Paths of Learning

Options for Families & Communities

ISSN 1526-0186

Richard J. Prystowsky, *Editor*
420 McKinley Street, Ste.111-437
Corona, CA 92879-6504
909-549-9067
rjprys@ix.netcom.com
Ron Miller, *Executive Editor*
Mary Leue, *Editor Emerita*
Jerry Mintz, *Editorial Advisor*
Charlie Miles, *Editorial Assistant*
Samara Miles, *Teen and Young Adult Editor*
joyful-girl@mediaone.net
Jacob Miles-Prystowsky, *Youth Editor*
jacobmp@mediaone.net

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

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

Manuscripts

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

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

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

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

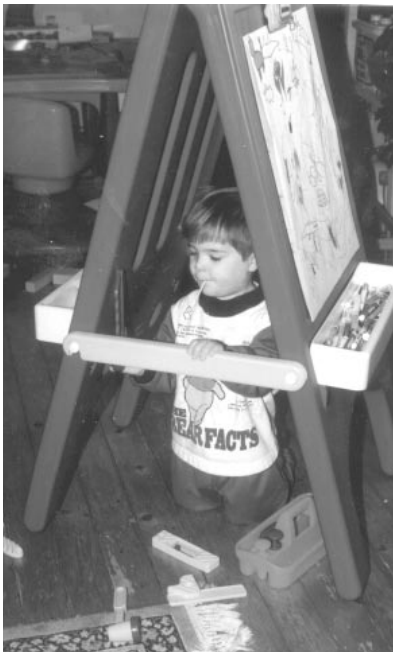
Printed on 100% post-consumer waste fiber with soy-based ink. *Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities* is the successor to *SKOLE: The Journal of Alternative Education,* which was founded in 1985 to serve the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools and published until early 1999 by Mary Leue of the Albany, NY, Free School. Newsstand sales through the IPA International Sales Cooperative. For more information call Moneka at (415) 447-4284, fax (415) 447-4281, or e-mail <moneka@bigtoppubs.com>. This issue of *Paths of Learning* was printed by Sharp Offset Printing <www.SharpOffsetPrinting.com> in Rutland, Vermont.

Paths of Learning

Options for Families & Communities

Issue Number 8 Spring 2001

Table of Contents



EDITORIAL

Relational Honor and Human Dignity

Recently, my wife and twelve-year-old son went to the bank to take care of some business. My wife had no trouble with her transactions. Working with a different teller, my son, however, experienced little more than frustration and trouble. It wasn't that he didn't have enough money in his account to cover the checks that he wanted to cash (for a while, the teller didn't even try to verify whether or not his account contained sufficient funds); it wasn't that he was a new customer (quite the opposite); it wasn't that he didn't have identification or that he hadn't filled out all of the paperwork properly (he had his "school" identification card, and he had prepared all of the documents perfectly). No, the problem was that, as the teller told him, he was too young. Apparently, at this bank, persons who are my son's age cannot cash checks totaling more than a pre-determined, limited amount of money, regardless of whether or not they have sufficient account funds to cover the total amounts of these checks.

Eventually, with my wife's help, my son was able to cash his checks. But his experience was fraught with the kind of humiliation and frustration that I see him endure not uncommonly, when, for example, while standing in line at a store, he is ignored or otherwise not taken seriously (or seemingly not noticed) by adults, who I doubt would so readily (if they would do so at all) exhibit such behavior to fellow adults with whom they were doing business. Like the experiences of so many children interacting with adults, my son's experience at the bank was, in a phrase, sadly typical.

What happened to my son happens regularly to children in our culture: in small ways, every day, they are robbed of the entitlement of their dignity. Often non-consciously and perhaps even unintentionally, we adults commonly fail to respect children, treating them as if we have no obligation to honor their wishes and desires, or even their everyday attempts to transact life's small details, such as cashing a check at the bank, or being noticed as they wait their turn in line to be served by a store clerk or by a helper at a fast-food restaurant. To be sure, being robbed of the entitlement of their dignity does not mean that children will necessarily be permanently harmed to the point of becoming dysfunctional adults. But we know that, more often than not, we reap what we sow. Thus, if in ourselves and others we plant and nurture the seeds of non-caring, invalidation, and indignity, we ought not be surprised if we and others become, at least to some degree and on occasion, non-caring, invalidating adults who rob others of their own entitlement of dignity. On the other hand, if in ourselves and others we plant and nurture the seeds of love, more often than not we will see our labors manifested in the beings of adults who have and who cultivate a committed life of honor and respect, for themselves and others.

The Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh teaches that the best way for us to insure a healthy future is for us to take good care of the present moment. To this end, since children are not merely "our future" (a controversial phrase, in many ways), but are beings living now, in the present moment, we adults need to treat children with respect, taking seriously their wishes and dreams, listening deeply to their concerns about life. But not only that. We also need to respect children in the (sometimes small) everyday ways in which we ourselves want to be respected. We would not want our children to humiliate us by yelling at or hitting us, for example, were we to fidget, whine, and complain while we waited for them to finish examining and trying out the toys in our local toy store. Then why do we humiliate them when they act out their boredom—sometimes, we must admit, in quite creative ways (perhaps as we did when we were children)—while they accompany us on our, let's face it, not always engaging and exciting shopping trips to the clothing store? And would we want children—or adults, for that matter—controlling what we do and with whom we congregate during the day, as well as how we spend at least a good part of our evenings? If not, then why, in our schools, do we force children to abide by schedules and learning agendas that adults have created for them, to congregate with persons not necessarily of their own choosing but with whom adults have determined they will spend their time, and, during the evening, to engage in greater or lesser amounts of adult-determined homework?

Indeed, we adults need to recognize children's needs, as we hope that children (and adults) will recognize ours. We need to recognize that, for example, after waiting in line at the food counter, they have as much right as anyone does to order lunch, or that, after having waited in line for a bank teller to help them, they have as much right to cash their checks as does any of the bank's other regular customers. The way to ensure that we adults grant children the entitlement of their dignity is to treat them with the kind of dignity with which we ourselves wish to be treated, even if, on occasion, they and we seem unworthy to be so treated. As Hamlet remarked, "use [that is, treat] every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping?" Rather, Hamlet advises, "[u]se [persons] after your own honor and dignity—the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty" (II.ii.529-532).

There are no guarantees in life, of course, and perhaps our efforts will not help to produce healthy results. But we must try

Enacting Our Intentions to Care

to create and walk a path of love and care if we want to reach our goal of seeing loving, caring behavior enacted and personified by others. If we take our moral intentions and obligations seriously, we have no other choice.

The work that we present to you in this issue of *Paths* speaks to these concerns quite directly. In the interview with Cecile Andrews, for example, you will find not simply a recipe for simpler and more meaningful living, but, more important, a way to understand that our attachments to consuming and acquiring material goods ultimately harm us, others, and the planet as a whole. To reclaim our lives, to honor our own dignity, and to respect the dignity of others and of the planet, we need, as Thoreau tried to teach us, to "simplify, simplify."

Cecile's views of self- and other-oriented honoring are grounded in the notion that we need to make our relating well to and our getting along well with others—and with the planet—a priority in our thoughts and behaviors. All of us who are deeply concerned about children's education surely hold a similar notion. Indeed, we might argue that relations should be a key point of focus in all meaningful teacher-student, adult-child, parent-child, and other interpersonal interactions. To stress this focal point in terms of teacher-student interactions, we might speak about "relational education," which is precisely the term used by Emanuel Pariser, Chris Mercogliano, and Mary Leue in their articles that appear in this issue, essays documenting the kinds of holistic rewards—sometimes subtle, and sometimes not evident for years—that derive from teachers' understanding that their primary responsibility with their students is both to help foster and to honor a relationship of mutual respect and dignity.

So, too, we find similar ideas and themes in the profile article that we present, in which we offer you the perspectives, feelings, and experiences of Jenifer Goldman, who, as a child in school, had experienced dishonor and shame. Fortunately, Jenifer found a committed advocate in her Uncle Jerry—our very own Jerry Mintz, *Paths'* Editorial Advisor—who, taking his relationship with his niece seriously, recognizing and honoring her needs and wishes, helped Jenifer to escape this soul-numbing entrapment and to find and travel, instead, a holistic, meaningful, rewarding path of living and learning. This is relational living that is committed, heartfelt, sincere, whole.

More generally, and in their own ways, all of the articles that appear in this issue of *Paths* have to do with honoring relations. From Don Glines' typically incisive and insightful views on so-called education reform, to Marilyn Morgan's helpful tips on how parents can help their children learn to use the computer to better their children's writing, to the simple but profound acts of parental love that ten-year-old Trace Lapid relates in his short essay on how he learned to read—in these and other examples that appear in the pages that follow, we see striking illustrations of what we might call deeply profound "relational honoring."

