York City. The vice president was a man by the name of Bob Maynad. I don't know if you know who he is. After his long career in journalism, he became the associate editor of the *Washington Post,* was the ombudsman for the *Washington Post,* and owned the *Oakland Tribune.* He became the only African American to own a major metropolitan newspaper. Bob was the vice president of the Inter-GO Council.

We basically organized a student strike in 1954. The strike was over a series of articles by the *New York Daily News,* having to do with the idea that high school kids were unruly; that they had unbridled sex; they were involved with drugs and violence.

I wrote about this in *The Discipline of Hop*e. We students went out and struggled with the misrepresentation of what was happening. Eventually they found out that all of the pictures—they had these pictures, all of white people, by the way—were fake. They were all posed by professional models.

(Laughter)

Absolutely true! There was a retraction, which I still have. I have saved them since 1954, so I have the originals. The retraction in the *Daily News* said, "Oh, we're sorry, we just thought this would make the point more dramatically."

C: What was the point in doing this? Was it just to sell newspapers? Why would they misrepresent things?

HK: To get tough on kids. You know, they were talking about what was called "The Blackboard Jungle." There were very few Irish kids in the New York City public schools at that time because most of them went to

Democracy means for everybody, and those people who have a fundamental commitment to democracy therefore have to have a fundamental commitment to those whose lives have no democratic choices within this so-called democracy.

Catholic schools. Italian kids went to the public schools, as did Jewish, Puerto Rican, and black kids. The target was primarily the Italian, black and Puerto Rican kids. Some of the Jewish kids were included, but they were considered to be exceptions. The idea was to be able to destroy the notion of progressive education, the very thing I have been fighting for all my life.

In a sense, I was party to that. I was at Bronx High School during the McCarthy era and we lost half of our staff because they took the Fifth Amendment. I was involved in student protests against McCarthy because my family was leftist, and issues of oppression were on the table every day. When I say on the table, I mean on the dining room every day. I have been through all of that, seen all of that, and understood that when you destroy public education you destroy the capacity for people to grow in public consciousness and to feel some connection with the society as a whole.

DEMOCRACY FOR A FEW?

HK: You can destroy public education in several ways. One is by having lousy schools. But you can also destroy it by removing people who don't have to go there from the public schools. Then we have no public fabric. We have no real understanding of human rights, the Bill of Rights, the whole existence and meaning of democracy. *Democracy does not mean democracy for a few.* Democracy means for everybody, and those people who have a fundamental commitment to democracy therefore have to have a fundamental commitment to those whose lives have no democratic choices within this so-called democracy. Democracy does not equal capitalism. It is not democracy for the rich. It is not democracy for the privileged. It is not democracy for the middle class. It is for *everybody.*

Anyone who isn't enormously distressed by the fact that one quarter to one third of our children are living in poverty and are hungry every day has got some *real* moral problems. There is some deep deficiency within that. But if you don't know that, it is not your fault. And a lot of our kids will never know that because they have been removed from a context in which they can either experience it directly or even be told about it.

R: One of the issues that comes up a lot is the question of whether or not public education in its present systemic form can be reformed. What do you have to say to those who might argue that public education—again, in its present systemic form—is *not* about democracy. It never was about democracy; it was about mainstreaming people into factory...

HK: Neither was the Constitution when it was created. When was America really about democracy except in the struggles for democracy? Remember, when we started the Constitution, it said that *white men with property* could vote. Right? White men of property! That's it! Slavery was institutionalized. Why is there a Bill of Rights? The reason is very simple. It wasn't included in the original Constitution, otherwise there wouldn't have had to have been amendments.

R: I think it is very clear that the thing that most Americans love about their freedom is not in the Constitution; it is in the Amendments.

HK: No, no, no! A lot of Americans don't love what they experience about *"their freedoms."* I mean, the idea of "*the* Americans" is insane. If you talk to people in the Delta of Mississippi and ask them what they like about their freedoms, they will tell you that it is Antebellum South, right now. I'm sorry. I went to a small town in Texas, and I remember being stopped by some cops because I was riding in a car where there were black and white people—and this was very recently—and the cop said, "Are you part of the civil whats movement? C*ivil whats* never come here!"

I mean, this stuff about *the Americans*. What about Mexican immigrants in southern California, and the freedoms that they have? Now, there are latitudes of freedom that we have here that are marvelous. They are wonderful, and this is not to put them down, because we are very lucky. You wouldn't want to live in Kosovo. You wouldn't want to live in Uganda or in other places, so this is not to put it down. But, to have this arrogant idea that there are "Americans," because what that means, is "us white people." Whenever anyone talks about the privileges of the Americans, they are really talking about white people.

R: How can the public ed. system, then, help the folks you are talking about?

HK: First of all, there are major reform movements that are very interesting in public education: the Cross Cities Campaign, for example, that comes out of Chicago deals with twelve major cities in a series of alliances. Norm Fruchter is at the Institute for Social and Educational Policy at NYU [http://www.nyu.edu/isep/]. Many people are connected to networks of school transformation. The idea of saying that schools can't be transformed is like saying that the South couldn't be transformed in

the sixties because the system was legally segregated and that that's the way it was. Just because it is that way doesn't mean it has to stay that way. It's just that comfortable people don't like to take risks.

R: Okay, but if you change things to the extent that you are talking about, you have essentially changed the system systemically, haven't you? Perhaps here many of us find common ground.

HK: That is absolutely right. The question is how to change it systemically.

R: Yes. And how do you reach those people in places like the Deep South? How does the reform movement reach them?

HK: How do you do it? You find out who is doing it and you see if you can be useful. There is a reform movement in the South. It comes though Southern Echo which is located down toward the Delta, as well as through Bob Moses's Algebra Project, based in Jackson, Mississippi. There really are people who are doing this. Do you know about the Alliance Schools in Texas? Communities are being organized and are working on developing quality public schools, some of which are very good, some of which are in process. Then there are the ACORN Schools. ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, started out dealing with housing for the homeless but has now done a lot of school work. They have schools in New York and in other places. Chicago Public Schools are doing things. It is not as if this isn't being done.

Perhaps the people who you are talking about aren't connected with the people who are doing progressive work in the public schools. I think it is a matter of connections. Do you know the National Coalition of Educational Activists? [http://members.aol.com/NCEAWeb] Their next convention is going to be in L.A. this summer. NCEA consists of students, parents, community organizers, teachers, administrators, and other educational activists, across the country, including union people who meet once a year. They are really exceptional.

They are also involved with *Rethinking Schools* [http://www.rethinkingschools.org/], which I believe is the best educational journal in the United States. It comes out of Milwaukee. I think a lot of the alternative people are not directly connected with either abandoned industrial communities like Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo, Detroit, or with large cities like L.A., New York, and in a fundamental way Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Fortworth. Many of the people who are doing work in urban settings are very busy; they are fighting major battles all the time, in some cases with real successes and in others with losses, because it is a very difficult struggle.

So, who reaches out to whom? It seems to me that it is incumbent upon those people who don't think the system can be reformed to look at those attempts that seem to be fairly effective in creating fundamental changes in public schooling—with some genuine effect in a positive way—before they continue the critique without knowledge of what's going on. These people are logical allies. It seems to me that people who are in the alternative movements should make the most equitable schools they can, but to just throw the rest out in the garbage is just a fool's game.

PHOTOS BY JACOB MILES - PRYSTOWSKY, SAMARA MILES, AND CHARLIE MILES

NATIONALIZATION OF STANDARDS

R: Let's say we begin to make some of these connections, which I am hoping that this magazine does. I hope that we can reach more audiences. What do we do in the face of what seems to be a growing nationalization of standards, a growing conformity to standards, to standardized testing, and so on? How do we transform a system with all this good will and energy, when from up top there seems to be such a movement and pressure to undermine it?

HK: This is a very difficult question. I think the potential effectiveness of the standards movement derives directly from those failures that the public schools have had, particularly with poor kids, but it also derives from some desire to stratify kids. This society needs computer technicians. This society needs people to clean bathrooms. Society needs engineers; society needs people who are going to work on the streets, and put out fires, and police-sealed communities. The people who control society understand that it is not necessary for everyone to succeed in school, and in fact, if everyone succeeds in school, then we are not going to have anyone to pick the crops. There will be nobody to work down in the valley, nobody to work in the hotel and restaurant industry in New York, except for certain people who will come in and only do it temporarily, if the schools succeed with their children. So part of what the standards movement does is to elevate standards, but it provides no opportunity to learn that equalizes the occasion for poor kids to learn. So the standards movement is just another form of elitism.

The idea is that *your* kids can come up to the standards, and *my* kids, if they wanted to, but the kids in Hunter's Point and other communities can't because they don't have the resources, neither in the schools nor at home, to do it. It is not because they *can't* humanly do it, because they can. There is no desire to make that equalization a reality. That is one of the other struggles we have to work on. Kentucky has been working on the equalization of funding and of resources and of schools. Until we introduce the notion of equal opportunities to learn into the standards thing, it is just another very difficult thing to fight.

But I am not opposed to saying that we want all the kids to read. And I am not opposed to saying that if the standards movement, at a certain point, becomes followed by an equal opportunity to learn movement, then things can break out from there.

On the other hand, only teaching to high stakes testing is insane. And the high stakes tests are insane. They are counter to anything that really has to do with critical learning and critical thinking. If you really want to talk about that, you should call Monty Neal at FAIR TEST, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There is an entire literature on alternative ways of assessing student skills. There are people who know more about it than I do, people who have devoted their lives to working on that.

I think that the important thing is that these are all very important issues. If you just opt out, then you aren't dealing with those issues at all.

R: So once again people with means can afford to provide for their kids to help insure that the kids perform well on the tests, and can find other ways to keep their families' privilege; the other kids, whose families cannot afford to help them in such ways, are going to be left holding the bag, so to speak.

HK: Yes, ask Kaplan about that.

R: Yes, I know. We paid for our older daughter to prepare for the Graduate Record Exams through Kaplan. And I used to supervise the Law School Admissions Tests and the Medical College Assessment Tests at our college in Irvine [CA], which is an affluent area. I don't think there was one kid who took the tests who wasn't prepped. Now what's going to happen to the kid in South Central L.A. who can't afford Kaplan?

HK: Who doesn't even know that Kaplan exists! Who doesn't even know that these test program preparation classes are there! Eventually, the public schools will contract to Kaplan, so that they won't teach anymore, they will just prepare kids for testing, without teaching them anything. It is just a nightmare!

You know, I have been doing this for a long time and I don't believe that in the course of my lifetime we will see the kind of victories that it seems to me to be necessary. But, I see that as no reason not to continue trying.

R: From your work, I get the sense that you feel as Dr. King did about getting to the promised land with his fellow black Americans struggling for civil rights. He said, "I might not get there with you," but he clearly believed that African Americans would get there. I get the sense from you that you feel similarly, that the struggle is what's important, not whether or not you particularly see...

HK: Democracy is what is important. Opportunity for everybody is what is important. I don't believe that I am big enough, or important enough, or powerful enough to achieve a lot of things, nor can any one person do it. But there are many, many people. I think that the role for people like me right now is to develop young leadership, to help young people see some of the struggles that they may go through, and to give them the power that they can responsibly use. It seems to me that that is the role, and that is what I am going to be trying to do in the next couple of years.

R: So, how crucial is hope, in your view? You have a line in the essay "The Tattooed Man," in your collection of essays *"I Won't Learn from You" and Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment*, "Seeding hope is at the center of the art and craft of teaching." You go on: "Creating hope in oneself as a teacher and nourishing or rekindling it in one's students is the central issue educators face today" (42). You have a new book called *The Discipline of Hope.* The concept of hope appears almost everywhere in your work. Can you talk a little bit about the importance of this concept of hope to this larger project?

SUSTAINING HOPE

HK: The first thing to do is to distinguish hope from optimism. If you describe the way you feel as optimistic it means, in a sense, "expecting to achieve certain things." That is, you are optimistic that you will get there, and all. Hope is much more of a metaphysical concept. It is much more spiritual. Hope is the idea that this can't all *be* for nothing, that there really is some deep, wondrous, positive feeling in human life and human beings that will eventually lead to a decent, convivial world for most of the people.

But you know, there will always be some people who are unhappy. I think that what I really mean by hope,

and the reason I talk about hope, is to distinguish it from the need to see large-scale rewards for your work at any particular time. For example, in the sixties, we tried to change all the schools. It didn't work. Well, now am I going become a corporate executive, a professor, go into the computer world?

Hope cannot be disciplined because it is a driving feature of one's life to say that *there is this goodness there, somewhere.* I believe that there can't be any hope unless one believes that, at the core, there are so many good things in people, even the most recalcitrant of people. And so, you don't give up because you haven't gotten to the core yet. You're sort of striving for that core; you're reaching out, struggling to bring it to the surface.

The other thing about hope is that hope involves risk. If you have hope you absolutely have to understand that to sustain hope you will take risks in your life, and those risks may involve hurting you. Many people involved in the civil rights movement have understood that it may cost them their lives. But because of the hope, the risk becomes part of the conception of life. Life without risk, life with total security is not worth living.

You know, I am an existentialist, fundamentally. When I was in Paris, I had the privilege of sitting around and listening to people like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir and all those people in the cafés of Paris in 1958-59. I spent time reading all of their works and a lot of time thinking. I was trained as a philosopher and a mathematician. I truly came to believe that you have to find a way to struggle with *mauvais foi et bon foi,* that is, bad faith and good faith. What that means is, when you do something, do you take a responsibility for it or not? You live in good faith if you take responsibility for what you do, even if what you do is screwed up. People are going to screw up all the time. You know, it's not that you're pure. It's that, "Okay, I did this. I really did this. I'm the one who did it, and I *chose* to do it." That's *bon foi*. That's good faith. *Mauvaise foi* says, "I didn't do it." Or, "Well it happened to me." Or, "I was feeling bad that day." Or, "I had too much to drink." Or, "My friends told me to do it." Or something like that. You live in bad faith because you don't take responsibility.

I think that if you live on the basis of hope, what you have to do is to take responsibility for what you do—good, bad or worse. That is a deep part of my thinking. Things are imperfect; people are imperfect. But there is that goodness there. That goodness can come out, can emerge from all the complex things that we live through. And it is *that* that drives you. And the beauty of it, for me, is that I see all that emerging in children. And so I can see my hope confirmed in the students that I teach.

When I say children, the funny thing is that for me, children now is anybody under the age of 35. (Laughter) It just has to do with age. When I see people feeling that they can be something that they wanted to be but didn't think that they could be, or learning something they didn't think they could learn, or reaching out to people they didn't think they could reach out to, then that's a confirmation of hope. Hope is constantly fed, if you work at it, by that kind of goodness in people and that kind of curiosity in people that is always emerging. As long as you're open, always sensible to that emergence, your hope never diminishes. You can get discouraged, but that's not the same thing as losing hope or diminishing the hope you have.