In his poem "Anger," offered in this issue, young poet Nick Hertzberg writes that anger, "in the pits of horror and despair...grows to destructive sizes." But this growth is not inevitable, for "in all the world there is a cure...: it is friendship, I'm quite sure." Friendship. Between persons who know each other—colleagues, classmates, neighbors. Between consumers and the planet that supports their ability to live. Between a bank teller and her young customer.

In a very moving poem, poet Li-Young Lee writes about a "good boy" who "labors/under the weight" of a bag of peaches that "his father has entrusted/to him." The father himself "carries a bagful [of peaches] in each arm." But we know from understanding the fuller context of the poem that this scene is not a metaphorical encapsulation of the burdensome struggles of life or, more specifically with respect to this poem, of a father's burdening his child with the weight of his own problems. Elsewhere in the poem, we read that, earlier in the day, under a heavy downpour, the father and son "shiver in delight,/and the father lifts from his son's cheek/one green leaf/fallen like a kiss." Indeed, the boy, who loves his father, is honored by the father, who entrusts his son with the task of carrying a bag of peaches. Both father and son carry the load.

Relational honoring is not a burdensomely heavy task. Though sometimes accompanied by feelings of ambivalence or even pain, such honoring, if it is profoundly and truly such, is grounded in love. It is itself the enactment of our intentions to care. Indeed, it is our work. And though it is sometimes or even often difficult work, deeply committed relational honoring always bears, as the title of Lee's poem suggests, "the weight of sweetness."

—Richard J. Prystowsky

References

Lee, Li-Young. "The Weight of Sweetness." In *Rose: Poems by Li-Young Lee.* Rochester, New York: BOA Editions, Ltd., 1986. p. 20.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.* In *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Edited by G. Blakemore Evans, et al. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974. pp. 1135-1197.

State of the Art
How Computer Technology Can Help Your Child Write Well

By Marilyn R. P. Morgan

Some time ago, I spent an evening working with a colleague writing an article for a professional journal. She didn't have a computer in her home, so we sat together at her kitchen table with our pads of paper and our notes and did our composing by hand. My colleague and I both began by putting down our thoughts as they occurred to us, but it wasn't long before I began crossing out parts of our communal draft, writing up and down in the margins, and circling sections and drawing arrows and asterisks to show where I thought the various parts should be moved. My colleague paused, looked at the mess I was making on the sheets of paper, and asked, "You're used to writing on a computer, aren't you?"

My colleague was right: I am used to writing on a computer now, becoming a word-processing convert of necessity because of the amount of writing that I do, and it has changed the way I write. Your children, with their own writing projects, may be going through this same transition now as personal computers make their way into more and more homes. This article presents some techniques for taking advantage of computer technology to help young writers learn to write well.

Writers of any age, whether working with paper and pen or on the computer, face two initial tasks: Finding something to say and then deciding how to say it. Once they have dealt with these issues, they are free to explore the new media the computer makes available and expand their horizons to communicate with readers who were previously beyond their reach.

Finding Something to Say

The first, most basic requirement for a writer is having something to say. Sometimes writers are lucky enough to know exactly what they want to say from the beginning, but most times ideas arrive only partially formed. They need refinement and focus. Sometimes there seem to be no ideas at all. This blank-slate feeling is the reason many people, children and adults alike, find writing intimidating.

Over the years, writers have discovered a number of techniques to help them develop their ideas. You have probably heard of techniques such as outlining, freewriting, cubing, brainstorming, list making, and journal keeping. There are visual techniques, too, like doodling or flow charting. Almost any of these writers' exercises can be done on a computer rather than with pen and paper. To take full advantage of the power of the computer, though, writers need to go beyond merely replacing pens with keyboards. Consider what your young writers can do with their computers that they couldn't do with pen and paper.

This blank-slate feeling is the reason many people, children and adults alike, find writing intimidating.

Freewriting, a technique invented by composition theorist Peter Elbow, is an exercise in which writers write without stopping for some period of time, usually five to fifteen minutes. The idea is to put down any thoughts that come into their heads on the topic to be considered. As in brainstorming, writers are not allowed to judge or edit the ideas—that comes later on, after the raw ideas have been captured. Also, writers should not pay any attention to grammar, spelling, punctuation, complete sentences, or other artifacts of formal written English. Freewriting stimulates and then captures a flow of ideas for later consideration. If the flow of ideas stops, writers should write "I don't know what to say" or repeat the last phrase or sentence that they wrote until fresh ideas occur to them. They must not stop writing before time runs out.

It takes practice to become comfortable with freewriting, but writers often find it to be a powerful technique for generating ideas. Because a proficient typist can write more quickly and more fluidly on the keyboard than with a pen, the exercise translates well to the computer. A simple twist that makes it even more effective is to freewrite on the computer with the monitor turned off so that writers are not distracted by the text they produce.

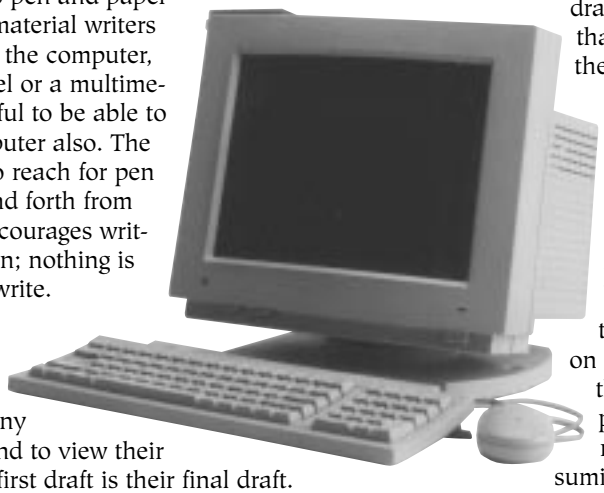
Another technique that works well on the computer is list making. List making is as simple as it sounds: Writers make lists of terms they associate with the topic they want to write about. Then they look over their lists and try to find relationships among the words. Words may be formed into "pro" and "con" lists, for example, and the computer makes it easy to

Marilyn R. P. Morgan teaches writing at the college level. She holds an M.A. in English and is currently working on a Ph.D. in communication and rhetoric specializing in scientific and technical communication. During the 1997-1998 academic year she served in her institution's Human-Computer Interaction program.

move words around as new thoughts occur and new relationships become apparent. On a computer with a good word processing package, the thesaurus or hypertext functions can add another dimension to this exercise. Writers can place the cursor on a word, hit a key, and the computer suggests related concepts. Choose one concept or type a related word and the computer suggests more. It's possible to follow threads of connected concepts into new territory, and this lexical navigation can be a powerful means of generating or refining ideas.

> On the computer, however, drafts are ephemeral, letters only pixels.

For years, young writers have been urged to keep journals of their thoughts as they read works of literature or other materials that they intend to write about later on. Ideas that arise out of discussions with others can also be recorded in the journal. Computers can be used for journal keeping just as paper notebooks can, but there is one instance in which the computer may be superior to pen and paper for this purpose. When the material writers are responding to is itself on the computer, for example a hypertext novel or a multimedia CD-ROM, then it is helpful to be able to record thoughts on the computer also. The convenience of not having to reach for pen and paper, or switch back and forth from one medium to the other, encourages writers to put all their ideas down; nothing is lost before they sit down to write.



Deciding How to Say It

Revision is always a thorny subject. Beginning writers tend to view their writing as permanent. Their first draft is their final draft. They fail to consider the possibility that there may be more than one way to say the same thing, and that different ways of saying it are appropriate for different readers. Often they fail to realize that the order in which their ideas occurred to them is not the best possible order in which to present them to their readers. Once they've committed their ideas to paper, they think, everything is settled.

Furthermore, nothing discourages revision so well as a laboriously handwritten or typed manuscript. On the computer, however, drafts are ephemeral, letters only pixels. The ease with which writers can rearrange, reword, add to, or delete from their texts encourages them to do so. This effect alone might make it worthwhile to encourage your children to start writing on a computer.

Another problem related to revision is the idea many beginning writers have that revising means nothing more than correcting grammar and spelling errors. Certainly grammar and spelling errors must be corrected if a writer's work is to be taken seriously by readers, but that's editing, not revision. There is an essential conflict here. Some readers find that grammar and spelling errors distract them from paying attention to what the writer is saying, and so it may be useful to correct them early in the writing process in order to get useful feedback from readers, but writers who pay too much attention to grammar and spelling too early in their writing process may be distracted from saying what they really want to say.

Grammar- and spell-checkers can solve this problem. Writers can use this software to rid their work of mechanical errors quickly and easily, early or late in their writing process as they please, leaving them free to think about the higher-order elements of revision. Of course, just as people should learn multiplication tables and long division and not become dependent on their pocket calculators, writers should learn grammar and punctuation and not become dependent on the computer. It's also helpful to make a careful distinction between editing and revising when you talk to your children about their writing, and never use the two terms interchangeably.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of the computer from the standpoint of revision is the way the computer encourages writing out of order. With pen and paper or on a typewriter, writers naturally tend to write from the beginning of their documents straight through to the end. On the computer, by contrast, writers can tackle the easiest parts of a project first and save more difficult parts for later, after they've built up some momentum.

Using this process of composing, students can generate drafts and make revisions without worrying that they will need to retype the entire paper; they will probably be more likely to generate such drafts under these circumstances. But whether or not they will in fact generate more drafts, you might keep in mind that, given the facility with writing and revising that computers offer, and given that most colleges grant their students access to computers (some expect the students to have computers), today, teachers of writing at the college level place much more emphasis on revision than they did years ago, knowing that they can ask their students to revise parts of papers without worrying that the revisionary task will entail lots of time-consuming retyping on the students' part.

This expectation fits nicely into a "process approach" to the teaching of writing, in which teachers are more interested in the student's writing and revision process than they are in the final product. Many, if not most, college writing instructors take this approach to the teaching of writing, which means that many, if not most, college writing instructors will expect their students to produce several drafts of each required paper and they will expect succeeding drafts to be more or less substantial revisions of the previous ones (the student's merely correcting grammar problems will not be acceptable).

> It's also helpful to make a careful distinction between editing and revising...and never use the two terms interchangeably.

Whatever the teaching philosophy of your children's future college writing instructor, chances are that understanding revision and being comfortable with revising their work will be an advantage when, as young adults, they enter that Freshman Composition 101 classroom. You can give them this advantage if, while they're children, you help them become comfortable using a computer to write and revise their work.

Exploring New Media

Marshall McLuhan, the media guru of the 1960s whose catch phrase, "The medium is the message," became a national mantra, said that the content of any new medium is always an older medium. We are apt, he said, to miss what is really important about new technologies because we try to look at them in terms of their predecessors. The computer is not just a glorified typewriter. It enables young writers to do new things, provided they're encouraged to think about writing in new ways.

Computers make it easy for writers to experiment with formatting their documents. Instead of producing plain manuscript-style text, writers can venture into two-column newsletter-type formats. They can write newspaper articles that look like newspaper articles, complete with headlines and scanned-in photographs. Writers can change fonts, distort text or wrap it around corners, or use a variety of special effects. These options are fun to play with and may spark a child's interest in writing. You can also bring visual elements into your discussions of the effectiveness of a text. Explore with your children the effect a document's appearance has on its readers. Will readers accept a newspaper article as truthful and reliable if it doesn't look like a newspaper article, for example? Can formatting and font choice affect the emotional response readers have to a text? These are questions worth considering with your beginning writers.

Not only can text be squeezed into new forms by the computer, but it can have graphics, sound, and animation incorporated into it. Children's books have pictures accompanying the text, so what could be more natural than for children who write to include pictures in the form of scanned-in photographs, draw program files, or clip art in their work? Children, who have not been exposed for as many years as adults to the concept of writing as a words-only phenomenon, can be wonderfully creative in their use of other media in their writing. To support their natural creativity, you can study with them the ways professionals combine varied media. Go through a CD-ROM production on dinosaurs, for example, and discuss with them the ways its creators linked text, sound, pictures, and animation. Any strategies you discover the professionals using can also be used by your young writers in their own projects, subject only to the limits of your software and hardware.

> Your children will need to be able to judge a text on its intellectual merit and not simply accept it as authoritative because it looks professionally produced.

Of course, to create hypertext documents or multi-media presentations, you must have software with these capabilities, and you must have hardware that will run the software. Even if your system won't let you re-create what you see the professionals doing, though, it still may be a useful exercise to try to understand how and why the professionals made the choices they did.

Finally, writers can get beyond the inherent linearity of printed texts and experiment with hypertext programs. Hypertext has its own set of strengths and limitations that writers must bear in mind. For example, it's necessary for writers of hypertext to anticipate how readers may navigate their way through the document, and that navigation won't take the standard start-to-finish path of printed texts. The various sections of a hypertext document must all stand alone because readers may come upon them in any order. In addition, hypertext writers must decide which words or visuals readers would like to function as links to other sections, how many links should exist, and how long each section should be. Just as learning a second language can give people a new perspective on their native language, exploring the unique characteristics of hypertext and multimedia can shed new light for writers on the writing of plain text.

Expanding Horizons

The Internet allows living rooms to be linked with other sites: Businesses, universities, and public interest organizations, for example. Children who "surf the 'net" may want to respond to the texts they discover there, and computer technology in the form of e-mail allows them to do so. With their own homepages on the World Wide Web, they can also have wide audiences for their documents and even get feedback in the form of e-mail from their readers.

E-mail also lends itself to pen-pals, of course, without the long lag time between sending a letter and getting a response that exists with paper mail. The immediacy of the exchanges can encourage children to write. However, speed isn't everything, and it can sometimes even be a detriment. Remind your young writers that, much of the time, a thoughtful response is better than an immediate one. Children (and some adults, too!) need to be reminded sometimes that the e-mail messages they write will be read by real people with real feelings. Forgetfulness of this point leads to the phenomenon known as "flaming"—sending harsh, often insulting, messages. If your children are active e-mail correspondents, they may be "flamed" occasionally by insensitive writers. It's probably a good idea to prepare them for this eventuality and to help them learn how and why not to flame others.

One final issue of consideration for others has to do with the length of e-mail messages. Many people dislike receiving long messages by e-mail. Some pay their Internet providers by the amount of data they download, making long messages expensive for them to receive. You can discuss this issue with your young writers and then lead naturally into a discussion of how what we consider to be good writing varies according to the format, reader, and occasion.

There are also electronic mailing lists covering an astonishingly broad variety of topics. Whatever your children's hobbies or interests, there's bound to be a mailing list on one of their favorite topics. Of course parents will want to monitor their children's travels and contacts on the Internet, and software exists for this purpose.

Chaotic though the electronic environment may be, some laws do apply there. When your children go online, be sure to educate them about the concepts of intellectual property and copyright law. They'll be tempted to borrow some of the exciting texts, cartoons, and visuals they find there for incorporation into their own work. Be sure they understand that such borrowing must always be credited, and, except in certain narrowly defined circumstances covered by fair-use doctrine, the creator's permission must also be obtained. Enforcement of copyright law on the Internet is lax at present because the medium is still so new, but this situation is bound to change.

In any case, proper crediting of the work of others is a necessary component of intellectual honesty.

With respect to paper, rather than electronic, publishing, the advent of desktop publishing software and laser printers that produce professional-quality documents means that young writers can use their writing to serve others or accomplish goals outside the classroom. They can write for real purposes and not solely to develop their writing skills, and they can be more actively involved in the totality of the writing project. Older children and teenagers, especially, can seek out and respond to community needs. They might create an informational brochure for a local environmental group, for example, or produce a flyer on pet safety for an animal shelter. If your children do any work of this kind, be sure to save a few sample copies and keep careful records of where, when, and for whom the work was done. Save copies of any thank-you letters they receive, too. Such documentation can be useful in the future when they're filling out college applications.

> The computer is not just a glorified typewriter.

Desktop publishing raises a host of questions, though. These systems take time and energy to learn to use. You will have to decide how much time to devote to learning software, as well as how much money you want to spend on purchasing it. What tradeoffs are you willing to make between time spent wielding a mouse and time spent in conversation with your children? Will your young writers be distracted from content by worrying about appearances? In short, desktop publishing raises all the questions that word processing does, only more so. Writers confronted all these issues when word processing software first came on the scene, but the greater expense, complexity, and power of desktop publishing software exaggerates them.

Even those who don't use software at all must confront some of the issues the computer raises. Years ago, producing a glossy, professional-looking document required skills and equipment to which, usually, only professional editors and publishers had access. This limited access served a sort of gate-keeping function. Not just anyone could get published—only those who had something to say that others judged to be valid or important. Many people tended to believe that what they read in a professional-looking publication must be true.

That belief was never completely reliable, but nowadays it has no validity at all. You really can't judge a book by its cover, or by how nice the pages inside look. It's important for everyone to develop critical reading and reasoning skills because, now that anyone can produce sharp-looking documents, we can't rely on appearances as much as we could—or thought we could—in the past. Your children will need to be able to judge a text on its intellectual merit and not simply accept it as authoritative because it looks professionally produced.