Or you can say, as I said before, "I'm probably not going to see this." Do I think I am going to see the elimination of poverty in the United States in my lifetime? The elimination of racism? In my lifetime? You've got to be kidding!

R: But you are going to work to see the end.

HK: Well, you've got to contribute to it because it might happen. Just might happen. Just conceivably.

R: Does hope counter despair, then, in these kids, especially in the ones who have such struggles?

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HK: Yes, hope counters despair, but it also counters something else. It isn't just hope and despair. There's cynicism. Despair is self-destructive. You see a lot of kids who hurt themselves because there's a hope/despair thing. Cynicism is worse. I mean, if I don't care, I'm out to get my own, and I'll get you. That can be in the business world, or it can be on the streets. Those are not kids with despair. Those are the kind of kids who say, "I'm going to go out a millionaire or I am going to go out young and in glory." Real cynicism. Coldness. Despair is a warm feeling, but cynicism is very cold. It is chilly. It's when you look at someone and see that they really have no feelings, except maybe for themselves, but you're not even sure about that, sometimes.

R: You subtitle the essay "The Tattooed Man: Confessions of a Hopemonger." Do you see yourself as a hopemonger?

HK: No, it is purely willed behavior; it comes from the existential part of me. Those of us who have

Do I think I am going to see the elimination of poverty in the United States in my lifetime? The elimination of racism? In my lifetime? You've got to be kidding!

struggled for as long as I have, have every reason to be discouraged. I have to will that. I may have sources of strength, but it is willed behavior. I will to be that way rather than some other way. That is not to say that sometimes I don't get a little discouraged, because I do. But no, it is willed behavior. It is chosen. I *choose* to be hopeful.

C: Is that why you call your book *The Discipline of Hope?*

HK: Yeah, that's right. It is a discipline.

R: So you work at hope.

HK: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

THE ROLE OF THE ARTS

R: How can we do this with kids in the school, in the communities? How can teachers, so many of whom want to do the right thing...

HK: We have got to give them things that they enjoy doing. We have to celebrate the arts. We have to give kids an opportunity to express themselves. We need to give them a chance to speak to each other over issues and not constantly take them back to a boring set of curriculum. We have to give them a chance to dance, to sing. It seems to me that success in school is frequently dependent on the degree to which people feel themselves physically, as well as intellectually, comfortable with being themselves in that environment. Being there. And so the question of *how you be there* becomes as important as the content of what you learn. So, I would be obsessed with the arts, with theatre, with music. I teach theatre all the time; that's my favorite thing to do. I absolutely love it.

Sami: In schools, they always cut the arts programs first.

HK: That's right. And it is terrible, stupid, because they cut out part of the heart of the students. You know? What they are doing is destroying the heart. And the mind can't work well without the heart. I don't come from a theatre background, but everybody was theatrical when I grew up.

My first experience with theatre really is interesting. I used to go to the Park Plaza Theatre in the Bronx. I would pay $ .25 to go, every Sunday morning, maybe it was Saturdays. We would see cartoons. Then, if you hid in the men's room, you could stay and see the grown-up movies that came on after the kids' cartoons. So, my parents would give me a quarter and I would go the movies once a week. They would know where I was, know when I had to come back, and I would stay for four or five hours. I must have been ten or eleven. Most of the kids who went were Italian or Jewish, a couple of black kids, a couple of Puerto Rican kids. You know, we would all line up.

One Saturday, all the Irish community came out. They are all dressed, and there are no other Jewish kids in sight. There are no Italians, blacks or Puerto Ricans in sight, nothing. But the Irish community is completely out, with kids and grandparents, and all. So I get in line. Maybe there are some funny cartoons for the Irish, you know? Who knows what's going on? I'm a very curious person, so I am willing to go places where I shouldn't be. Sometimes it is dangerous and sometimes it is very useful.

I want to encounter them as people, not as people who have a history or a record, but as people who have the capacity to choose their lives, who have the capacity to make their lives new, if they care to.

So I stayed in line and I came up with my $.25, and it turned out that it costs a buck, but I didn't have it. An Irishman who lived next door to me gave me the $.75. So I went in.

It was the Abbey Theatre of Dublin performing *Playboy of the Western World.* Some of the most famous Irish actors ever were there. And I got hooked. I used to sneak in to the second half of Broadway plays, because I never had any money to go into the first act. I found out how to do that from a friend of mine, who was an usher. So I saw 50 plays, some of the most famous plays ever done, only from Act 2 on. I saw Patty Duke in *The Bad Seed,* Fredrick March and Florence Eldridge in *Long Day's Journey into Night,* some of the more extraordinary plays that were put on with the most amazing actors and actresses that you can imagine. And I just loved it.

Of course, I had to figure out what had been going on in Act 1, so I got real smart about theatre; I came to understand how to pick up drama in the middle.

It wasn't until I was teaching in Berkeley in the 1960s that I decided to do theatre with the kids myself, high school theatre. Have you ever seen the movie called *Billy Jack?* It is about a woman who runs a free school and who falls in love with a Native American guy who comes back from Vietnam. All the kids in the free school were part of my theatre troop. I did all the theatre stuff with the kids for that movie. One of those kids is now a producer for WNET. Another one is the leader of the Saturday Night Live band. Another is a famous jazz drummer who does studio sessions in Amsterdam and Geneva. One is an artist in Paris. Incredible, interesting kids. They are all in their late forties now.

As a teacher you are always on stage. Whether you like it or not, you are doing theatre. What made it possible for me to do theatre with kids is that I realized that I was doing theatre with kids my entire teaching career.

R: Also, as a teacher, when a student comes into my class—to use the example you gave, and forgive me for making it something of a metaphor—I try to figure out what was Act 1. I am coming in in the middle.

HK: Yet, I want to make sure that Act 1 doesn't make a difference. I try to eliminate my students' past history when I encounter them. I don't really care. I won't read about their past history, I won't find out about their records, their grades.… I want to encounter them—and this is the other existential part of me—I want to encounter them as people, not as people who have a history or a record, but as people who have the capacity to choose their lives, who have the capacity to make their lives new, if they care to.

R: So, you put the predetermined script and roles aside.

HK: Pure improvisation. That is to say, I very carefully plan things and I am willing to drop anything at any moment to go with what really seems to make sense. If there is an analogy, it is that of the jazz musician. Jazz has real structure; there is a chordal structure and a harmonic structure. To be a good jazz musician you have to be a good musician. Then you have to let all of that go, so you are doing two things at the same time. For example, I have to hear, if I am a jazz musician, all of the ways in which all the other musicians are playing in order to realize what my contribution to the whole is going to be.

The same thing happens with teaching. Good teachers have to have this sensibility for the presence of all of their students and let that develop. That sensibility is so important. It is teachable, but some of it is intuitive, instinctual. Some of it has to do with the fact that you care about all of these people's lives.

R: We'll be publishing an article in this issue [David Stern's "Freedom or Structure: One Teacher's Journey"], written by a seasoned educator, who says, in effect, "You know, I see good points in terms of people who say just let kids develop whatever they are develop-

ing—basically, leave them alone—and yet I see lots of kids fall through the cracks." What he is trying to argue for is a certain amount of freedom within structure, a certain amount of telling kids, "Okay, develop on your own, but let's be sure that you do x, y and z, too." It sounds as if you are somewhat, in your own way...

HK: I have never been a Summerhillian. I have never believed that kids should do whatever they want to do, because I know what they want to do. What they want, first of all, is not to be in school.

R: In your essay "The Tattooed Man," you talk about the influence of Mozart's music on you, and how someone introduced Mozart to you, and so on. You say, "I know I could not have invented Mozart myself, and contrary to some educators who would have us believe that children create their own worlds, I know that worlds created by individuals are tiny and that children need to connect with culture and history as much as they need to be free to contribute to them" (58). I was wondering if you could expand upon that.

HK: Let's say that someone is potentially an incredibly talented pianist but they have never seen a piano. Where is that piano going to be? Or, perhaps someone could really work on computers but has never seen a computer. Someone may have the capacity to do it; it may be a particular gift. They have a particular genius for it, but they have never seen a computer. They don't know what a computer is all about. That person isn't going to create a computer. Someone who is a musician is not going to build a piano, you know. She isn't going to start from scratch.

Some people think of caring as letting kids only do what they want to do. I don't think that is caring. I think caring is trying to expose kids to the riches of the world, to what they don't know. What are you offering? Teaching, to me, has a lot to do with offering, offering resources, options, opportunities, and all. Teaching also has to do with setting limits. People can't kill each other, smack each other, tear each other's work up without kids becoming discouraged and not doing work. To say that kids "make the world" is to say that Nelson Rockefeller's kids have the same opportunities as kids growing up with no opportunities in some poor community somewhere. To me, this is all an abstract, intellectual game of reconstructionist notions.

Kids don't reconstruct math; they may rediscover mathematical things, but they don't discover them without people who know about algebra, calculus or even arithmetic presenting them with the opportunity to discover it. They may construct for themselves ways of thinking about these things, but they don't construct language. If you take a baby and take the baby away from any contact with people who speak a language, that baby is going to really have hard times. If you take a baby born in the U.S. and bring him up in Italy, he will speak Italian with the accent of the region he was raised in, and not English, if everybody around him speaks that. So, there is a kind of foolishness that comes out of a dogmatic Piagetianism. I don't believe it at all.

In my teaching, I have seen kids learn an enormous amount, discover an enormous amount, but I had to provide a lot of the occasions upon which the discovery took place.

R: What if they, on some of those occasions, decided that they didn't want to learn? I don't mean that creative maladjustment, that creative response, that says, "I don't want to learn this because it is racist, against my culture," or something like that. What if a kid said, "I don't want to read. Period."

COUNTERING SCHOOL FAILURE

HK: It depends upon who the kid is and what the context is. If it is a kid who has experienced failure in learning to read in his past school career and my judgement is, since teaching involves judgement, that the kid is afraid to learn to read but really has to become functional, then I will find a way to seduce him, force him, compel him, charm him, or think of any other way I can to get him to read. I won't get off his back.

R: That's the story of Barry, right? The kid in *I Won't Learn from You!*?

HK: Yeah. Often poor kids who have experienced school failure by the time you encounter them don't believe that they can do something, so that they resist it in a crazy way. The one thing you don't do is repeat the structures of failure. What you have to do is to give them different options and opportunities to learn things that they haven't learned before. A teacher has to be creative in approaching those subjects.

But I don't think you let kids go that way, and especially if you know that if you let a kid go in the third grade they are going to be dead on arrival in the sixth grade. And people can say, "Well, but in the alternative schools it is not the case." That may be. Far be it for me to make that judgement. But I know that if you are poor and you are growing up in an urban ghetto and you can't read by the time you are in the sixth grade you are dead in the water. And I don't want to see that happen, to any kid.

R: Yet, in an alternative setting in which the classification of third grade or sixth grade doesn't really much matter, all of those concepts are already in question. So what if you let a kid find reading, so to speak, at his or her own pace and in his or her own time?

HK: The problem is, they don't find it. Have you read Lisa Delpit's *Other People's Children*? She answers that question more eloquently and more thoroughly than I can do. She argues that progressives who let their own kids learn at their own rate and in their own way can do so because they feel assured that their children will eventually learn; however, when it comes to other people's children, they are basically damaging them.

R: But, Dan Greenberg says that, although at Sudbury Valley no child can be forced to do anything by anybody at any time, by the time the students leave there at age eighteen, they are all reading and writing and so on. What about the argument that says, "Well, as a matter of fact, kids will all learn to read if we just give them their space"?

HK: The streets are very tempting. If you are growing up poor and living on mean streets, you don't have any space in which to do that. That comes from a position of privilege. There are other things to do on the streets that are going to tear you away from the time and the education and the opportunity to do it. If the people at Sudbury Valley can figure out a way to get all the schools in

America to have the resources—the time, the effort, the energy, the grace, the comfort, the lack of danger, the lack of violence that Sudbury Valley has—then let them go ahead and do it. I welcome them.

R: You know, what you keep coming back to is the position that lots of progressive, liberal ideas continue not to account for the realities of the lives of poor kids, kids from ghetto areas, kids who don't have the luxury of those kinds of choices, and that for you, the public school venue is still where these changes are....

HK: It is all we've got. And if we abandon it, then the kids will have nothing. If we impoverish it, they will have less. That is right. I believe that, very strongly.

R: Can you talk about the role of storytelling in teaching and learning? You write about that and see it as very important. For our readers who aren't very familiar with your work, can you talk about that a bit?

HK: Well, stories are how people reach each other. Teaching is the unfolding of many stories and so it is, in essence, a long series of nested stories that are unfolded. And it is not just my stories but also the kids' stories, stories that come from their community and all. People listen to stories. They don't listen to preachments. Well, some people do at church, although I don't understand that too well. But even in good sermons, it is all stories, parables, riddles, puzzles.

In effect, storytelling both creates a community bond and gives people an opportunity to discover their own voices. I think the crucial thing is the discovery of voice. How do people learn to voice who they are, what they think, what they believe in, what they know. Storytelling also allows you to be funny. If you can't be funny in the classroom, you can't succeed. There has to be some fun in there. Most teachers who burn out do so because they aren't having fun anymore.

There has to be an opportunity not only to have fun, but also to share a part of yourself that you feel like sharing. And I think when teachers tell stories it is that sharing part of oneself that elicits trust. Storytelling is definitely a part of my own background. At every dinner, everybody had stories to tell and only got about one out.

R: So I am a third grade teacher, and I am reading this interview. I am fascinated by it, and I think, "So what can I do? Tomorrow, I am going to go into my classroom. I want to do this storytelling thing. What can I do?"

HK: Say something about yourself. Think about what you are teaching, think about yourself in school, when you learned it, or think about someone in your family who did or didn't learn it, and tell a story about yourself.

R: And the kids, what can I have them do?

HK: You figure it out. You're going to be a teacher. I'm not going to tell you what to do. That's too formulaic. Basically, you want to ask the kids what they think. And then listen. But, one thing you got to do is say, "I'm going to give a half an hour to this conversation." That's the major commitment. And if you can't fill up a half an hour of conversation with your class, then you got to figure out how to do it. You simply have to figure out how to create a time to tell stories.

Take a book. Take a simple book, a children's book. I got one yesterday. It is called *Click Clack Moo: Cows that Type*. It is an interesting book. So I would ask my third grade class what this book is. I don't care what reading level it is. The cows are typing to the farmer and basically say that the barn is cold and that we want some electric blankets and if he doesn't do it, they will go on strike. They left a note on the barn door saying, "Sorry we're closed, no milk today."

R: There's your unionist background coming up again!