Looking Forward

We can only imagine how all this new technology—computers, the Internet, hypertext, multimedia, and forms yet to be invented—will affect the writing of the next generation and the ways in which they learn. With sufficient imagination, though, and a healthy portion of ingenuity, we can use the new technologies to benefit both children and the society to which they will contribute as they grow.

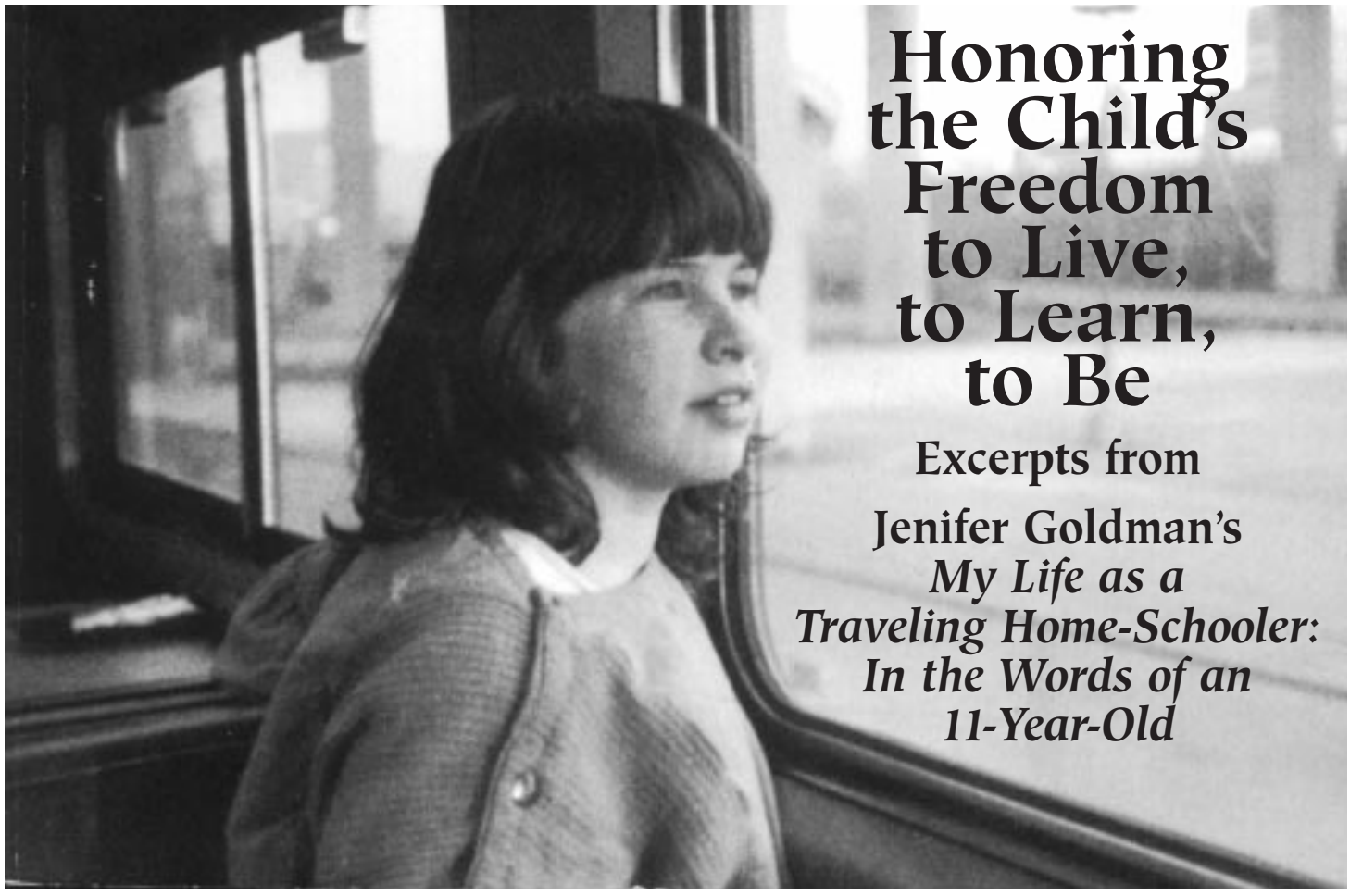
Editor's Introduction: *In each of our previous issues of* Paths, *we have profiled a particular learning environment or situation that honors the dignity of the children and the holistic relationships among children and adults. In this issue, we continue this trend, this time profiling not a school, but some days in the life of a traveling homeschooler.*

As this profile ought to help demonstrate, the term "homeschooling" is quite a misnomer, since so much of the living and learning experienced in this path of teaching and learning occurs outside of the home, and since so little of the teaching and learning experienced by homeschooling families resembles schooling in any recognizable form. In general, like other forms of teaching and learning, homeschooling is best understood in the plural, and not in the singular. Its paths and possibilities are multifarious; indeed, although the homeschooling movement is far more massive than it has been in modern American history, it is hardly monolithic.

And so we present to you here some snap shots of one homeschooling journey by way of offering you a glimpse into the life of a former homeschooled child, Jenifer Goldman. Experiencing frustrations and angst in school, Jenifer, with the help of her parents and Uncle Jerry, began a homeschooling journey that would have remarkable results. Uncle Jerry was quite a resource and mentor for his niece. But this isn't surprising, since Uncle Jerry—that is, Jerry Mintz, our Editorial Advisor and a veteran alternative educator— has a long history of helping students and advocating for children's rights. Jenifer accompanied Jerry as he traveled the country for various of his responsibilities. Hardly a passive companion in her travels, Jenifer helped in the formation of a new school, worked selling items at a conference, and otherwise was quite an active "student."

Encouraged to record her experiences, in 1991 Jenifer (then 12) published her work in the book from which the following excerpts are taken. Written ten years ago, the back-cover annotation yet accurately states, "This is a rare and perhaps unique view of the current world of alternative education and homeschooling as seen through the eyes of a 10-almost-11-year-old girl.... The text, which is entirely in Jenifer's own words,... [offers] perceptions [that] will have meaning not only to those involved in alternative education, but also to anyone who has the responsibility of educating a child. However," the annotation continues, "most of all this book is written for children themselves." This last line has a double meaning: prosaically, the meaning is that the book is written for children to read; but more profoundly and poignantly, the meaning is that the book is "for the children." In the spirit of honoring the children, we thus present this engaging, sometimes humorous, always honest, and effectively sobering account of some days in the life of one very special, and very fortunate, traveling homeschooling child. [Note: Except for correcting an obvious typo or two, I left the writing as is so that the reader might absorb and enjoy the fullness of the writing's charm, clarity, and honesty.]

—Richard Prystowsky



Honoring the Child's Freedom to Live, to Learn, to Be

Excerpts from Jenifer Goldman's *My Life as a Traveling Home-Schooler: In the Words of an 11-Year-Old*

Chapter 1. "Before Homeschooling"

Through most of my life school's been pretty miserable. When I started homeschooling, everything got better. I can't remember much of the nursery school or kindergarten, but some of the reasons why I didn't like school were — well, why don't I just give you an example of some of the things that have happened to me?

I was in fourth grade. I had a teacher named Miss Jay. She was the teacher of my worst nightmares. We were having a vote on who should write the end of the year graduation speech. I suggested to the teacher that we not tell whose paper it was that we were reading, because I figured that some people would do it by who their friend was, rather than whose paper they liked best. They voted my paper the best, so I was selected to do the speech. But the teacher seemed to try anything possible to stop me from doing it.

Three other kids had also tried to write a speech, so the teacher decided that we should all work together. We started working together, but just because I was behind on a couple of papers, she took away the privilege for me to write it, even though I was the one who was selected. The teacher said that I "owed" her work. So the other kids went on to make the speech, and I sat and did extra work. Personally, I thought it was very unfair, because after the kids all decided that mine was the best, the teacher kicked me out of it. I told different people about it, but nobody listened, so that's just what I had to live with.

Most of my education has been through public school, but I also learned from the people in my family. These included my mother, my father, my uncle Jerry, my nana, and my grandpa (until I was seven years old—it's hard to believe that it was three and a half years ago, because I remember him so well, it just seems like a few months). My uncle Jerry is one of the main characters throughout this book, along with me.

My nana's been a big help in many things, such as spelling, math, when I was first learning multiplication, and she also taught me much about piano, because she's a piano teacher.

My grandpa took me a lot of places and taught me just about everything, especially reading, because I always used to sit on his lap and he would read books to me. He used to take me to the zoo, to movies, to the playground, and anyplace else that he needed to go.

My father and mother got divorced when I was four, but I see my father once every month. He lives in Cambridge, Mass. My father teaches me a lot about science, and a lot about mechanics, since he had been working for Xerox, and now works for Savin, fixing copying machines. He can fix just about anything. He's taught me a lot about problems with cars and electronic things.

My mother taught me about crafts and sign language, because she's been a special ed teacher in classrooms and an art teacher in summer camps.

I've been living in the same house with my nana and my uncle Jerry for many years, and before that, we used to visit all the time. Jerry taught me many things, and a lot of what I know now. Jerry used to run an alternative school in Vermont. Then Jerry became the director of a company called the NCACS (National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools). So, when I was having trouble in school, Jerry thought that it might be a good idea for me to homeschool for a while.

From Chapter 2. "The Trip to Niagara Falls and Toronto"

That summer I went on my first trip with Jerry. Here's what I wrote about it:

My name is Jenifer and I'm ten years old. I hadn't ever traveled with my Uncle Jerry before. I had heard many stories about my Uncle Jerry's trips. I've always wanted to go on a trip with him.

My uncle said that he thought I could go on this trip with him because he thought I was old enough now. I just turned ten.

He had to go to a meeting in Canada on decentralism. I think that decentralism means not being in a large group all doing the same thing and having one leader telling you what to do all the time.

I decided to go about two days before we were ready to leave. We thought we would go camping somewhere around Niagara Falls so we bought a tent. I had more experience camping than Jerry did, and I had to push him to go camping for at least a night.

We had to have my birth certificate because I was leaving the country, and I had a big fight with my mother to try to get her to give me the original because I didn't think they would accept a copy. This was my first time out of the country....

When we first got to the border I was very excited because I knew that as soon as we showed our birth certificate and passport and stuff that we would be in another country. At the border we showed our stuff, and we had no trouble getting in.

When we got over the Rainbow Bridge I saw Niagara Falls for the first time. I thought it was the most beautiful thing that I had ever seen. The colored lights that were shining on the falls made it look even prettier.

We talked about camping out but as we were driving toward the camp ground, Jerry stopped at a motel and he said, "OK campers, follow me, into the motel!" We found out how much it would cost, which was about $40 a night, so I dragged Jerry out and back over the camp ground which fortunately was only $14 a night, and that was in Canadian money....

After we got our tent set up, we went to the downtown area to get something to eat. We went to a restaurant called Mother's and had pizza and spaghetti. Then we walked down the street looking at all the stores and tourist attractions. I thought that it looked really fun, and I hoped that we would be able to come down the next night to go into some of the tourist attractions.

The next morning we went to a breakfast bar for all you can eat. It was breakfast and lunch combined because we were going to be in Marineland all day, and food costs more there.

At Marineland I went on the big steel roller coaster three times; once in the middle, once in the back and the last time I

My Life as a Traveling Home-Schooler: In the Words of an 11-Year-Old by Jenifer Goldman, ©1991 Jerry Mintz. Solomon Press Publishers, Education Division, 417 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Heights, NY 11577. 1-800-769-4171. $7.50 Reprinted with permission.

waited to get the front. Jerry chickened out and didn't go on it at all. He thought I was real gutsy, especially to get the front seat. The ride was really neat. It had four loops upside down. They said it was the longest steel roller coaster in the world. The ride took about three minutes.

I went on a few other rides that Jerry also chickened out on. I didn't make Jerry go on the rides because I didn't want a sick and grumpy Uncle Jerry for the rest of the time....

We stayed at Marineland for about five hours altogether....

Back at the camp ground we tried to start a camp fire. At first we were having a lot of trouble because we didn't have any kindling. Eventually we got it started. We roasted some marshmallows. We also set off some sparklers that we had bought and one fountain. We had two sparklers left, and there were a couple of kids across the street from us so we went over to them and gave them the sparklers and the rest of our marshmallows. Then the kids and I went over to the park. Meanwhile, Jerry was talking to their parents.

One of the girls had aplastic anemia, and she was waiting for a bone marrow transplant. Every two days she had to have a blood transfusion. I felt really bad for her.

After I went swimming we took down the tent and headed for Toronto. When we got there we went to see Jerry's friend, Satu Repo[ ].... After that we went to a woman's rights rally with Satu. Then we went to a diner with her. Then it was our turn to take her to our meeting. The main speaker was Ivan Ilich. I thought it was really dull and boring. I didn't understand anything except the "and's" and the "the's." Even if I do have a good vocabulary, this was ridiculous. So I drew some pictures of boats on the water, and I used origami boats and used pipe cleaners to hold them in place....

One day we went to the Royal Ontario Museum. The Egyptian exhibit was pretty stinky compared to the Metropolitan, but I loved the dinosaurs....

After we left the conference on Saturday, we went to the CNN Tower, which has the highest observation deck in the world. We went all the way up to the top, which was 140 stories high! It was amazing. You could see the whole city of Toronto, and we saw a clipper ship in the harbor, and we found our car, which was really amazing....

Then we drove back to Niagara Falls and we went to the Maid of the Mist. It is a tour boat which goes under the falls, and of course, supplies you with rain coats. It was really cool on the Maid of the Mist. When we went by the American Falls we saw a rainbow, but we didn't get very wet. We went up to the Canadian Horseshoe falls, into the very center and kept on moving until we were so close to the falls that we thought it was going to come down right on our heads....

For our last breakfast in Canada we had crepes, and I called them "creeps," but they were good. Then we went back across the border, but I didn't want to go back. There was about a half hour of traffic because it was Sunday and a lot of people were going back to the United States. We had no trouble getting across the border. They didn't even check our papers. Jerry said that it is sometimes harder getting back into the United States, but it turned to be easier.

From Chapter 3. "I Tried A Private School"

Later that summer, we looked into starting an alternative school in the area. I went to a few meetings with this group called the Learning Tree. They used to have an alternative school and were thinking about starting it up again. We talked about how we would run it and what kind of democracy there would be, and how the students would be able to vote in the meetings. But we never ended up starting the school.

So we decided that I should try a school more toward an alternative school. It was a private school called Berrywood Friends. It was a Quaker school (although there weren't any Quakers in it).

At first I was enjoying it there. It was quiet. There were much fewer kids in one classroom. I thought that I was going to do a lot better there. In the end, I still thought I did. But there was something wrong. I'm still not sure what it was.

The kids there were either much too calm—they never did anything but sit around and talk or make string bracelets, or the kids were all running around hitting kids or being mean, which wasn't right for me, either. So after a while, we agreed that it would be best if I left there and tried something new.

After that I went back to public school, because I had no place else to go....

From Chapter 5. "More Public School Problems"

I didn't do too well when I went back to the public school again. I mean, I was starting in the middle of the year, and the kids who knew me thought something was wrong because I was gone for so long. They were overloading me with homework. I would sit there and work on it, and if I even took a small break, I wouldn't get it done in time. Sometimes I would stay up until midnight, trying to do the homework. Then they said, since I wasn't getting my work done, I would have to stay after school to do it. Every day after school, I would go to the principal's office, sit at a desk, and work on my homework. Fifteen minutes before the late bus came, I was let out. Then I'd get on the late bus, go home, and work on my homework again. Sometimes, I'd sit in bed, working on it. Other times, I just wouldn't get it done.

Sometime the teacher gave me extra work when my homework wasn't done. That, I thought, was silly. Because, if I couldn't get my work done in the first place, why give me more?

Then they decided that they wanted to do some testing on me, because they thought that something was wrong. I thought that if I passed it would be good, but if I messed up at all, then they might do something bad.

Jerry suggested that maybe we could try homeschooling for a few months. I thought it was a good idea, but we had a time trying to get my mom and dad to agree. Finally, we decided that I would try it, for just a few months.

I first found out that I was going to be able to homeschool when I went on a trip with Jerry to Virginia and the NCACS (alternative school) conference. We decided to take notes and keep a log of all my homeschooling experiences, which is what this is from here on.

From Chapter 6. "NCAS Trip to Virginia: I Start Homeschooling"

This is the kind of thing that is very hard to describe, but I felt that I was taking in a lot of information. I learned a lot.

The first night, one of the first things that I did was help them set up the (conference) store. One of the adults came up

to Jerry and was talking to him, and then asked me if I wanted to help out with the store. Her name was Faye, and she has a son, Stewart, who is home schooling.

I priced the items in the store, and then set it up, and sold them. I went around looking for some other kids to help with the store. It turned out that I found two other kids to help....