HK: That's right. And they basically take up for the chickens, and now there's no milk and no eggs. Then they win what they want, but unfortunately they give away the typewriter, which is their instrument of power, so we would talk about that. However, the ducks, who were given the typewriter to take to the farmer, don't. They start typing; they start organizing. So now we have lots to talk about. But the point about talking about it is not to test it, not to come to a conclusion, not to tell people what to think, not to say that if you don't tell me exactly what is in this book you are going to get a B or C, or an A if you can memorize it. Talk about it. And that's where storytelling comes in. That's what *bonds* human communities together.

Then kids can come to you and say, "I want to learn this but I don't know how." That is one of the most important things to say. "Yeah, I want to learn how to read but I don't know how to do it. Everybody has tried to teach me to read but nobody has told me how to read or nobody has shared this with me. Nobody has given me the power and strength to understand what I need to do to go about doing things like this."

R: From what I understand from reading some of your work, isn't it true that storytelling, fiction, literature also enables one to see beyond the world one is in?

HK: Poetry, in particular.

R: You talk about how the ghetto limits one's visions, and so on.

HK: Not the ghetto, being upper class limits vision! Don't think about people with limited vision as only being poor. Sometimes poor people have a much bigger vision than people who are wealthy and protected and ghettoized in their white alternative communities.

R: For either group, storytelling, fiction, is a way out.

HK: Poetry. Theatre. The same thing. These are all ways to see a larger human world, but also to love lan-

guage. I think that if anything, you don't write as much as I do unless you have a certain level of language. Write for its own sake, for the sake of its own existence, not for anything else.

R: Charlie read me a passage in the *Discipline of Hope* about the teacher in you wrestling with the educator in you. This comes up elsewhere in your work, also. Where is Herb Kohl now with that struggle?

HK: Wrestling. You never end those struggles. Since I am going to be doing a lot of teacher education over the next couple of years, one thing that has been bothering me a great deal is how much does the teacher in me get them—the young people that I have an opportunity to work with—to conform to what the state demands as opposed to what I know in my heart would be in their better interest. And that is the same struggle: the educator versus the teacher, right? I wrestle with this all of the time. I don't know where I am going to come out at any particular time.

I know that ultimately I get very wicked, and the educator overcomes the teacher, I am pretty sure. But how it happens, is different every time. You know, I talk about that in *Discipline of Hope,* about situational teaching. If you ask me before I begin the class how it is going to come out that way, I can't tell you. I have to be there first, feel the presence of everybody, know what I can get away with.

(Laughter)

R: There's your existentialism again.

(Laughter)

Much of my writing is based on stuff that I've read and that I know. I don't display it, annotate it, or show it because I prefer to tell stories in my own way, and so I try to inform my writing with what I know and what I think as opposed to being an academic writer.

HK: Actually, your work is always storytelling.

C: I so enjoyed your essay on Alder Creek. It was just beautiful.

HK: Judy and I were at Alder Creek two or three days ago. Oh! It has changed so much this year! The whole path of the creek has totally changed. It is running further north and the driftwood is at a different place now and it is just fascinating. Every year it just changes. You know, it is the same river, but it is not. That is one of my favorite things that I have written. I enjoyed writing it.

C: Well, I can tell, I think, when I am reading somebody who likes words and enjoys their writing. It shines through.

HK: I consider myself, as a writer, not an educational writer, but a writer who happens to write about education. I probably have more friends who are writers than who are educators. I have a lot of friends, and I founded the Teachers and Writers Collaborative. I work with all kinds of writers from all over the world, with PEN and Freedom to Write, Writers in the Schools, all that stuff. It all has to do with the privilege of being among other people who are really high on writing. It is great fun.

R: In a final comment, do you have any words of hope for the many teachers out there who are struggling to do the right thing?

HK: I think that because hope comes from a sense of community that the most important thing is to not do it alone, to search out other people, other teachers, either in your community, or across private and public schools, or in any different place. Build not merely alliances, but friendships. Groups of teachers can join others who are similarly struggling with questions of hope. Hang out a bit with them.

Don't try to put your school behind you but integrate that into your social life in a way that is positive and reflective of other people doing similar things that you can like. I, for example, have been talking to Pat Montgomery and a few other people in the alternative school movement and in the private school, the National Association of Independent Schools, as well as the public schools. There is absolutely no reason why teachers across all those sectors can't meet with each other and communicate with each other. They need each other for support.

My feeling is that that kind of meeting—for example, a gathering that is not sectionalized according to public, private, or homeschool, but focuses instead on issues of equity, justice, and caring about kids and teachers—would be very useful and very important. We need to feel ourselves as part of a whole movement, rather than separate. That's one way to do that. And in that way, the sharing of resources is made more possible.

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A Resource List: Books by Herb Kohl

Kohl is the author of over 40 books. Below are brief summaries of some of his most well-known works, as well as summaries of several of his lesser known or newer works. In all of these books, one finds stimulating, provocative, heartfelt teaching principles that remain timeless.

36 Children (1967 original, 1990 reissue, New American Library Trade). In this classic chronicle of an inner city school, Kohl describes his teaching experiences in a sixth grade Harlem classroom. On Amazon.com, one reader from Lubbock, Texas, wrote recently about what he had learned from this book, which he recommends to all teachers and teachers-to-be: "Be challenged to teach out of your comfort zone. Allow your sweet spirit to be given to kids who fall asleep in class because the gun shots at four a.m. woke them up and [they] are afraid to go back to sleep. Be reminded to learn from your students and allow students to teach you. Wherever you are, make your classroom a safe place to share, learn and grow."

For locating old copies of this or other out-of-print books listed below, visit http://www.bibliofind.com.

The Discipline of Hope: Learning from a Lifetime of Teaching (1998, Simon and Schuster). Reviewer Joel Neuberg (from *Booklist,* February 1998) wrote, "At the age of 60, the prolific Herbert Kohl looks back on 38 years of teaching at every level from kindergarten through college. The first third of the book focuses on the first two years of Kohl's career, teaching sixth-grade children from African American and Puerto Rican neighborhoods in New York City—the same period covered in Kohl's classic work, *36 Children* … Set against the social events of the time—from the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War in the '60s and '70s through the widespread abandonment of public schools in the '80s—Kohl's account demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the learning process. Of interest to anyone who sends a child to school, this compelling mix of theory and autobiography will be most useful to teachers looking for inspiration." http://www.simonandschuster.com/

"I Won't Learn from You": And Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment (1995, New Press). In this book of five essays, Kohl uses masterful storytelling skills within personal reflections of his own teaching and life experiences to illustrate how and why children learn and become "active creators of their own values." In the final essay, Kohl describes *creative maladjustment* as "breaking social patterns that are morally reprehensible, taking conscious control of one's place in the environment, and readjusting the world one lives in based on personal integrity and honesty—that is as it consists of learning to survive with minimal moral and personal compromise in a thoroughly compromised world and of not being afraid of planned and willed conflict, if necessary" (p. 130). This definition is followed by many descriptions of how this concept plays out in the classroom as well as within the broader political dynamics of teaching. Throughout every essay, as is common to Kohl's work, one finds students always at the core of Kohl's commitment to the "struggle for public education."
http://www.thenewpress.com/books/iwontlrn.htm

On Teaching (1976, Schocken Books). As Kohl describes in the preface, "This book is for people thinking about becoming a teacher as well as for people in teacher training and for people who are in the classroom and think of themselves as still learning how to teach. It is about the specifics of working with children and developing curriculum material. It is also about educational politics, the social structure of the school, and the ways in which the feelings we have as adults affect the work we do in school." This book covers the motivation for teaching, the craft of teaching, and the politics of teaching.

The Open Classroom: A Practical Guide to a New Way of Teaching (1969, Random House). This book is one of Kohl's early responses to working in an authoritative school environment that had more to do with controlling students than with teaching them. Kohl describes in great detail both the struggles, problems, failures, *and* successes of teachers trying to create non-authoritarian classrooms and the "battles with self and system" that teachers encounter in public schools (p. 15). The "open classroom," which he suggests as an alternative to teacher-directed classrooms, takes time to develop, yet in the end is worth its own reward; based on participation rather than compulsion, it validates and honors students' sincere desire to learn.

Should We Burn Babar? (1995, The New Press). Kohl examines children's literature and the power of stories as he reflects on ways to address well-loved children's books whose core messages need to be challenged. He looks at colonialism in the Babar books, racism and misrepresentation inherent in the usual telling of the Rosa Parks story, sexism in Pinocchio, and the absence of adolescent literature that questions economic and social structures at deeper levels. As you read these essays, you get a better sense of what to look for in *how* a story is told and to question what isn't told within each story. Kohl's answer is neither to burn books nor to ignore other beloved cultural icons (such as Barbie), but to encourage critical awareness and a "social imagination" (freedom to imagine the world other than it is). In the final essay, drawing from his readings of history, Kohl challenges the "good old days" perspective on public education by telling the story of a fictional family making its way through the trials and tribulations of America's school history.
http://www.thenewpress.com/books/shouldwe.htm

Other books that Herb Kohl has written or edited include *Teaching the Unteachable: The Story of an Experiment in Children's Writing* (1967); *Golden Boy as Anthony Cool: A Photo Essay on Naming and Graffiti* (1972); *Half the House* (1974); *Math, Writing & Games in the Open Classroom* (1974); *Basic Skills—A Plan for Your Child, a Program for All Children* (1982); *Growing Minds: On Becoming a Teacher* (1985); *A Call to Character* (1995); *The Plain Truth Of Things: A Treasury* (1997).

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PHOTO BY KAZUO HIRASAWA

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IN JAPAN: A BRIEF ORIENTATION

By Nat Needle

Introduction

I first met the Japanese alternative educator Kazuhiro ("Kazu") Kojima in 1985 at a conference in the U.S. An avid investigator of the American alternative education movement, Kazu was instrumental in making his American colleagues aware of the complex issues facing alternative educators and their students in Japan. At that time, Kazu's report on Japanese "alternative education" was depressing. Students who stopped attending public school, often as a result of brutal hazing by teachers as well as fellow students, were labeled as having a disease called "School Refusal Syndrome." Special hospitals "treated" such children so they could return to school and thereby be pronounced "cured." The possibility that the problem might lie within the system rather than the student had not yet dawned on Japanese society.

Over the past fifteen years, however, public dissatisfaction with the monolithic national school system has been slowly but steadily increasing. The phenomenon of "classroom collapse," in which even lower-grade elementary students rebel *en masse* against adult authority, has recently made front-page news. The number of students looking for new ways to learn, and to truly heal their spirits from school-induced damage, is growing.

All across Japan today, a small but spunky sprinkling of educators and parents is creating new options for these young people. Kazu and his co-pioneers don't always see eye to eye amongst themselves any more than do their U.S. counterparts. Yet thanks to them, Japanese students who don't go to school, and their families, need no longer feel alone in a culture where being cast out is the fate most feared.

Leaving the approved path in response to a child's needs is still an extraordinary act in Japan, but no longer unheard of. When Pat Montgomery, director of **Clonlara School** and its global **Home-Based Education Program**, visited Japan in 1984, she was warned not to use the term "homeschooling" because no one would have any idea what she was talking about. During her 1997 trip, however, she spoke to packed audiences of parents eager to absorb her message that they, not the government, had the power as well as the right to educate their own children.

My purpose here is to summarize the broad categories of alternative education activity now going on in Japan. They all share a common philosophy of freedom, and some organizations straddle more than one category. But generally these distinctions reflect the some-

Nat Needle has been exploring educational alternatives since 1975, when he co-founded Oddfellows Playhouse, a performing arts youth organization. He has since directed an alternative high school, taught public elementary school, and led Clonlara School's Campus High School. A jazz pianist, songwriter, and ordained Buddhist minister, he has recently moved to Massachusetts from Kyoto, Japan, with his wife Mihoko Wakabayashi and sons Asa, 5, and Noriyoshi, 1.

PHOTO BY NAT NEEDLE

During the 1994 visit of Tokyo Shure staff and students to Clonlara School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, just following the return of Clonlara staff and students from their visit to Tokyo Sure: (left to right) Mihoko Wakabayashi, Tokyo Sure staff member Kageki Asakura, Pat Montgomery, Keiko Okuchi, Jim Montgomery, and Tokyo Shure staff member Minako Hagiwara.

what different needs and aims of students, parents, and staff.

Free Spaces for School Refusers

The term "school refuser" might convey a gritty "heck, no" attitude. However, it often applies to students who can no longer bring themselves to attend despite mixed emotions about staying away. They may feel ashamed, or miss their reliable routine. Yet physical signs of school-related stress, such as stomach pain or even hair loss, may have become impossible to ignore. Parents and students may still see a return to school as their goal. Students are likely to remain officially enrolled at school, since withdrawing might entail a bureaucratic fight and make it impossible to re-enroll later.

"Free spaces" don't see themselves as alternative schools. They don't claim to provide an educational program, nor do they expect regular attendance. They do offer a place for young people to rediscover life outside of school. Parents may initially focus on persuading a traumatized young person to leave his or her room and venture out to meet others in a free space's safe, caring environment. Students may spend a long period of recovery just hanging out, playing computer games, and building trust with adult staff.

Gradually, however, they may participate in organized activities and renew a sense of belonging. At **Tama River** in Kawasaki near Tokyo, founded by Hiroyuki Nishino in 1991, students travel yearly to an ocean island to bathe in volcanic springs and to fish. At Reiko Saito's **Koryu Hiroba** ("Sharing Space") in Nagoya, group meetings allow students a chance to share thoughts and feelings. Optional workshops are offered in, for example, English or flower arranging. Thirty young people, some with physical disabilities, come as often as twice a week, or as seldom as once a month. **Life Art**, started by Takaaki Yamada in 1992, now with roughly 50 members ranging in age from 14 to 30, operates a second-hand shop in its Kyoto neighborhood.

As school refusers regain self-confidence as a result of such experiences, they often return to school. Sometimes, however, they chart their own course in a way similar to American "unschooling" teenagers. Examples of such young people can be found at **Tokyo Shure**, Japan's largest free space with about two hundred members. Shure (pronounced "shoo-reh") was organized by Keiko Okuchi, herself the mother of a school refuser, in 1985. Its members have apprenticed themselves to bakers or artists, started a newspaper about not going to school, and explored formal and informal learning experiences abroad. Former members joined hands to build a log cabin guest house in the Nagano mountains.

Homeschooling Networks

Sometimes, families with children out of school take pains to point out that they are *not* school refusers, but rather *homeschoolers* who have chosen their path out of conviction. Compared to those who are simply struggling to cope with an unexpected situation, the number of deliberately homeschooling families is quite small. Many homeschoolers began as school refusers, however, and such evolution is becoming less unusual.

Homeschooling is legal in Japan. Still, it presents enormous social and economic challenges in a nation where customs and official opinions outweigh legal rights, and identity is so closely tied to schooling. Clonlara School is no correspondence school; rather, it supports parents' own educational designs. Yet the 250 or so Japanese homeschooling families enrolled (up from about 70 five years ago) are attracted by the comfort of associating with a private American school, as well as the status and employability conferred by its diploma.

Homegrown networks sprouting up just in the past few years are now making homeschooling a slightly less lonely prospect. Tomiko Kugai has been coordinating the **Himeji Homeschoolers' Network**, a regional group of about ten families, since 1994. They produce a newsletter and organize activities such as cooking, computer explorations, and games at area sports centers or playgrounds. Kugai-san believes that interest in home-based education is growing, but that parents are deterred by psychological dependence on school identity and teacher grades, as well as a lack of confidence in their own power. To instill that confidence, Okuchi-san of Tokyo Shure tirelessly crisscrosses Japan speaking to parents. Tokyo Shure's **Home Shure** network now connects over one

hundred families nationwide through a newsletter, computer chat rooms, optional course packages, and other resources.

Meanwhile, Kimiyo Matsuura in Osaka prefecture, herself a Clonlara enrollee, struggles uphill to gather local families together as homeschoolers because most still see themselves as "school refusers," a shame considered best kept private. She points out that in Japan, few students can revel in their learning without schooling the way more and more U.S. students can. Family energy is still largely expended in protecting against embarrassment and searching for ways around the rules that will permit students access to a normal future.

Free Schools

Independent alternative schools, known as "free schools," are not recognized as schools by the government, and cannot offer a diploma. They differ from free spaces in that they offer a scheduled (although non-coercive) program to students who generally attend on a regular if not daily basis. Keiko Yamashita founded **Wakusei Gakko** ("Planet School") in 1989 after she returned from an inspiration-seeking tour of alternative schools in the U.S. She now has between 17 and 20 students, ages 6 to 18, and employs several veteran part-time staff. Parent-staff gatherings are frequent, and the monthly schedule is developed in sessions with students. Academic study is individualized. Group activities from pottery to cooking abound. The school emphasizes communion with nature, and its tiny Kyoto space adjoining Keiko-san's house is supplemented by a building in the farmland north of the city, which they visit up to twice a week. In addition, the school takes longer trips to hike in the mountains, fish, and swim in lakes and rivers.

As longtime Planet School parents, students, and staff develop shared educational ideals, they find it more challenging to integrate new school refusal families. First of all, such families may not be interested in questioning the system; more likely, they are just trying to cope with their immediate problems associated with derailment from the normal track. Moreover, within a tiny group operating in a cramped area, meeting the needs of both students accustomed to adventuresome, self-directed learning and those cautiously emerging from long seclusion creates inevitable strain. By contrast, at Tokyo Shure, thanks to its larger space and numbers, new members can more easily find their own niche yet still observe the courage of more experienced unschoolers. Within the past year, some longtime members have worked with staff to create **Shure Daigaku** (Shure University), an experiment in self-organized higher education that will bear close watching.

Human Harbor, founded by Kiyomi Kimura in the countryside of Shikoku in 1996, began, as the name suggests, as a healing refuge for school refusers. While still serving that function, it evolved into a free school as Kimura-san's devoted efforts to build strength and self-esteem in her students took hold. These continue to include "Human Walks" of five kilometers or more, and "Human Meditation" aimed at developing appreciation of the five senses. Responding to student needs voiced within weekly democratic meetings, Human Harbor also offers experiences like band and basketball that are normally hard to find outside of school. Human Harbor strives mightily to keep its students' doorways into conventional society open. They have a contract with Clonlara School whereby students who wish to can complete a program meeting Clonlara's requirements and receive its diploma. Kimura-san also supports, practically and emotionally, students who want to earn a Japanese high school diploma or take college entrance examinations (see Conclusion).

Government-approved Independent Alternative Schools

If a school succeeds in raising enough money and building a substantial enough facility, faculty, and student body, it may meet the Ministry of Education's standards for what it considers to be a "school." If it convinces the Ministry that it can offer a curriculum comparable to that provided within public schools, it may receive not only approval, but funds as well, even if its methods differ radically from those found within the system. The first independent school based squarely on freedom to win such approval is **Kinokuni Kodomo no Mura** (Kinokuni Children's Village), a boarding school founded by Shinichi Hori and his colleagues in 1992 in Wakayama prefecture. Hori-san was influenced by A.S. Neill's belief in non-coercion and the project-oriented philosophy of John Dewey. Both principles infuse the school: students and staff make rules in democratic meetings, while projects embrace music, construction, cooking, nature exploration, art, and much more. So-called "basic skills" are studied within the context of projects, and not as separate subjects. The government has recently extended its approval beyond the elementary and junior high schools to include the high school as a "special school for international affairs." Thus a Kinokuni diploma now entitles graduates to take college entrance examinations (Potter 1998).

Alternative After-school Programs

The term "juku" is usually translated as "cram school," since these after-school programs are typically designed to help students memorize the vast collection of facts and formulae needed to pass entrance examinations. However, some alternative educators have started programs harking back to an earlier era in Japan, when inwardly motivated young scholars would gather around a popular teacher in search of broad knowledge and wisdom. An example of such an educator is Katsusuke Hori, founder of **Holistic Juku**. Hori-san helps students study for exams, but in a relaxed atmosphere that allows for informal discussions of world events and social issues. Hori-san also tutors and encourages students who wish to enter college without first being graduated from high school (see Conclusion).

Within the System

Despite centralized control of the public system, individual educators who believe deeply in learning through joy, freedom, and meaningful activity sometimes create pockets of originality. Giichiro Yamanouchi, for example, as principal of an elementary school in the mountains of Niigata prefecture, engaged children in visionary projects serving and involving the entire village, from planting a forest to raising carp. Ikue Tezuka (1995) beautifully recounts the story of his school in a recently translated book, and Yamanouchi (2000) himself has just published an article in the journal *Encounter* describing his "holistic practices."

Conclusion

For those who attend free schools, or no school, but who seek a high school diploma or college entrance, the way is narrow but not totally barred. One must *apply* for admission to high school in Japan. Although the required junior high school diploma has become increasingly easy to get even with minimal attendance, it is still nearly impossible to enter a normal high school without adequate junior high grades. There are, however, a small number of night high schools, as well as special "credit schools" where students can sign up for individual courses they need to complete missing credits towards a high school diploma. One can enter these on the basis of a test and interview without relying on a junior high transcript, although getting into the popular ones can be competitive.

It is also possible, high school diploma or no, to take a battery of tests, the *daiken,* covering nine subjects. After passing these (a project one can spread over a few years), one may take the entrance examinations of individual colleges. Passing *daiken* does not grant high school graduate status; nor does it guarantee college admission (there is no GED or community college system in Japan). Free schools often tutor and otherwise assist students pursuing these options. Keiko-san of Planet School feels that her students can handle this kind of challenge better because they have a supportive community, know themselves and what they want, and know that tests are not the measure of one's worth as a human being.

PHOTO BY NAT NEEDLE

Following a 1997 summer gathering of homeschooling families in Tottori prefecture: (left to right) Mihoko Wakabayashi, Asa Wakabayashi Needle, Inori , Kokoro, Taeko, Hikarn, Genki, and Kazuhiro Kojima.

Considering all the hardships I've mentioned, one might be tempted to think that learning alternatives in Japan are "behind" those in the U.S., as I did when I came to live in Japan in 1996. Over the past few years, however, I have come to appreciate the profound well of inner and outer resources that Japanese alternative educators, parents, and students have to draw upon simply by virtue of growing up in this culture. Far from imitating American models, these folks are putting their own stamp on this worldwide movement.

First, the average Japanese person, consciously or unconsciously, seems to possess the kind of affinity for nature that we in the U.S. might associate with Native American traditions. Even small children growing up in big cities display knowledge of flowers, vegetables, insects, trees, and so on that outstrips that of many American adults. This is an enviable starting point for all kinds of learning activity that adults and children can enjoy easily together.

Second, Japanese people tend to share an understanding of the need to work together, and to endure patiently the process of making decisions in a group. Holding such values in common lessens the time and effort needed to make a transition from the authoritarian regimen of school to a democratic consensus process.

Third, there is a wealth of traditional activities that nearly everyone seems familiar and comfortable with, be it making miso soup, fishing, folding origami, catching bugs, setting off fireworks, or singing a thousand songs everybody seems to know. It's as if any gathering of Japanese people outside of school comes equipped with an entire curriculum, which is of course nothing less than culture itself.

Therefore, I conclude that there's quite a bit we could be learning from our Japanese friends. The International

Democratic Education Conference (IDEC), hosted by Tokyo Shure in July 2000, is one opportunity to get acquainted with the Japanese alternative education scene. I hope it will lead to further interest. For fifteen years, Kazu Kojima has been taking groups of Japanese people to the U.S. to gather ideas from alternative schools and communities as part of his **Traveling School** (Tabi no Gakko). Lately, I've been thinking it's time to return the compliment.

Sources

This is merely a sampling, not a directory. My pleasure in mentioning at least a typical handful of the sparkling and adorable men and women propelling this movement is matched by my regret at leaving so many others unsung. I don't mean to anoint some people as dominant or worthy of more notice than others. Information for this article was absorbed: gradually, as a result of my conversations with students, staff, and parents; and, in one gulp, from responses to questionnaires I distributed at the 7th annual Japan-wide gathering of alternative program staff organized by Kazu in September 1999. Above all, I relied upon my wife, Mihoko Wakabayashi. While a college student, Mihoko began volunteering on behalf of school refusers, then went on to become a staff member at Tokyo Shure. Until recently, she managed the Clonlara School Japan Office out of our Kyoto home. She answered my questions about the Japanese school system, translated information from a variety of newsletters, and recalled her own many conversations with her compatriots. I alone take full responsibility for any errors that may mislead or offend.

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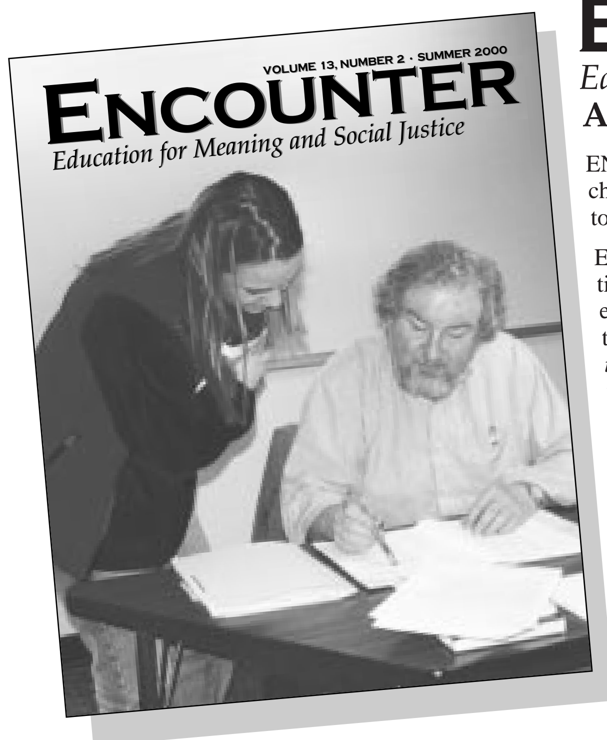

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“Am I Really Qualified to Teach My Own Children?” Some Thoughts on This Common and Provocative Question[1]

BY RICHARD J. PRYSTOWSKY

“There are many kinds of seeds in us, both good and bad. Some were planted during our lifetime, and some were transmitted by our parents, our ancestors, and our society.… Every time we practice mindful living, we plant healthy seeds and strengthen the healthy seeds already in us. Healthy seeds function similarly to antibodies.… If we plant wholesome, healing, refreshing seeds, they will take care of the negative seeds, even without our asking them. To succeed, we need to cultivate a good reserve of refreshing seeds.”

Thich Nhat Hanh,
Peace Is Every Step

“The kids are all learning, all the time. Life is their greatest teacher. The B.A.s and M.A.s and Ph.D.s on the staff are minor actors.”

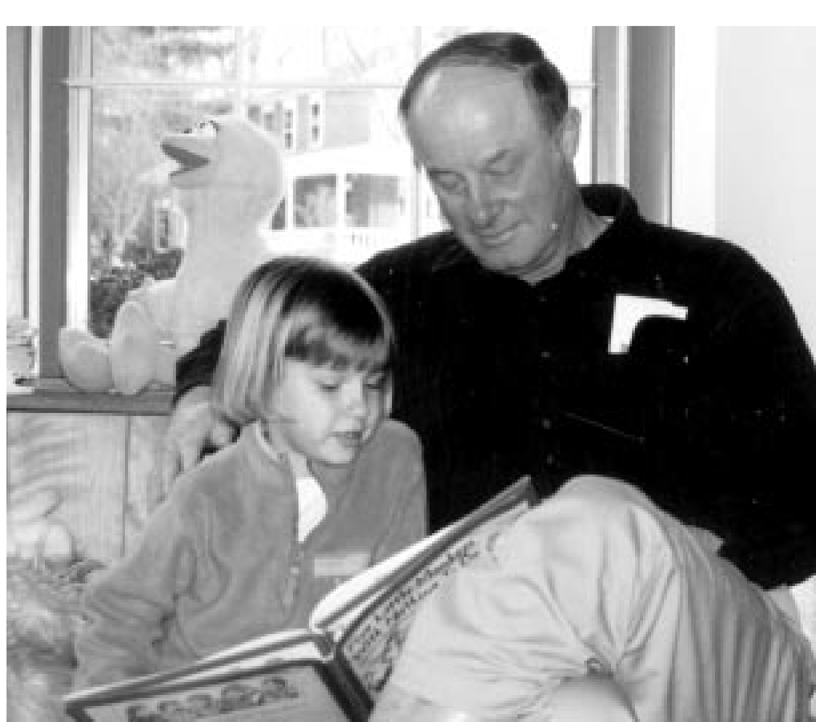
Daniel Greenberg,
Free At Last

Richard J. Prystowsky, the editor of Paths of Learning, is also a homeschooling father and a Professor of English and Humanities and the Chair of the Department of English at Irvine Valley College.

Would that homeschooling parents had a dollar for each time that they asked themselves or have been asked by others why they think they are qualified to teach their own. The question is certainly an intriguing one, and, for many homeschooling parents, a pressing one. In this essay, I would like to address some of the “psychological” and “spiritual” concerns raised by this question, couching this discussion within the context of some crucial links between parent-child teaching and holistic family living. I will be leaving aside concerns such as one’s knowledge of the subject matter, one’s ability to find important data, and so on; clearly, such concerns are important, but they are beyond the purview of the present paper.

My intention here is to help parents—especially those new to and those thinking about homeschooling—who are struggling with the questions of whether or not they really are both capable of teaching and qualified to teach their own and whether or not they are (or would be) acting responsibly by homeschooling their children. To this end, I offer a discussion of the following personal traits, which, in my nearly twenty years of college teaching, I have come to see as being essential for anyone to possess who desires to be a good teacher, that person’s profound knowledge of her subject matter or in-depth training in teaching notwithstanding. (Note: One’s being “certified” to teach is not synonymous with one’s being “qualified” to teach.) My greatest mentors possessed these traits, although, to the best of my knowledge, none had taken a single course in educational theory or methods. If you yourself have or are striving to have all of these traits (the following list is not meant to be exhaustive), then you are probably fit to teach your own. On the other hand, if you lack *and* have no interest in attaining them, then perhaps you ought not teach either your own or anyone else’s children.