Some of the people questioned the prices, especially since we had to take the tags off of the things that had been bought and raise the prices a little bit. We had to explain to them that we had to make a profit, and we certainly didn't want to take a loss, and that the money was going to the Coalition.

While running the store I met a lot of new people and made a lot of new friends.

At one point we moved the store from the dining hall down to the arts and crafts center. On the way walking down there I met a couple of kids from another school and I became friends with them, too. They were doing something really funny when I met them. They were pouring water over a kid's head and putting it in pony tails all over. It turned out that they were going to do a crazy barber act at the talent show. So they asked my new friend and I if we wanted to join the act. We said yes.

We had a day to practice for the talent show. Then we went down and signed up for it and got right to rehearsal. Meanwhile, this kid was getting ready to kill us because he was getting soaking wet.

Now the big night was coming close. We were getting all our props ready. We were just doing it ourselves. I came up with half of the lines and they came up with the other half.

Now it was time for us to go up on stage. A couple of them were a little nervous, but I wasn't. I think it went pretty well.

A few girls who were in my cabin did a dancing act. I think their act was probably the best one that night.

Speaking of my cabin, it was really nice. There were mostly girls from the Farm School. The only two boys in the cabin were two of the fathers of the girls. Jerry's cabin was next door. Our cabin was heated, one of the only three. I felt sorry for Jerry, who had to sleep in the cold one....

On the second day of the conference we went into Washington, DC on four coach busses. We were going to see our congressmen and go to see museums. We were going to see our congressmen to tell them about alternative education. The first thing that we did was we went to a couple of senators' offices. They weren't in, but we left them information. From Senator Moynahan's office we got passes to go into the Senate. The Senate is one of the places where they make all the laws, and we got to see a meeting in session....

After leaving Moynahan's office, we went over to the offices for the House of Representatives.... After that we went to the Capitol. We went to the dome. It was really pretty. It was so big that just looking up could make you dizzy. It's the largest cast iron dome in the world. It's over 100 years old....

At the conference, Jerry and I had a really good system: He'd put me to bed at night, and I'd wake him up in the morning. Sometimes he was hard to wake up, but I'd do it anyway, because I knew he wouldn't want to miss breakfast.....

I really enjoyed this trip. It gave me a chance to feel what it was like to have freedom. To me, freedom means a chance to make your own decisions. It's not just that you have to respect other people's rights. Even without freedom you have to respect other people's rights. But I felt that my right to make decisions was being respected also.

The kids there seemed to be more like me, and I was able to get along with them. Whenever I go to other places, kids are always so concerned about fashion, and I have to look exactly right, or I don't fit in. Here, I still wanted to look good, but I felt that I didn't have to be so worried whether I looked perfect or not. I feel that we were treated more fairly, and kids were treating each other more fairly. Their whole attitude toward life and what it means was different. They didn't believe in violence. They didn't exclude other kids because of their race or color. Their overall view seemed a lot better.

Finally the day came that we had to leave. I didn't enjoy having to leave, but it was just as well, because I couldn't spend the rest of my life there.

From Chapter 7. "Question Class"

One of the first things we did when we got back home was a question class, where Jerry asked me to just brainstorm any questions that came to my mind. Then I rated the ones I was most interested in, and we studied those first. These were the questions we came up with. The numbers are my rating, on a scale of ten. It took about a half hour.

What's the point of this?	7
How does a TV Work?	5
How did life on Earth start?	6
Why are kids mean to me?	8
Who invented the lamp shade?	5
Who thought of putting pockets in pants? Who invented the zipper? Buttons?	7
Who invented the belt?	*[sic]*
Who invented the computer? Who invented the Mouse[?] Who invented the name Apple? How come Apple and Macintosh are related (I don't think they even meant it)?	8
Who invented the cellular phone, answering machine?	7
Why doesn't my father live closer to me?	8
Who built the first house on Earth?	7
Why can't people get along more easily?	8
Who invented the piano? (Is that science or music?)	7
Who invented written music? Who was the first person to write music for the piano?	7
Who invented the desk, the table?	7
How can I make more friends?	7
Why don't I like to use the left hand in piano (I know the answer a little bit)?	6
Why do I dislike my art work, and other people always like it?	6
Who wrote the first map?	7
Who thought of having a leader for the first time? When did it first happen, in towns, cities, states, etc.?	8
Why did people start wearing make-up?	6
Where did the first languages come from? If they couldn't communicate with each other, how could they tell people what they meant?	8
Who was the first rock and roll group?	8
How much do electric guitars cost these days?	7
Who was the first farmer?	8

Why are all these questions "who was"? 7

How come most grown-ups never understand us kids? (You notice I say "most") 7

How come kids don't understand us kids, sometimes? 7

How come whenever deep down I'm getting tired of someone, I lose their phone number, and I don't even mean to? 7

How come there isn't life on other planets? 8

How come it appears that we know so much about outer space and we really know so little? 7

How is it possible that the universe is unlimited? It seems impossible. There's got to be some point at which it stops. 8

How come people believe in different religions and they have to be separated because of that? 7

How can I make more friends?
How come I have so much trouble making friends in the first place?
I don't think I'm so different from other people who are popular? *[sic]* What have I done wrong? 8

Who ever thought of having fun? 7

Who has time to have fun now anyway? 7

That's all I can think of.

Chapter 8. "Book Report on Panati's Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things'"

I read a book called "Panati's Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things." It explains where many ordinary things originated.

Jerry ran a question class for me. Most of the questions I asked were, "Where does it come from?'" So Jerry got this book which answers some of the questions I asked. I've learned a lot from it.

For example, do you know why men's and woman's clothes are buttoned differently? It's because men used to dress themselves and woman used to have people dress them. Ever since, woman have had to button their clothing backwards. Did you know that the first decorative buttons were made in 2000 B.C. or that they weren't used as fasteners until the 1200's?

I really enjoyed this book.

From Chapter 11. "Montana Trip Notes"

I had never even seen the outside of an AMTRACK train, except on a commercial. When I went inside, I explored the train for a while, and it's really amazing. They have a restaurant, the dining car, and it's almost like Bob's Big Boys, or something. The food is pretty good, and there's some really nice people. There's a lounge car where you can go to play cards, or buy snacks at the snack bar. On the Western train, they show movies each night in the lounge car. Some of the movies were "Uncle Buck", "Bat Man", "Cookie", "When Harry Met Sally", and they showed one of the old cartoons, "Top Cat." The Eastern trains are pretty small, but the Western trains are huge double deckers, and they're a lot more fancy. They don't show movies on the Eastern trains, but the Eastern trains are still comfortable to sleep in.

It was pretty comfortable to sleep on the train, although you had to sleep sitting up. The seats leaned back, but not very far. The only trouble with the Western trains was that they had a bar between the seats, so that, even if you got a double-seater, you had a bar on your back when you tried to lay down.

Some of the things we studied on the train were geography, studying the states that we traveled through on the train, math work book (Jerry helped me work on multiplying fractions, symmetry, and volume). In current events, we looked in the paper and read articles about apartheid in South Africa, Mohawk Indian History (the gambling problem on the Reservation—I read some of it, so it was also reading). Jerry taught me a card game called "Pig", and he says it's a lesson in observation, because when someone gets four of the same cards, they touch their nose, and you have to notice it first. We worked on vocabulary and spelling—we did crossword puzzles, about five of them. We did economics, looking in the stock market — Jerry had bought stock in Telephonos de Mexico, which is a Mexican telephone company. I learned how to look up the stock. I read some things in the "Unusual Origins of Everyday Things" book, about superstitions, such as black cats, "knock on wood", crossed fingers, "God bless you", sneezes, hot dogs, and wedding rings. In current events, we also read about how bears are being threatened, being hunted for their claws and their gall bladders, that the Japanese treasure dearly. We read about "Chorus Line", and its last production, which was also economics because we talked about how much money it took in. That night I took my "New Kids" book and read for a while. So, you see, in the first two days of the trip we did quite a lot, while we were on the train....

[On the night when we got to Sussex,] we had the first meeting of the people who were really interested in starting a school. It was at a church that said that they would let us meet there. The first thing that Jerry did was call the children up to the front of the room, and we formed a circle. We were going to attempt to have the first meeting of the new school.

I was the chairperson, and the girl sitting across from me kept the log. I thought that the meeting went pretty well, considering that it was the first meeting, and the kids didn't even know each other.

We talked about "rules" and "interests", and "parental supervision." We decided on a new way to vote. That was my idea: Two thirds of the people would have to vote on something in order for it to pass, like majority, but it had to be higher than majority. Also, the others, the minority, if they felt strongly enough, could call a revote. And that passed.