1. The willingness to engage in child-led/student-led learning. Like many homeschooling parents, I’ve discovered that *meaningful* learning can occur only if the learner *actively* wants to learn, gives her consent to learn from a particular teacher (unless she wants to be self-taught), and initiates the learning process. In other words, although a teacher might certainly inspire a student to want to learn, ultimately the desire to learn comes from within the learner. Moreover, as the output of mass public education demonstrates, one can even do great harm to a learner by trying to make her learn against her will.[2]



PHOHTO BY BOB DEAN

Unless you are willing to let your child lead the way—fully or partly—to her own learning, you might find yourself engaged in a home version of the worst sort of organized schooling, in which teachers force-feed students information that the latter understandably resist learning. In my college classes, I try to help students see that, although I can try to provide an atmosphere in which they can take some intellectual risks, I cannot learn for them. Only they can learn for themselves.

Before moving on, I should add that, both in the classroom and at home, I have found that some of my best teaching moments occur when, learning along with my students or children, I discover meaning and uncover knowledge *in the process of teaching*. Additionally, I feel that one of my goals as a teacher/parent is to help guide my students/children so that they can teach themselves. Secure self-directed learners know when they don't know something, and they know enough to ask for help when they need or want it. In this regard, my eleven-year-old son, for example, acts no differently from my self-directed college students. When he was five, for instance, he virtually taught himself to write. When he needed help, he asked for it; when he didn't need help, he simply wrote, sometimes laboriously, sometimes not—as is the case with most (if not all) *professional* writers. As Daniel Greenberg and John Taylor Gatto (among others) have suggested, to teach successfully, one must have or cultivate the ability first to recognize a learner's desire to learn something and then to seize the opportunity to help him learn what he wants or needs to learn.[3] Thus, if I don't know how to assist my students or children when they ask me for help, I feel that I am duty-bound as their teacher to try to help them discover how they can receive good assistance elsewhere.

2. Real, genuine humility and compassion. I often try to teach my students that they will have achieved much in the way of good critical thinking if they come to realize about themselves what all great thinkers come to realize about *themselves*: to wit, that they have learned enough to know how little they really know. Concerning the present topic, we can say with certainty that someone who lacks genuine humility cannot be satisfactorily compassionate towards others, because she doesn't yet have the inner strength and security to be satisfactorily compassionate towards herself. Such a person, then, is not likely to be a very good teacher—a fact to which anyone can attest who has endured even a day in the classroom of a teacher who lacked compassion for others. In any event, a truly humble, compassionate teacher is often wise enough to lead her students to discover for themselves what they need to know and secure enough to validate those of their insights that are authentic, meaningful, and moral in the highest sense of the word—even if (and perhaps especially if) these insights are quite different from her own. Such a teacher gives her students a precious gift when she shows them that she is strong enough to be humble and honest concerning what she knows and doesn't know.

Since most of my students have suffered humiliation during their schooling and other training in "socialization," they often have trouble distinguishing humility from self-loathing; in the worst cases, they act in the manner of seriously wounded animals—defensive, protective, and, in the main, wary of showing themselves vulnerable in any way to anyone. Neither I nor anyone else can teach such persons why they should be or how they can be humble; only they can teach themselves these lessons. However, I can and do try to help a number of my students discover their own paths to humility and compassion by helping them see how they themselves might begin healing those damaged parts of their inner selves that they now guard at all costs, those parts of their inner being, if you will, the damage to which the best "alternative" teaching efforts might have helped to prevent.

3. The inner security to teach others freely. Although I don't consider myself a very secure person, I do feel very strongly that, when my students become humble enough and courageous enough to begin drawing out from within themselves their own deepest truths, they also become their own best teachers and thus no longer need me as their principal guide in this endeavor. To extrapolate, I would suggest that, whenever we teach, we should always try to do so freely, so that we can remain lovingly detached from our students' learning obligations, which are always personal. All teachers need to keep in mind that there is a world of difference between our *wanting* to help persons learn for *their* own sake and our *needing* to teach them for *our* own sake (of course, these two conditions need not be mutually exclusive). If the latter is the case, we might be either projecting onto those who

learn from us our own insecurities or making them the vehicles by means of which we carry out our own political or social agendas. Using our students/children to fill the narcissistic voids and heal the narcissistic wounds in our own lives could eventually prove quite harmful to both them and us.[4]

One final matter here: I have found that neither my own children nor my college students need me to tell them what is best for them or what they should know; in fact, they often resent (and rightfully so) my occasional, unintended attempts to own their responsibility to make meaningful choices in and for their own lives, especially when I am interfering with their choices to learn or not learn. Often, both my children and a number of my students seem to sense that such moves on my part might represent controlling, codependent behavior, and they healthily resist these moves. They want to make their own decisions and be responsible for their own mistakes. For my part, I need to recognize when I am hindering learners from reaching rather than helping them to reach their own educational goals. I, too, need to own and learn from my mistakes.

4. The willingness to learn, often from those whom we teach. If there is anything that is obvious in great teachers, it is their willingness to learn, often from their own students. Simply put, one cannot be a good teacher if one has lost the desire to learn, and any teacher unwilling to learn from his students is a teacher whose best days are past. If you have no desire to learn or no willingness to learn along with those whom you teach, or if you don't feel that those who study with you can teach you anything of real value, then you probably ought not be teaching *anyone*.

5. Patience. In the quick-fix, fast-food, narcotizing culture in which we live, patience is a rare commodity. But it is an essential ingredient to good teaching. Since each child learns in her own way and at her own pace, we need to be patient enough to see how our children engage in their own ever-developing and sometimes changing learning processes so that we can help them be active, confident learners. We need to give ourselves permission to allow them to learn differently from the ways in which we learn and from the ways in which other children (including *our* other children) seem to be learning. We need to accept as a perfectly normal state of affairs, for example, the fact that one of our children might want to read at age four but that another might not want to read even at age eleven or twelve. Indeed, not uncommonly, our anxiety concerning what our students/children are or are not learning has to do with us, and not with them. Since we know that they are not learning most things in the world, and yet since we also know that they are always learning all of the time, we might want to ask ourselves why we sometimes feel uneasy about their learning patterns and paths. Ultimately, such an inquiry might help us to discover that what we imagine to be our students' or children's shortcomings often reflect instead our own unresolved, problematic, internal struggles.

In any event, we need to be patient with our children and ourselves as we all struggle to live individually and mutually meaningful lives. Oh, the possible differences in all of our lives had most of our own teachers understood this need for patience in *themselves*!

* * *

When you teach your children at home, you are doing far more than "homeschooling" them.[5] Exercising maximum control over your family's right to do what is in its own best moral interests, you are swimming against a tide of enormously destructive and powerful mediocrity and mainstreaming in your attempts to help your children live meaningful lives as whole, independent beings. You are trying to keep your children from suffering the fate of many of our nation's schooled children, who have been conditioned to be actively uninterested in and sometimes openly hostile to meaningful, shared, participatory communal living, and who, as passive, obedient learners, have little interest in themselves, in the meaning and value of their existence, or in the value of their communities. I have seen many such learners in my college classes. Often lacking good social skills, good study habits, a healthy dose of adult responsibility, and, most conspicuously, the self-motivation and self-reliance recognizable in a confident learner, they are frequently uninterested in and even hostile to learning, especially to learning new or controversial material, even if such material can help them live more meaningful and compassionate lives. More significantly, many of the students in this group who are trying to recondition themselves into becoming active, mature learners have trouble trusting themselves; not a few often seem to believe that their professors, and not they themselves, possess the answers to *their* most important questions.

If I have noticed any common denominator among those of my students who seem disinterested in their own pursuits, in their own learning agendas, sometimes even in their own and others' lives, it is that these kinds of students seem distanced from themselves. This state of being is common among persons who have been conditioned to be passive and whose psyches need to protect them from their being too emotionally harmed. For such students, "know thyself" is as foreign a concept as is the idea that they are responsible for their own learning, for their own *lives*. Self-knowledge and self-respect seem almost anathema to them, cruel reminiscences and temptations of vaguely desirable, ideal personal states of being that, to them, in their present existential dilemma, seem utterly unattainable.

For the record, I don't mean to imply that homeschooling is the right choice for everyone, nor do I think that everyone who homeschools ought necessarily to be doing so. Rather, by presenting and elaborating on what I consider important qualities that every good teacher ought to possess, I am trying to help parents decide whether or not this educational option is right for their own families. I would say, simply, that parents who wish to isolate their families from the world at large, or those who wish to force-feed their children at home rather than having others force-feed them at school, need not apply. I would also say that parents who envision a larger holistic setting for their families, perhaps one involving an intentional community, might find homeschooling a limiting or otherwise unworkable option, unless such a community were comprised (also) of homeschooling families. Nevertheless, I would hope that such parents would find for their children teachers who possess the personal qualities that I've outlined in this essay. I would ask us all to think about how little we learned from and perhaps how much we hated learning from persons who, despite their immense knowledge of the subject matter, didn't possess these qualities. Conversely, I would ask us to consider how much we learned or enjoyed learning from teachers who did possess them, even if such teachers weren't "experts" in their fields. In short, no teaching and learning environment, including homeschooling and alternative educational environments, is *ipso facto* nurturing and positive. Humble, patient, caring, nurturing, compassionate, learner-centered teachers are a *sine qua non* of any meaningful, healthy learning environment. Without the opportunity to work with such teachers, students are harmed.

Additionally, I do not mean to imply that parents who decide to homeschool their children necessarily will insure

that their children will be self-reliant, mature adults who have an unrelenting zest for learning. And I especially don't mean to imply that such parents ought to be homeschooling their children *now* primarily to help insure their children's "success" in the *future*. Rather—and here I want to address prospective homeschooling parents directly—I simply want to clarify what I see as being centrally at stake here: you have both the right and the obligation to advocate for your child's needs, to do what's best for your child, even though the culture at large often makes it difficult for you to do so, and even though you might occasionally have doubts or questions about your educational theories and practices or about your aptitude as a teacher (all good-faith teachers have such doubts or questions). Remember that, for the most part, mass-organized schooling (public or private) sets up learning situations that are convenient not only for textbook publishers, teachers, administrators, and members of school boards, but also for parents unluckily caught in the anti-family, anti-child trap that our culture has laid for us all. On the other hand, holistic family living demands that the parent-teacher (a vibrant and ancient PTA) respond to the learning needs of her or his child by setting up learning situations that meet those needs.

As you wrestle with the central questions at stake here, keep in mind that few persons (if anyone) outside of your family will care as much as you care about meeting your child's needs. Put differently, you know the difference between being with your child and leaving your child with even a warm, loving, devoted caretaker. And you know that your *child* knows the difference, too. With this understanding in mind, think of those children who—as perhaps you once did—at the end of the school year or school cycle, feel utterly relieved finally to have the time to do the things that they find meaningful in their lives, and who can now spend more than a few fleeting moments with the persons who matter most to them. How distressing that we have placed the vast majority of our nation's children in this bind. But how promising that, as caring, nurturing homeschooling parents, you can avoid being a party to such madness.

Notes

1. Often, homeschoolers encounter two questions more than they encounter any others: "What about socialization?" and "Am I *really* qualified to teach my own children?" The first question tends to be posed by persons outside of homeschooling; it is best answered, I think, in Chapter 3 of David Guterson's *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992). Several years ago, I wrote the present essay because I couldn't find a good answer to the second question, which tends to be posed by persons within homeschooling. This essay is a slightly revised version of the original article, which appeared in *SKOLE: The Journal of Alternative Education*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 47-57.

2. For some excellent discussions of this issue, see Daniel Greenberg's *Free At Last: The Sudbury Valley School* (Framingham, MA: Sudbury Valley School Press, 1987), pp. 15-18 and *passim*, and Herbert Kohl's *I Won't Learn from You! The Role of Assent in Learning* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1991).

3. In a November 1967 *Redbook* article entitled "How Teachers Make Children Hate Reading," John Holt—still a public school educator at the time—analyzes the differences between what I'm calling child-led learning and what I'm calling force-fed learning. His article is reprinted in *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose*, ed. by Arthur M. Eastman, et al. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), pp. 224-232.

4. For a detailed discussion concerning these kinds of matters, see Alice Miller's *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*, trans. by Ruth Ward (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

5. For a trenchant critique of the word "homeschooling," see David Guterson's *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense, op. cit.*, p. 5ff. Despite its occasional flaws, Guterson's book—one of the most engaging books ever written on homeschooling—provides consistently provocative, insightful discussions of centrally important issues and controversies having to do with homeschooling. I highly recommend this book to prospective homeschooling families, as well as to anyone else who is seriously committed to learning more about homeschooling.

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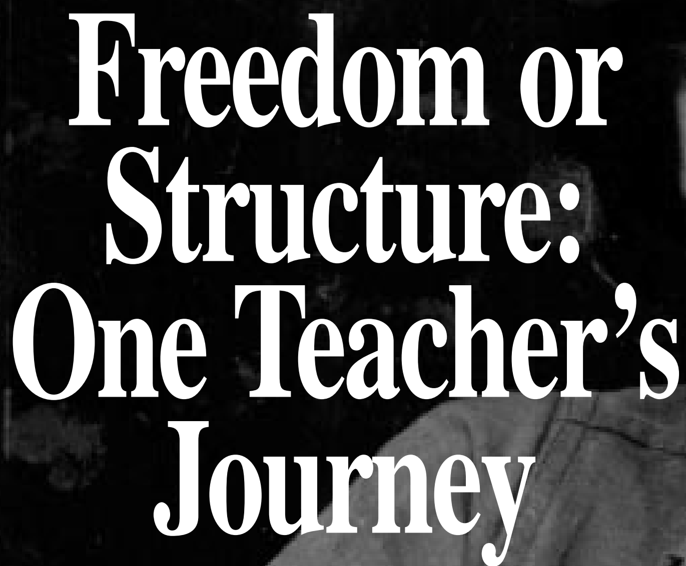

Freedom or Structure: One Teacher's Journey

by David Stern

For ten years now as a teacher and a parent I have embraced and explored the idea expressed above, and many other related writings and thoughts. My reflections on the ideas of John Holt, A.S. Neill, The Sudbury Valley School, Alfie Kohn and others have affected my actions profoundly for the last decade, and I owe them a great debt of thanks. Not surprisingly, in every situation within which I have taught, this guiding philosophy was not embraced, and I attributed a myriad of student difficulties to this fact. When children struggled, most likely they were unheard or disenfranchised, lacking ownership over their own education. When students apparently thrived, I wondered if the reason for their success was that their desire to please others was strong enough to overwhelm personal aspirations. Were they happy simply because they had done what teachers and parents wanted, or had they, in fact, pleased themselves? Believing the former to at least a fair degree, I wrote articles in support of educational freedom, and strongly pressured school administration and faculty to consider the possible effects of coercive education. As I watched my interactions with classes and students I *knew* there was something in Holt's thesis that clearly helped my teaching, and I wanted to share it with other educators and integrate it into my family's life.