After that, we talked about what kids were interested in, and what they wanted to learn. A lot of kids were interested in math. Some of them said "recess". One of the kids was relating everything to his public school, and trying to make everything like his public school. So I asked him why he was relating everything to his public school, and not what he felt and he wanted. He said, "That's the only thing I have to relate it to."

We adjourned the meeting to the next day, and the kids went outside to play, while they showed a video, "Why do These Kids Love School?", and talked....

[The next day, for another meeting,] Jerry pulled us aside in a little room, and all the kids went in, and we tried to decide on a name for the school. We came up with a lot of things like Bitterroot, Grizzly Bear, Ponderosa, and Shiny Mountain. Then we went out into the big meeting, with the adults included. The adults put about thirty two other names into it. One of the people asked the eight year old kid who thought of the name why he put out "Shiny Mountain". He said, "Because that is one of the nick-names of the state." So someone said, well if that's

what it is, it should be "ShinING mountain, rather than ShinY Mountain." The boy said he had no objections to making the change. Then we voted on all of the names, got it down to ten, and then to four. Finally, we had the last two, which were Ponderosa and Shining Mountain. After the kid explained why he liked the name, a lot of the people changed their mind and started to like that, and finally, Shining Mountain won! So now the name of the school is going to be Shining Mountain School. Hopefully, it will be starting this fall.

After the meeting, Jerry's friend, Jerry Nichols, came to pick us up in a pick-up truck. He used to work at Jerry's School. He took us to his house in Stevensville, where he has 130 acres of property. We met his wife, Lisa, and their one year old daughter, and their twelve year old son, William. He LIKES to be called William. Most people never call me by my full name unless they're angry at me.

Jerry Nichols writes legal papers to save the trees. He stops people from cutting down large areas of trees in the wilderness areas. On the way to his house, he took us to a wildlife preserve, where we saw a lot of deer.

The next morning I took a walk into the hills with William. We saw a magpie nest. It had four babies in it....

I thought this trip was a good experience, especially helping people start a new school.

From Chapter 13. "Teen Trip to California"

The trip that I went on to California was different in many ways from the one to Montana. On this trip I was with a group of kids, and a lot of the kids were not from alternative schools or homeschoolers, but from public school. I thought that might be a problem, because they weren't used to the way that Jerry did things with alternative schooling, like meetings, the stop rule, and other things. The stop rule is where a kid says "stop!" if he is getting seriously mad about something, and the other kid may not realize it. It avoids lots of fights.

One of the purposes of the trip for Jerry was going to a conference of public alternatives at Stanford University....

We were going to catch the train at Grand Central Station in New York City. When we got there, we had one little problem: How do we carry our bags? Grand Central Station is a big place, and we had to walk all the way through it to find the people we had to meet there. I was finding all kinds of useful ways of carrying my bag. Of course, none of them worked for very long. I finally just decided to drag it along behind me. It kept banging into things and eventually tore my bag to shreds, but it was the best I could do....

Everybody eventually showed up, and we got on the train. Right away we began to see how much fun the train could be. As soon as our tickets were collected we started exploring the train. I don't think any of the other kids had ever been on an AMTRACK train before (Long Island Railroad is barely a train).

One of the first things that they discovered was the lounge and snack bar, where we spent most of our (conscious) time. By about 9:30, everybody except us was out of the lounge car, and we had it all to ourselves. We were all hanging out in there, and we had sort of a party. Then we had THE FIRST MEETING.

On the agenda for THE FIRST MEETING was 1. Rules 2. Caffeine 3. Bedtime.

I chaired the first meeting, because nobody really understood or cared who chaired the meeting, and Jerry, Tosha and I were the only ones who knew how to do it. For the rules, we decided that we would try for consensus, but if we couldn't get consensus, we would do majority vote, and if the smaller half felt strongly enough, then could call a re-vote. Although he didn't like to, Jerry reserved the right to make emergency decisions.

Then we came to number two on the agenda: Soft drinks with caffeine. Jerry brought it up because he knew caffeine kept him awake, and it kept most other people awake. So he proposed that after a certain hour, we stop drinking anything with caffeine in it. There were many objections, arguments and revotes. But we finally decided that, for that night it would be the choice of the person who was drinking it. Some people claimed not to be kept awake by caffeine. So we thought we'd try it for that first night and see what happened. Unfortunately, almost everyone stayed awake. Maybe it was because of the caffeine, or maybe it was just because we were excited because it was the first night. Even though, the next day we decided that people couldn't have caffeine (cokes, etc) past 9 PM. We eventually all agreed...

One of the funniest things on the trip was the way we cooked soup on the train. We would go downstairs to the bathroom, plug in Angela's teapot, and cook oriental soup in it. At one point we got kicked out and had to do it in the hallway. But it did save us money.

We went through Denver, Colorado, then went through the beautiful mountains and lots of tunnels. Later, it was up to 110 degrees in the desert, so the train had to slow down to 40 MPH because the tracks were expanding. We didn't realize it, because the train was air conditioned.

The train was very late getting to California, so they gave everybody on the train a free dinner in the diner.

Finally we got to Oakland. We were on the train almost three days.

We took a day to go to San Francisco. Awesome! The cable cars, the buildings weren't just square shaped and the people were NOT New Yorkers....

We went to Chinatown and looked in the stores and ate. Then we went on an outside elevator to the top of the Fairmont Hotel. The first feeling when you got on was WOW! Looking down on the whole city was really fun. We could point out the places we'd been and see the pyramid. After we got down, we decided to go up again. But that time, on the way down, some English guy pushed the "door open" button, so the elevator came to a stop, right where there were no floors, just cement wall. We were very high, just coming down from the top. Everybody got worried. Someone picked up the emergency phone, and they told him to push the little red button. But it was totally dark. We didn't know which little red button. Mike had a match and lit it so we could see. We found the button, pushed it, and finally we were on the way down. We hoped never to see that English guy again.

The next day we went on a cruise under the Golden Gate Bridge and we saw Alcatraz. It's a jail that they turned into a museum. It's the one David Copperfield broke out of. Then we went to Pier 39,.... the highlight of the trip [for some of my friends]. Personally, I wouldn't know because I spent the whole time in the arcade....

...[W]e went to the Exploratorium in San Francisco. It's like a really big hands-on museum. I love museums, especially a hands-on science museum. That's got to be the ideal museum in the world for me. One of the things I liked best was a large pin screen, where you put your hand under it, and

it comes out on top in the shape of your hand. I also liked the optical illusions center. In the sounds department, there was a place where you could talk into it, and it would say what you said backwards. So Jerry sang Row, Row, Row your Boat backwards into it, and it came out forward!

On our last day in San Francisco we went to Golden Gate Park and saw the Japanese Tea Garden. They had pagodas and weird bridges, and tiny trees, what do you all them? Bonsai? It was neat.

Then we went to the planetarium. I can't say anything special about it, because I've been to planetariums before, but I quite enjoyed it....

The train we took from Oakland went to LA along the coast. I remember looking over the edge sometimes and saying, "Whoa, are we going to fall in the water?"...

We got off the train at Los Angeles. When we got there we found out that the van that we rented wasn't there, so we all hung out at the train station until Jerry got it worked out. It wasn't too bad. We all had fun pushing each other on the luggage carts. Jerry was frantic, running around making phone calls....

Hollywood wasn't much like I thought it would be. I expected it to be all glamorous and sparkling, with all kinds of big signs. But basically what I saw was a place with stars on the sidewalk and a place where there were hand prints of the stars. It was not as clean as I pictured it....

We tried to get the group in to see the Laugh Factory, but we were too young. We needed to be 18 or over to get in because they served liquor. I thought that was stupid, but I guess they have their reasons.

After the Laugh Factory put down, we attempted to go up into the hills above Hollywood to see the homes of some of the actors and actresses. It was really nice up there. When you first looked off the edge of the hill, it was sort of frightening, because it was a long way down, but then when you got used to it, it was really neat, looking down on all the lights. The houses were all really big and very pretty. We passed a few signs that said "No Trespassing." "Keep out", "Beware" and other such things.

We had gotten tickets for a TV show called "Hold Everything" at the Chinese Theatre (where the movie stars' hand prints are). They were free, because they wanted an audience. Maybe they needed a clapping section.

The TV show was fun, and we almost got on camera. It was a game show in which they had stars, and they had to guess if someone on a video was going to do something or not. I knew one of the actors. He was from the show "Just the Ten of Us." We watched the taping of three shows in a row. They encouraged us to stay for all three by handing out raffles at the end.

What I thought was funny was, in one of the tapings, when the host was coming out, he tripped on a rug and he fell down. So they had to start taping all over again. Another funny part was when the host was supposed to say, "In this video the focus is on the lady in red" and instead he said, "The focus is on the lady in bed", so they had to retape that section, too.