There was also, however, always data that generated nagging doubts within me regarding the completeness of Holt's ideology. I continued to see "coercive" teachers hold incredibly successful classes within which students not only grappled with a great deal of material, but also obviously increased their passion for learning. Many students would tell me that being forced to explore material had helped them find pieces of their life they very much enjoyed. If fear was the inescapable by-product of coercion, why was the picture I perceived so mixed?

In response to these doubts I have also spent the last ten years exploring what *other* forces might be at work inside children as they grow, and how adults can best support their children's lifelong development. At different times in this search I have taught in both "traditional" and "alternative" settings, experimented with curriculum and pedagogical style, and communicated as deeply as I could with my students and their families. Simultaneously, I have struggled to understand and support my own two children both as formal academic learners and as human beings trying to make sense of the world.

Editorial Introduction: In our next issue of *Paths,* we will be profiling The Meeting School. In the meantime, readers seeking more information about this school may contact Jacqueline Stillwell, Head of School, c/o The Meeting School, Rindge, New Hampshire 03461.

> "There is one more reason, and the most important one, why we must reject the idea of school and classroom as places where, most of the time, children are doing what some adult tells them to do. The reason is that there is no way to coerce children without making them afraid, or more afraid.... Fear is the inseparable companion of coercion, and its inescapable consequence."
>
> —John Holt,
>
> Summary from *How Children Fail*

Finally, after ten years of soul searching, experimenting and careful observation, I have begun to resolve the debate within my head and the "answers" I am finding have proven to be quite a surprise. What I have come to believe, simply stated, is that any rigid philosophical platform—either for freedom in learning or for a structured, externally generated program—is misguided. Children, as it is frequently said though little heeded, are unique, with each needing a different blend of "being held" and "being freed" at a given time. The challenge to parents and teachers is in determining what is needed when. Thankfully, I now find myself employed at a school that has offered some insight into how to make this difficult judgment.

Working at The Meeting School—an alternative Quaker boarding farm school in southern New Hampshire—I have come to believe that the central issue of parenting and education is not whether students, faculty, or parents determine learning direction, pedagogical style, or lifestyle choices. It is quite clear to me now that these responsibilities are, and should be, shared, with the burden shifting over time. What we must do is develop rich, open communications with our children, and attend to these dialogues with far greater care and respect than the current culture suggests. This is not some glib statement suggesting we all need to "talk to our kids" or find "quality time." What I am advocating is that we—in our educational systems and the larger culture—reevaluate the relationship, structures, and communications between adults and children. The first step in this process is to put in place *concrete mechanisms* with which parents, teachers, and children can learn to hear and understand each other again. At this tiny Quaker school I have learned the importance of—and some tools for—listening at a deeper level, but first I had to let go of a few preconceptions.

My past experiences at traditional schools had left me still convinced that in a more "Holtian" school culture, freedom in learning would work its magic. The Meeting School, where I now work, does not grade, and offers students a good deal of curricular flexibility. Additionally, the school asks its students to do predominantly authentic work, maintaining their own lives through cooking, food raising and house cleaning. Also authentic, and at least as important, students participate in the governance of the school on virtually all issues—from schedule and curricular planning to smoking and drug policies. As a result, students seem to feel real ownership over their "education"—or lives. There is a strong focus on community development, with students truly valued as participants in the discernment of how we live and learn together.

Moving to The Meeting School gave me the educational exploration opportunity for which I had been searching. Nearly all my fellow teachers were aware of free schools, alternative assessment methods and integrated curriculum approaches. Faculty talked frequently about the writings of John Holt, Alfie Kohn, Parker Palmer and others. We have long class blocks, no grading, and extreme curricular flexibility, and we achieve all this in a farm and forest setting. I seized the opportunity to set my students free, allowing them to choose their educational direction in my class within extremely wide parameters. Many students did extremely well under this model, healing wounds from prior experiences, and moving forward in content exploration with greater confidence and strength. But some students floundered. They seized the freedoms offered with great eagerness, and used them to hide from their own fears. They would, for example, ask for the freedom to study in their room, and if they returned at all, they had often not done what they themselves had set as their goals. These children were afraid of the challenges before them, and given the opportunity, chose to run from rather than engage their struggles in order to move forward.

I was intimately familiar with these divergent responses to the same educational program, as I had recently watched my own two children experience unschooling, and become part of a strong unschooling homeschooling network. Both children explored what they wanted roughly when they wanted, but with very different results. My son Josh, a very sensitive child who at that time had difficulty with emotional interactions, read almost constantly, staying in the house, and almost never pushing himself to examine a new activity. Without much knowledge of the experience being passed up, he declared that new endeavors were uninteresting. I believe he was afraid of how he might be perceived, and the longer he remained apart from his peers, the harder a re-engagement became. He has, in fact, shared the depth of his fears in this regard with me now, two year later. While he was isolating himself, however, he was not strong enough to reveal his emotions. He declared instead that "nobody was really nice," and that he'd "much rather read." My daughter, on the other hand, unfettered by strong fears, explored with enthusiasm nearly every activity that came her way.

David Stern is a 38-year year-old parent, teacher and artist currently living at The Meeting School in Rindge, New Hampshire, where he also serves as Assistant Head of School. David joined TMS after teaching for eight years at The Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts, where he was Chair of the Theatre Department. David, his wife Vanessa, and their two children, Josh and Rachel, now live on the Meeting School campus in a farmhouse with nine students.

One day, in an effort to support Josh in developing friendships in a homeschooled context, I invited—with Josh's support—a child and his father to come over and join us in an activity. Josh was quite excited about the event until the day arrived when it was to occur. That day, he began to brood. When this boy arrived with his father, Josh refused to come downstairs. Embarrassed, I went up to cajole him to join us. When he refused, I pressured him, discussing his fears quite directly. Finally, I literally dragged him down the stairs until, fearful of being completely humiliated, he stood up and tried to pretend that everything was okay. The first five minutes were hell. By the end of a half-hour, however, the boys were laughing and talking together, and are now best friends.

Josh needed to be pushed to undertake emotional risk in order to thrive and grow at this juncture in his life. Many educational and personal situations similarly require prodding, structural support, or an outright mandate to facilitate growth. After ten years of watching, working with, and parenting children, I have come to believe that people do not always heal in an environment of free choice. Some of them retreat, and their lack of addressing fears causes them to grow ever more afraid. The truth of this is obvious when we examine our own lives. What heals the fear of reading? Reading does. Similarly, swimming heals the fear of water, and reaching out heals the fear of disconnection. Leaving children to flounder without structural supports is as wrongheaded as forcing them to follow a program that does not mesh with their personal goals or desires. People must take challenges at a pace that is safe, but not necessarily comfortable, and discomfort is often avoided. Growth, simply put, requires risk, and not all people can—or will—choose what seems the harder road in the moment without support. Sometimes, I now believe, it is the role of teachers and parents to push children to a place they might otherwise avoid.

So how have I reconciled this position with what I still believe are truths espoused by Holt and others? Truths stating that unafraid students (if they exist) can work freely and joyously; that dictated curriculum and methodology can damage intrinsic motivation; and that systems wherein adults are empowered to control children's learning all too frequently get "out of control" as adults fail to listen. My lack of clarity in the past regarding how to bridge the two perceived platforms of education hindered my teaching. I believed that either Holt was right or he was wrong, and, perhaps like Holt himself, I could not reconcile his thoughts with any "coercive" teaching or parenting. The Meeting School has helped me see an answer to this paradox, and, as usual with things of great beauty, the solution is rather simple in some respects.

What we must do is listen deeply to our children and students to determine what type of support they needand when—listening not just to what they say with their words, but for the messages that underlie their words and actions. Sometimes these messages seem loud and clear. We may find a child staying in his room all day, retreating into sleep, reading, or drug addiction. Perhaps we can perceive, when he interacts with peers,a tension underlying these encounters. Occasionally a child will tell us directly of his loneliness, self-doubt, or other specific challenge.

Academic fears can be equally palpable. I had one student sit at my kitchen table staring at a piece of paper for over an hour unable to begin writing. Finally, I gently approached her, suggesting that she need not worry what came out, but just let her words pour onto the page. Instead of words, it was tears that began to flow. But this girl did not want to avoid writing or me. (So I believe!) She was simply afraid—as she now can tell me—that what would come out if she began to write would be "unworthy," and she would be judged on its quality. I was able to hear from her the need for me to respond with tenderness and patience while supporting her with my expectation that she move forward with her text. The requirement was not a problem, but a structure facilitating her growth.

On the other hand, we may find a child eagerly and independently seeking out experiences. I know one unschooled ten year old who loves advanced mathematics, dances, plays violin, reads avidly, and runs a number of Dungeons and Dragons campaigns on his own initiative. At this juncture he works extremely well under his own steam, and might have difficulty with a great deal of external control. The vast majority of children lie—or bounce—between these "retreating" and "engaging" extremes, and can be, in their movement and subtleties, more difficult to comprehend in a given moment.

This is where The Meeting School has been the greatest help to me, for they have modeled ways in which I might strengthen my communications with those around me. First and foremost, the school, as an outcropping of its Quaker roots, holds the belief that there is "that of God in everyone." This means that each of us—young and old—has equal access to "truth," seeing a question or issue from a unique vantage point. As a result, TMS has an incredibly deep commitment to creating the space to listen to and hear one another in the search for these truths. There is a silent worship to begin every day, and an hour of worship once a week. In these settings, people speak when they feel called to do so. It has been amazing to me how all involved come to understand the responsibilities inherent in the freedom to speak, and the need to speak when called to do so.

There is also a remarkable amount of what we call "meetings for business." There are student meetings every week, five hours of faculty meetings per week, and two hours of community meetings in which the whole school gathers to work through issues. Such a large amount of meetings might seem wasteful—or simply painful—to many faculty I have known, but we find them extremely helpful, and frequently too brief. This certainly does not mean that they are always easy or enjoyable, but rather that we all understand the need to struggle together toward understanding. Within these meetings we examine school issues and problems, but we also address personal conflicts and fears, share moments of our lives, and discipline ourselves to listen for the different truths each of us has to offer. In short, we develop community and enhance our understandings of one another.

Perhaps, however, I can best illustrate the fact that there are concrete methods to listening and hearing by describing the Meeting School's version of "clearness meetings." The purpose of these meetings, as the name implies, is to help people "get clear" with one another or reach a deeper understanding of themselves. These meetings represent in some ways an absolute commitment to communication. No community member may refuse a call to clearness, as community membership requires the struggle for understanding between individuals. The Meeting School's commitment to working through conflict on all levels is among the greatest strengths of the institution. Any extended communicational difficulty warrants a clearness meeting, even within the academic arena.

Clearness meetings are mediated, and each party is entitled to a support person. One central reason for this format is to equalize power differentials, such as those that exist between faculty and students. (When they feel safe, you'd be amazed what children will say, and how much depth of thought is revealed.) The clearness meeting begins with short silent meditation to help all parties focus and become emotionally centered. Then the person who requested the meeting speaks his/her concerns without interruption. The other party in the conflict then repeats what he/she has heard. The roles are then reversed, and the process is repeated. The clearness then moves into mediated dialogue, followed by the creation of expectations and plans for future behavior.

Clearness meetings take time, and cannot be utilized with great frequency. When the need arises, however, this is a tool that helps participants communicate despite fear, reach deep understanding, and generate moral meaning. Most important, real communication frequently removes a large portion of the fear at work in a given relationship. It is only by taking this kind of time—carving the space to truly hear what is happening around us—that we can more fully understand, and better support, our children. Clearness meetings and this general culture of respectful listening have shown me what I have been missing in my communications for so long, and at what cost. Students now, more often than not, lead me in my work as a teacher, and I can support them better than ever before.

Kids are different. They need different things at different times, and must be handled as individuals. Our job is not to find the perfect, all encompassing educational or pedagogical philosophy, but to understand each unique child as fully as possible. Unlike Holt, I believe that children are not always able to know—or explain—what they need when they need it. They require guidance in exploring both the world and themselves. Children are never to be ignored or disrespected, but we must not abdicate our role as leaders or, in the Quaker tradition, elders. Teachers and parents must, in fact, "hear children into speech" as thoughtfully as possible to gain an understanding of the manner in which children experience the world. We must then discern with equal care what we think their assertions mean, and what we feel might be helpful in supporting them. These acts of translation and adult intervention are not disrespectful, though they can be done disrespectfully. They are, in fact, deeply loving actions.

We all know that, for a variety of reasons, a child may say he doesn't want to go out to play for a variety of reasons. Perhaps she doesn't like the game. Perhaps he is feeling tired or sick. Or perhaps she had a fight with someone who is playing. Some of this can be ascertained by listening—both to the words and to the silences. Still more understanding can be gained by asking questions and listening once again with equal care. Clearly, the different situations warrant different responses, and our habits of inquiry are extremely important if we are to comprehend and support our children in these and other circumstances.

So when a student wants to explore a subject area in lieu of a requirement or work independently off campus for a term, our job as educators is not to consult our rules and regulations, but to listen to the forces driving the student. If he or she is afraid of a struggle or of pursuing freedoms to avoid personal accountability, we must dialogue about our concerns in these regards. If we are not "clear" following dialogue, we must probe more deeply. Meeting School faculty would wish to prohibit a student from making a choice that appears harmful from the adult's perspective. This eldering stems from the desire to care for students, and is in keeping with non-coercive, thoughtful teaching. Parents do not give a toddler the freedom to walk on the road because such children are not prepared to take on this challenge. Protecting children from dangers does not end at age four—or fourteen—and takes on many different forms throughout the journey. Sadly, the discernment of a child's readiness for a given challenge becomes increasingly complex as children age, and the demands on adult decision-making skills become correspondingly more extreme. Meeting School faculty attempt to determine—in consultation with individual students and parents as appropriate—whether students are making a request that supports their health and learning, and if so, we try to honor their request. Mistakes are invariably made, but true listening raises our chances of understanding and helps our children see that we are sincere in our desire to help.

Learning is not divorced from living, and the above philosophical approach extends into all areas of life. If children are proceeding with a fair degree of safety and self-awareness on any activity, we can allow them freedom of motion. If they are at risk, we may need to restrict or (God forbid) control them. When teens ask to go to concerts, coed campouts, or similar activities, we ask two central questions. First, "What is this activity or situation my child will be encountering?" and second, "How is my child prepared for such an event?" These activities certainly hold many a "learning opportunity," but nearly all parents—unschooling or otherwise—impose some structures on their children in such scenarios.

Children are different indeed, and we need to listen with extreme care and patience to understand and accommodate these differences in all areas of life. We must act respectfully, but not abdicate our role in helping children safely explore themselves and the world. They rely upon us for structure and guidance more than they can admit, or perhaps comprehend. Sometimes our love of our children is revealed as we trust them, honoring their unique vision of themselves at different phases of their lives. At other times, however, our love is revealed as we refuse to allow our children to hurt themselves. Deep down, as we well know, children understand and need both of these actions. Together we must rebuild a culture wherein all of us help each other to listen—gaining an understanding of what response is needed when.

Krishnamurti, 1934 from 1000 Moons.

Krishnamurti was an enigma. He was a philosopher who wanted nothing to do with philosophy. He was a spiritual guru who refused to play that role. And he was a true world teacher—constantly traveling around the world, leading discussions, and giving talks. Yet the term World Teacher was the very first label for him that he repudiated back in 1929.

Of all his activities in the public arena, spanning almost eighty years, he was most proud of his work as an educator, a friend of children. And he was very pleased with the network of international schools that bear his name. Rarely, however, are these schools in Europe, India and America discussed in educational journals. Why? Because Krishnamurti's philosophy of education and school methodology are as much of an enigma as Krishnamurti the man. In this article, however, I shall identify a few general principles that characterize Krishnamurti's educational impulse.

I believe a brief history of Krishnaji (as he's affectionately called in India) might be in order, especially for readers unfamiliar with his name. He was born in South India in 1895. His father was a theosophist, a member of a worldwide organization dedicated to principles of religious unity and brotherhood of all peoples. One day the young Krishnamurti was playing on the beach a short distance from where the sluggish Adyar River empties into the Bay of Bengal. A theosophical researcher by the name of Charles Leadbeater observed the young Krishnamurti with his clairvoyant vision. He later reported that the boy's aura or energy field was larger and more luminous and sparkling than any aura he had ever seen. He decided this boy must be the expected World Teacher or Messiah for this age.

According to the theosophical world view the concept of the World Teacher is quite different than in Christianity, Islam or Judaism. It's a view expressed by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* when he says, "Oh, son of Bharata, whenever there is decline of righteousness and uprising of unrighteousness, then I project myself into creation. For the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the evil-doer, and for the proper establishment of the law of righteousness, I appear from age to age." (*Bhagavad Gita* chap. 4, verses 7-8). Thus the theosophists would say that the prophets of various world religions are the emissaries especially sent to earth by the spiritual hierarchy at critical times of world history to assist struggling humanity. Krishnamurti they believed to be such a one.

To make a long and extremely fascinating story short, the Theosophical Society adopted the boy, educated him in England, and built an international organization, the Order of the Star in the East, around the premise that Krishnamurti basically was the new Messiah. One event that might be significant to relate involves the early experiences Krishnamurti had with his "process." The "process," as he referred to it for the rest of his life, had to do with awakening states of inner consciousness, and seemed to be connected with certain sometimes painful sensations in his neck, spine and head. The beginning of "the process" occurred in 1922 in Ojai, California, where Krishnamurti was staying with his brother, Nitya. While meditating under the now famous pepper tree outside of his cottage, Krishnamurti relates:

> In front of me was my body and over the head I saw the Star bright and clear. Then I could feel the vibration of the Lord Buddha.... I was so happy, calm and at peace. I could still see my body and I was hovering and within myself was the calmness of the bottom of a deep unfathomable lake.... Nothing could ever be the same. I have drunk at the clear pure waters at the source of the fountain of life and my soul was appeased. Never more could I be thirsty, never more could I be in utter darkness. I have seen the Light.... The fountain of Truth has been revealed to me and the darkness has been disbursed. Love in all its glory has intoxicated my heart: my heart can never be closed. I have drunk at the fountain of joy and eternal Beauty. I am God-intoxicated! (Jayakar 1986, 48)

However, despite this and many further experiences of expanded consciousness, Krishnamurti grew increasingly disgusted with his label as being "the World Teacher" and in the incredible adoration (almost worship) that his followers had for him. Therefore, in 1929 the thirty-four-year-old Krishnamurti shocked

The Methodless Method: Krishnamurti Education

BY JAMES W. PETERSON

his followers by renouncing the theosophical claim of his divinity and dissolved the Order of the Star with the words, "The Truth is a Pathless Land ..." and no organization can hold it.

Over the course of the next fifty-five years, Krishnamurti lectured around the world on the theme that everyone must find Truth in one's own consciousness by breaking the hold of the conditioned mind. Many religious and esoteric systems share the notion that it is the stored residue of experiences on earth, stored in the brain and also in higher, unseen mental structures, which veils us from God or Truth consciousness. When one can remove these mental impressions—decondition the mind—all that will be left is the consciousness of unitary oneness with life. But, according to Krishnamurti's philosophy, no beliefs, no gurus, no system of consciousness expansion could help in this search for the "pathless land." These systems are simply another level of mental constructs.

When Krishnaji was in his eighties and living in the Ojai Valley in southern California, he once said that after lecturing for fifty years, he found that there was still not one single person living the life of which he spoke. He, therefore, liked to put his faith in children. If one could raise and educate children differently, perhaps they could be able to live life with that quality of consciousness Krishnamurti unceasingly discussed: this state of deconditioned, choiceless awareness of living completely in the Now—with no thoughts of the past or future.

But if grown-ups cannot fully understand or be transformed by his philosophy, how could one hope to raise and educate children who can? I am sure that is the question educators at Krishnamurti schools all across the world wrestle with every day. What is the method of teaching children that will help bring about this radical transformation of consciousness and help them decondition their minds?

The first principle one discovers about Krishnamurti's philosophy of educating children, however, is that there is no method, no system to follow in the educational process. Krishnamurti states in his *Letters to the Schools:*

> The awakening of intelligence is our concern in all these schools and the inevitable question that arises: how is this intelligence to be awakened? What is the system, what is the method, what is the practice? The realization that it is a wrong question is the beginning of the awakening of intelligence. (1981, 16)

He continues this line of thought in *Education and the Significance of Life:*

> Life cannot be made to conform to a system; it cannot be forced into a framework, however nobly conceived. When we train our children according to a system of thought or a particular discipline, we prevent them from growing into integrated men and women, and therefore they are incapable of thinking intelligently, which is to meet life as a whole. (1968, 24)

Krishnamurti has created a worldwide network of schools with no communicable method or system of education! That fact, in itself, is very intriguing.

Actually the "methodless system" is both a help and a hindrance to the teachers in Krishnamurti's schools. I have spoken with several of them in Asia and North America over the years, and they have all suggested that there are two sides to this fact that Krishnamurti has given them no system to follow; there are advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the teachers are creatively free to come up with their own methods and ideas, corresponding with age, needs and aptitudes of their students. Yet, on the other hand, they have little guidance and no set text or plan to fall back on, and because of this, teaching at a

James Peterson has been an elementary teacher for thirty-one years. He was graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, where he did his master's degree thesis on the subject of clairvoyant children. This thesis led to his 1987 book *The Secret Life of Kids,* which explores children's paranormal experiences. He has utilized aspects of Montessori and Waldorf educational approaches in his teaching and has published three articles on "Waldorf in the Public Schools." He currently teaches kindergarten and first grade in a small, rural public school in California.

PHOTOS BY ASIT CHANDMAL

Top photo: From Krishnamurti: A Biography.
Bottom photo: A child aproaches Krishnaji with a flower at the end of his last talk, which ends with silence.

Krishnamurti school can be demanding and quite stressful at times. In several of these schools I understand there is a frequent turnover of teachers. And yet the teachers at the schools seem very alive and excited about their work. They are enthusiastic about the curriculum they have devised for the children and eager to discuss what is going on in the classroom. The fact that so much responsibility for learning is placed on their own creativity is a very stimulating challenge for the teachers.

Even back in 1923 when Krishnamurti first wrote about education in a little book entitled *Education as Service,* he was not focussed on a definite curriculum or a specific educational method. The philosophy he offered then was that education came down to the attitude of the teacher and the attitude of the child, and how they both related to one another. In this volume he discussed qualities that a teacher should have, such as love, discrimination, ability to control anger, patience, etc. and knowledge of how the character of the teacher profoundly affects the children. Indeed at this early stage of his development, Krishnamurti felt that the characteristics of the teachers' personality modeled continuously in front of the children created the foundation of the educational process.

In these schools I have seen teachers borrow ideas and curriculum from public schools, from Waldorf schools, and from Montessori schools. The teachers are intelligent and knowledgeable, but they are not bound philosophically to any particular technique they may utilize in the classroom.

This idea about not being bound or conditioned to think one method is the answer to all educational issues is a reflection of Krishnamurti's general teachings, and another identifiable principle of his schools. Children are not only helped to be free from boundaries and constraints, but they are also encouraged to inwardly examine and observe the thinking mind and how it works. Krishnamurti states in his *Letters to the Schools,* for example:

> Memorizing, recording information, is considered learning. This brings about a mind that is limited and therefore heavily conditioned. The art of learning is to give the right place to information, to act skillfully according to what is learned, but at the same time not to be psychologically bound by the limitations of knowledge and the images or symbols that thought creates. (1981, 32)

The academic subjects are very thoroughly and skillfully taught by the teachers, but they always communicate that these things are not the foundational issues of life, and therefore not the foundational issues of the school.

This point is emphasized in the "Philosophy of the School" paper of the Oak Grove School in the Ojai Valley of California: "The intent of the Oak Grove School is for students to develop the skills necessary to function in the modern world, and at the same time to develop a foundation for inquiry into perennial questions of human life." A history teacher at the Oak Grove School, Patrick Foster, recently picked up this theme in the winter (1999-2000) newsletter of the Krishnamurti Foundation of America: "We also try to integrate Krishnamurti's insights into the curriculum—not as dogma but rather as a tool for exploring issues. So in World History, as we're studying the social matrix of militarism in history, we also explore the contribution of personal violence to that structure. And while we're at it, we will look at the economic structures and attitudes that create socially organized violence.

"I don't teach or preach any particular set of values at Oak Grove—in fact I try to explore the very phenomenon of value to see what's at the bottom of it. But I do help my students see how values figure into history. History is made following or ignoring some set of values—so it is important to see how values are manipulated to justify, excuse or even camouflage personal selfish desires. Getting this across to teenagers about to enter the larger world is part of my responsibility as an educator."

Krishnamurti often disparaged the British system of education and the inappropriate system they exported to India as being a rigid, conditioned system that does not give room for true intelligence to flower. Competition, pressure, fear and stress Krishnamurti saw as the enemies of true learning. The model of this old, traditional system includes strictly disciplined children; a typically intellectual, detached and sometimes fearsome teacher or professor; and a curriculum based on competition for the best grades and studying for and passing difficult examinations. Stress

and fear can easily become constant companions of children in such a system. And fear, Krishnamurti said, cripples learning. In 1963 he said this to some students in north India: “Look at your faces! You are frightened children—and it is a terrible thing to be frightened, especially while you are so young. Fear prevents you from studying properly. You can study well and learn quickly only in a happy atmosphere, and not in a state of fear.... Fear is a crippling thing: it destroys love, sympathy, compassion—and you must have love, sympathy, compassion, for otherwise you will not be a human being” (Krishnamurti Foundation of India 1993, 33).

The traditional British system of education is also a very intellectual system—certainly not holistic in any sense of the word. Krishnamurti saw the human being and the human mind as multidimensional. Rather than have an educational system basically oriented around the training of only the most superficial layers of the mind, he asked high school students in south India: “Is it not possible to cultivate the whole of the mind? [In traditional education] we are neglecting the more active, deeper layers of the mind” (*Education and Life’s Challenges* 1970).

But to help children recognize these deeper layers, the traditional, competitive atmosphere of most schools must be abolished and education must start with the youngest children and show them that school is a happy place, free from pressure. Krishnamurti continues in his *Letters to the Schools:*

> With the very young what is most important is to help them to free themselves from psychological pressures and problems. Now the very young are being taught complicated intellectual problems; their studies are becoming more and more technical; they are given more and more abstract information; various forms of knowledge are being imposed on their brains, thus conditioning them right from childhood. Whereas what we are concerned with is to help the very young to have no psychological problems, to be free of fear, anxiety, cruelty, to have care, generosity and affection. This is far more important than the imposition of knowledge on their young minds. This does not mean that the child should not learn to read, write and so on, but the emphasis is on psychological freedom instead of the acquisition of knowledge, though that is necessary. (1981, 82)

This openness and freedom that Krishnaji speaks about are nowhere more evident in his schools than in the teachers themselves. In this regard, I particularly remember two school visits: one to the Oak Grove School and one to The School in Adyar, India, several blocks away from Vasanta Vihar, Krishnamurti’s south Indian residence. During my visits I was welcomed into the kindergarten and first grade classrooms. What struck me so much in both schools was that the teachers were more keen on learning about what I did in my class back home in California than in trying to demonstrate to me all their own innovative methods and curricula. In India the teacher coaxed me to come back and join her later for a meal so that she could ask me more questions. I am so used to visiting private schools such as Montessori or Waldorf schools, in which all the teachers have the definitive answers to all educational issues. All that’s needed is to tell visitors everything.

But in Krishnamurti’s schools the teachers truly are not “conditioned” to follow some set system—whatever it may be. It seems as if their technique is to take cues from the children themselves, use their own creativity, and to borrow and integrate ideas from any and all other schools. Much of the learning in all grades might be characterized as “learning by doing.” In this way teacher and children work as a team to explore issues and skills in their studies. Patrick Foster, the teacher previously cited from the Oak Grove School, speaks of his history lessons: “[I]n World History, for example, we make fire with sticks and tinder, build pit and adobe ovens and bake bread, plant and harvest grains, build models of historical structures, experiment with early foods, etc.... thus appeal[ing] to various learning styles and interests. This exposes students to the pre-intellectual life skills that underlie our civilization and all subsequent development of technology. A deeper understanding of human life requires at least some familiarity with the ways humans order and organize their cultures—and the technological impulse is one rubric with which to view human nature. Balancing hands-on projects and historical information with students’ interests and learning styles requires continual experimentation” (Krishnamurti Foundation of America 2000).

Krishnamurti’s schools are concerned with, as he put it, “the cultivation of the total human being!” And the role of nature plays a tremendous part in this cultivation. There was nothing in the world Krishnaji loved as much as the mountains, rivers, plants and animals of the natural world. Up until a few months before his death, he took long daily walks in nature—whether in the hills of Ojai or on a beach in south India. At the age of ninety, when he would sit in his garden in Ojai, wild birds would actually perch on his shoulder. As he put it, “If you have lost touch with nature, then you will inevitably lose relationship[s] with one another.... We consider that nature exists for our use, for our convenience, and so lose communion with the earth. [But] sensitivity to a falling leaf [or] to a tall tree on a hill is far more important than all the passing of examinations and having a bright career. Those are not the whole of life. Life is like a vast river...” (1981, 42).

Sensitizing children to the beauties and wonders of nature does not merely involve nature walks or camp-outs with the children. Students are encouraged to become true environmentalists and ecologists: “In these schools of ours responsibility to the earth, to nature and to each other is part of our education....” (1981, 20). It is not uncommon to hear of children in Krishnamurti’s schools journeying to a beach where there has been an oil spill to help with the clean up, or having a letter writing campaign to stop the use of some dangerous toxic chemical. A recent example of this activism at the Oak Grove School is that the entire elementary and junior high camped at the Matilija Environmental Science Area in southern California. During their three-week stay the students worked with “habitat restoration,” i.e., they removed non-native plants such as cane and rye grass, and planted coast live oaks, alder, sycamore, willow and black walnut trees. The children are helped to understand that the problems of the earth, anywhere on the earth, are everyone’s problems. The whole concept of national issues, or narrow, patriotic perspectives are de-emphasized and replaced by a vision of

a global world community in which everyone lives together and helps one another.

The last topic I wish to mention is silence. Though for sixty-five years Krishnamurti traveled the world speaking to groups of people, what he most loved was silence. Words arise from thoughts and thoughts arise from the conditioned mind. So the state Krishnamurti helped people manifest was the state (as he called it) of choiceless awareness: silent listening, silent observing of both the inner world and the outer world—which are really one. Since this silence has to do with a conditionless state of mind, Krishnamurti valued very highly the power of children to be silent at times. He frequently observed from visiting his schools around the world and holding meetings with the pupils how much more effortlessly children from the East could sit quietly than could children from the West, who are conditioned to the ceaseless noise of our western technological culture. The constant barrage of music, television and radio often make it hard for western children to value sitting still in silence.

Of course the children in Krishnamurti's schools are not asked to sit silently in class. On the contrary they move around freely, have discussions with peers and with the teachers, and are lively and playful. Being silent, however, is also seen as a joyful, happy experience and it is practiced daily, especially in nature. Times are set aside in many classes for the children to silently observe nature, listen to the sounds around them, or simply to be quietly aware of the chatter (or lack of chatter) of their own minds.

I remember very clearly my first encounter with J. Krishnamurti and how he brought about this experience of inner silence. I was a twenty-year-old college student at U.C. Berkeley. I saw him in February of 1969 at the Berkeley Community Theatre. He had just spoken for some two hours to a packed auditorium. When he finished he said, "Are there any questions?" There was a very full and pregnant and rich silence in the hall. No one spoke up. After a very long pause Krishnamurti said, "Isn't this silence better than words?" Another long pause. "May I go now?" And with this he stood up and glided offstage. The silence was so incredibly full, full of an immense presence, that the audience could not even clap: we just sat there and bathed in that silence.

Krishnamurti was indeed a remarkable man, and a remarkable world teacher. His schools for children, I think, are remarkable as well. This may be partly due to the fact that it's so frustratingly difficult to really say what a Krishnamurti school is and what are the fundamental principles of a Krishnamurti education are. Even though it is difficult to completely understand Krishnamurti's teachings intellectually, it is very easy to sense emotionally that he is offering something of immense value. After reading his books one senses that Krishnamurti experienced a state of consciousness quite different from our normal, daily-life consciousness. And one is intrigued with the possibility that perhaps such an experience is within the grasp of everyone. With the schools somehow it is similar. When I visited various Krishnamurti schools I was not so much impressed by the curriculum or the articulated way the teachers explained their philosophy of education. But the children had kind of a joyful sparkle, a lightness that I have not seen in other schools. Maybe they are in some way kept from being overly burdened by western cultur-

PHOTO BY ASIT CHANDMAL

Krishnamurti at 85.

al conditioning. That was certainly Krishnamurti's aim in founding the schools. There's a common atmosphere in the various schools, which, although vague and intangible, always left me feeling that I wish my own child could go to such a school. And one can understand why Krishnamurti himself was so pleased with this aspect of his life's work. Helping children to meet life's challenges in a radically different way from the ways in which children are trained to meet them in other schools can bring about a revolution in society—and a revolution as well in what Krishnamurti called the "religious life." Krishnamurti sums up his vision for his schools in these closing remarks:

> What then is the total responsibility of these schools? Surely they must be centres for learning or a way of life which is not based on pleasure, on self-centred activities, but on the understanding of correct action, the depth and beauty of relationship, and the sacredness of a religious life. When the world around us is so utterly destructive and without meaning, these schools, these centres, must become places of light and wisdom. (1981, 84)

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Now What?
Reflections by Robin Martin

After reading about Krishnamurti's methodless method, you may be intrigued to learn more about this "enigma" of a man. How did this man believe that he could create an openness and freedom within schools that follow no system, indeed no prescribed ideals whatsoever for what each school should do or what it should look like? His schools, which are today still flowering around the world, are relatively unknown and obscure, even as his philosophies become increasingly popular.

Krishnamurti Schools

What exactly constitutes a Krishnamurti school? What are the intentions and aims of these schools? These questions are addressed directly in Krishnamurti's own words at http://www.kinfonet.org/Community/Schools/index.htm.

Anyone interested in learning about specific Krishnamurti schools can find a full listing with contact information and brief descriptions at http://www.kinfonet.org/Community/Schools/School_Listings/.

Also, here are a couple of resources on specific Krishnamurti schools:

There is an out-of-print book called *Life at School,* by Meenakshi Thapan (Oxford U. Press, Delhi, 1991), that James Peterson recommends and that outlines daily routines at Krishnamurti's school in Rishi Valley, India.

Rishi Valley School also has a growing alumni website at http://www.rvs.org/welcome.htm that is interesting to explore.

Brockwood Park has a video that was compiled by students, available from the Krishnamurti Foundation, at http://www.brockwood.org.uk/kft/.

Recommended Books, Videos, and Audio Tapes

Perhaps the most famous and easy-to-read book by Krishnamurti is *Education and the Significance of Life* (Harper and Row, 1953). In this book, Krishnamurti explains that our reliance on dogmas, institutions, and authority figures prevents individuals from achieving the deep self-knowledge that leads to genuine wisdom. He argues that conventional forms of education "suffocate" the mind and heart by forcing young people to conform to adults' stale and incomplete understanding of the true meaning of life. (This out-of-print book is available by online search of the used bookstores at http://www.bibliofind.com; it is also available at most local libraries.)

The Krishnamurti Foundation of America has created a web page especially for educators, which describes (and sells) most of Krishnamurti's best books related to his philosophies of education. You can link to this page at http://www.kfa.org/catalog/.

To purchase other books, videos, or audio tapes on Krishnamurti's teachings, you can also check directly with the Krishnamurti Foundation, Brockwood Park, Hants S024 0LQ, England. Or, some of the websites below also have options for purchasing materials.

Websites to Explore

If you don't have a computer or Internet access from home, try your local library to access these expanding web resources.

Krishnamurti Foundation Trust—http://www.brockwood.org.uk/kft/
Krishnamurti Information Network—http://www.kinfonet.org/
Krishnamurti Information Homepage Berlin—http://flp.cs.tu-berlin.de:1895/
    The Core of the Teachings, http://flp.cs.tu-berlin.de:1895/excerpts/core.html
Krishnamurti Foundation of America—http://www.kfa.org/
Inquiry into the nature of thought and the source of conflict in the world—a series of reflections by Krishnamurti and David Bohm—http://www.ratical.org/many_worlds/K/

Moving From Ideals to Integration

How can you be in genuine relationship with a child if you have images in your head about who you are, who the child is, and who you are in relation to each other? According to Krishnamurti, these images put us into interactions with our images of each other and keep us from genuinely relating to each other and who we really are in each moment. The challenge to action is to not live by our ideals or images of one another, but instead to recognize the limited place of thoughts/images/ideals as we discover how to live in genuine relationship with others. This happens by recognizing the internal divisions within our own thoughts and selves, because in that moment of recognition we can change ourselves. The ultimate goal, then, is the "integrated life," in which we find the balance of right action and right thought within ourselves. Understanding the deeper meanings of Krishnamurti and learning to live an integrated life is no small task, yet it is the task of teachers who believe in the truth of Krushnamurti's philosophies of education. There are no methods, no "how to" book or resources with the answers, of how to reach this place of deep understanding and integration within oneself; the integrated life is found only within yourself.

For more detailed resource descriptions about Krishnamurti and education, 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. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide on Krishnamurti education, please call 1-800-639-4122.

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
www.ncacs.org

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 Center
P.O. 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 PC 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.

Youth on Board
58 Day Street
P.O. Box 440322
Somerville, MA 02144
(617) 623-9900 x1242
http://www.youthonboard.org
youthonboard@aol.com

Youth on Board is a nonprofit organization that helps young people and adults think differently about each other so that they can work together to change their communities. They offer highly interactive training programs for young people and adults and a wide array of publications on youth involvement issues, including the book *14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making.*

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.

Write for Paths of Learning

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.

Dear Paths/Dear Readers

We continue to receive very encouraging and helpful messages from you, our readers. For those of you involved in a community or school that supports your educational endeavors, we seem to be providing a helpful, informative supplement to your life's work. For those of you who are more isolated, we seem to be serving as a healthy connection for you, helping you to remain sane in an often seemingly insane world.

Below, we offer you a sampling of comments that we have received recently. Given our desire to continue serving the needs of all of our readers, we again welcome feedback from you all on how we're doing and on how we could be doing better. In addition, we invite you to see these exchanges as ongoing discussions and dialogues in which everyone is invited to participate.

Paths of Learning:

I received my copy of *Paths* yesterday and haven't been able to put it down. Lovely editorial, and I'm really enjoying the interview with Thomas Armstrong.

I'm still not certain how I had the good fortune to receive a copy of *Paths,* in the very beginning, but I am extremely grateful for the serendipity!

Lori McCray
Marlborough, MA

Paths of Learning:

I am a 37-year-old public school teacher in Pico Rivera, California, where I teach Math to 7th graders.… I subscribe to *Paths of Learning;* it definitely is a breath of fresh air in the area of education. I was particularly fond of the inaugural issue, as I particularly admire Joseph Chilton Pearce.…

Roman Padilla

West Covina, California

We received the following letter from a reader who carefully read our second issue. Very appreciative of receiving such detailed reports, and sensing that other readers might want to hear what their fellow readers are saying, we'll try our best to publish such letters, in part or in full.

Dear Editor:

After reading my Autumn 1999 issue I feel compelled to share my opinions.

I found [Daniel Greenberg's] "The Case Against [Standardized Tests: The Massachusetts Experience]" to be the most motivating article. It was passionate, wry, comprehensible and thought provoking. I thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Greenberg's direct writing style and insightful essay.

The two profiles [of the Sudbury Valley School] that followed enlightened me. I had heard about the Sudbury Valley School from many sources and only now feel I understand its importance.

The [interview with] Grace Llewellyn was very honest and warm. I enjoyed reading about her motivation to write her popular book and create the [Not Back to School] Camp and her personal growth due to their success.

Nathaniel Needle's article ["Temple of Learning"] was very intriguing. [Robin Martin's] "Now What" page that followed was very helpful.

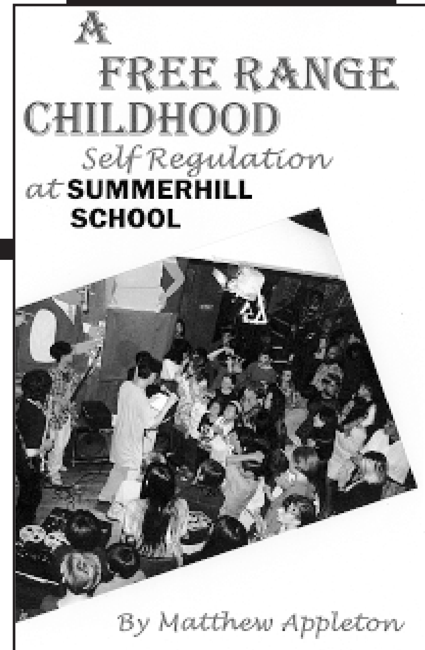
The poem by Tom Miner ["First Day of School"] and "A Fable" [by Pearl] were lovely. I hope to find more poetry to ponder in future issues.

Lastly, your "Editorial" ["Education with Compassion"] stirred my heart.… I would love to see more articles dealing with this subject and offering concrete ideas on how to instill "an ever stronger ethic of caring" in our children.

Thank you for all the ideas your magazine has introduced in such a calm and considerate manner. I truly look forward to delving into "Paths 3."

Peace,
Leslie Shores
Corona, CA

Summerhill Revisited



Matthew Appleton's **A Free Range Childhood** provides an updated, insightful account of everyday life at Summerhill. This is the first major book to appear on the school since A.S. Neill's 1960 bestseller inspired an international movement for alternative education. Through graceful and reflective writing, Appleton expands on Neill's stirring call for educational freedom.

"Matthew was a popular member of staff, allowing Summerhill to work its magic on him. …This is a candid view of his time with us—it is a very enjoyable read, and it raises some important, if uncomfortable, questions about modern methods of childrearing."

Zoe Readhead, Principal of Summerhill School and daughter of founder A.S. Neill

"The reappearance of Summerhill on the world stage couldn't be more timely. Matthew Appleton is an able guide, thanks to a prose filled with immediacy and passion. Old Neill would be proud."

Chris Mercogliano, Co-director of the Albany Free School, and author of Making It Up As We Go Along: The Story of the Albany Free School.

"In a time of crisis and confusion, *A Free Range Childhood* connects us with the ethical heart of education at its best…"

William Ayers, Distinguished Professor of Education, Senior University Scholar, University of Illinois at Chicago, and author of To Teach, The Journey of a Teacher, and A Kind and Just Parent.

The world's most famous alternative school continues to demonstrate that children thrive in an atmosphere of freedom, trust, and self-government.

A Free Range Childhood, $18.95
Foundation for Educational Renewal • P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733
(800) 639-4122 - www.PathsOfLearning.net

A sampling of features in the next issue of

Paths of Learning

Options for Families & Communities

- An interview with Nancy Gruver, founder and publisher of *New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams*.
- A profile article on The Meeting School, a coeducational Quaker school located in Rindge, New Hampshire, which helps students walk a path of deep learning and spiritual living.
- An in-depth but down-to-earth article, written by Mary Goral, a professor at Mount Mary College, explaining and exploring the fascinating "connective pedagogy" underlying Waldorf education.
- The path of The Journey School, "where education is a journey, not a race": a model how-to guide, from vision to start-up, for those who are interested in starting their own charter school.
- Plus book reviews, kids' writing, and more!

Paths of Learning
P.O. BOX 328
BRANDON, VT 05733-0328
http://www.great-ideas.org/paths.htm

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