The next day we went to Malibu Beach. It is mainly a surfing beach, but at one end there is some good body surfing waves. Jerry went in wading, and we pushed him in.

Then we went over to Venice Beach. When we got there it was getting dark, so we didn't go swimming, but we walked along the boardwalk and looked in different shops. Jerry's shirt was wet and it was getting cold, so he had to get a new shirt somewhere. He wanted to get the cheapest one possible. We went past a booth that had shirts that said, "Muscle Beach" on them. Jerry asked for the cheapest, which turned out to be a sleeveless muscle shirt, which definitely was not Jerry, but he got it anyway because it was only $2. I don't think he'll ever wear it again....

One of our biggest goals in the trip was to go to Disneyland. Finally that day arrived. The first thing Jerry did was take a picture of all of us.

I liked Space Mountain the best, even though it wasn't as fast as I thought it would be. I love fast roller coasters, as well as looping roller coasters. I think I went on about half the rides there. We stayed until late. We watched a little of the electric parade from the ski ride. I got a front seat view of the fireworks, and they were pretty good.

On the last day in the Los Angeles area we went to Universal Studios. It's a place where they make movies....

After Universal, we went back to...get our stuff and to bring it to the train station.

The only real thing that happened on the way from Los Angeles to Texas was that we saw a little bit of Mexico when we went through El Paso....

We...got on the train to Chicago. We went through Dallas, which had interesting architecture. In Chicago we had a few hours between trains.

It was finally my 11th birthday. It started out as the worst birthday ever. Because everything was going wrong: I had to spend it on a train, and almost lost $5 in the process. I made a bet with one of the kids that I thought was impossible for him to win, and he won. It was a card trick that he was doing. After he did it I remembered I knew the trick from magic class, which made me feel even worse, because I got suckered out on a trick that I knew. It was the trick where they bet you the next card they turn over will be your card, but they've already turned over your card. So you bet, and the dealer goes back and turns over your card again.

Then we had an argument because I said that I had my legs crossed, or something like that. Finally we got it settled and I said that I'd never make excuses about bets that I lost.

When we got to Chicago we went to the Sears Tower. It's known for being the tallest building in the world. From a distance it didn't look taller than the World Trade Center, but when you went up to the top and looked down it was amazing.

We couldn't find a decent place to go for my birthday, so we went to Burger King. Maybe I shouldn't put it that way, but at that time, that's how I felt.

We went back to the station and got on the train to New York. Nothing was really happening. We were all sitting around doing nothing, like seeing if we could drink coke without putting the can to our mouth. Then [a friend of mine] came to get me for a meeting. He said it was about cheating. So I went down to the lounge car for the meeting. Jerry sent me back and said to get the other girls. Then Tosha told me that the girls wanted to talk to me, and they talked to me about nothing.

Then we went back and started the meeting. Now the meeting was about nothing. I was beginning to wonder what this was all about.

Then, all of a sudden, a waiter walked down the aisle with a tray in his hand and a whole bunch of cake, singing "Happy Birthday"! Everybody yelled, "surprise!", and the whole lounge car started to sing. Then I figured that maybe the day wasn't so bad after all.

From Chapter 14, "Conclusion"

Now that you've heard about all my trips and experiences, you can see that I've met a lot of new kids and made a lot of new friends through homeschooling. I'm saying this for those of you who may think that I didn't socialize enough through homeschooling, or get enough time with my peers. It's even easier to make new friends through homeschooling because the kids are basically friendlier. Maybe it's because they're not under so much pressure from all the unnecessary work in public school and always having to give in to their peers about being cool, and looking "stylish" and knowing who are the "cool" people to hang with.

One of the best aspects of my homeschooling was getting to travel, because learning while traveling sure beats sitting in an old classroom any time, or sitting around the house. The reason that I think it's better is because you get to have fun while you're learning. You get to explore the world and what it really is. In school they teach math on a piece of paper. But through my travels I got to experience how to use math in real life. Not only math, but just about anything else that I'll need for life; like how to understand people and get along, and how to use language in communication to make contact with people, how to help people with their problems and how to solve problems. I also learned about current events and what's going on in the world.

At this point, the book is starting to annoy me because it's starting to sound like one big advertisement for homeschooling. So I should try to think of something bad to say about it.....UM.....I can't think of anything bad about it. Sorry. I mean who could miss staying after school every day or being yelled at by the teacher?

In this book I've given you some of my homeschooling experiences and some of the ways that we did things. But this isn't the way it has to be, because if you would like to start homeschooling, you should read other books and use your own ideas. I think that homeschooling is a good experience for both parents and children....

A postscript, by Jerry Mintz: Since writing her book, Jenifer Goldman went on to graduate from an alternative high school on Long Island. She applied to and received a scholarship from Bel Rea Institute, from which she was graduated with honors, becoming a licensed Veterinary Technician after passing her national boards. She is currently living with her father and her fiancé in Colorado, working in a veterinary laboratory, and helping her fiancé and father build up a video games store in Parker, Colorado. She will write about her life after homeschoolong in a future issue of Paths of Learning.

Editor's Note: For our special issue (October 2001), Jenifer will be contributing a retrospective postscript to this profile article. We invite all of our readers who have benefited from their meaningful educational paths to contribute their stories, as well.

The Soul of Education by Rachael Kessler

by Josette Luvmour

The consciousness of our children depends immeasurably on the way we educate them. The absence of connection to the mystery, to essence, remains the most glaring defect in education. This relationship to the whole self is intrinsic to holistic education and is a way to allow children to experience health and holiness. Nothing could be more important for the education of the child in this day and age. It is Rachael Kessler's eloquent exposition of how this essential educational concern has been approached by her and by others that makes *The Soul of Education*, her newest book, so important for anyone interested in education. Kessler shows us that an education which moves away from a compartmentalized reductionism approach and towards one that honors the whole human being necessarily includes the mystery that lies within us all.

The Soul of Education is a great contribution to helping teachers begin to unlock the mystery that lies within each child. By offering a tenable curriculum that is possible, promising and practical, this book provides many tried and tested ideas, as well as written accounts in the words of students, as to how educators can approach this enormous question of bringing inspiration and "soul" into the classroom. Especially enjoyable are the sections in which students themselves speak of the importance that meaning, purpose, and connection have had for them in combination with creative expression and moments of joy and transcendence.

Kessler embraces a shift in the emphasis of education from the punishing of dysfunctional behaviors—which manifest from the exigencies of psychological and emotional wounding—to the satisfying of students' deep inner needs and hunger for spiritual connection. When the needs are fulfilled, the aberrant behaviors fade away. This book is an important reminder that health and wholeness are our natural birthright. When nourished, humans return to the natural flow of health and "wellness." Without the nourishment of self-knowledge, we live in confusion and fear—fear of the unknown, fear of mystery, and fear of death.

The definition of the word "soul" in the English language changes with the philosophy, religion, organization or persons using it. In the introduction to her book, Kessler clarifies her meaning: "I use the word *soul* in this book to call for attention in schools to the inner life; to the depth dimension of human experience; to students' longings for something more than an ordinary, material, and fragmented existence" (p. x). This definition follows her clear statement of philosophy: "The body of the child will not grow if it is not fed; the mind will not flourish unless it is stimulated and guided. And the spirit will suffer if it is not nurtured. A soulful education embraces diverse ways to satisfy the spiritual hunger of today's youth. When guided to find constructive ways to express their spiritual longings, young people can find purpose in life, do better in school, strengthen ties to family and friends, and approach adult life with vitality and vision" (ibid.)

Kessler shares with us her rich work with hundreds of teenagers. She writes, "After listening for many years to their stories, questions, and wisdom, I began to see a pattern.... As the pattern became clearer, a map emerged. I found seven gateways to their souls, each gateway representing a set of key experiences embedded in their stories. Together these gateways offer both a language and a framework for developing practical teaching strategies to invite soul into the classroom" (p. 15, 16).

Honoring young voices, Kessler states, is a process of creating safety. This requires great sensitivity to the needs of the teens. Kessler recognizes teens need to self-govern and so she encourages teachers to allow them to design their own safe space ("ground rules"). She knows how difficult it is for them to trust themselves and one another and so she suggests that games and/or symbolic expression are used initially. Then, in a gracious act that truly honors students, Kessler turns the direction of the spiritual dialogue over to them.

To accomplish this, Kessler uses the Council Process, a process she has used for many years and to which she has contributed significant creative impulse. Council is a modern expression of a timeless Native American tradition and for many years Kessler has successfully found ways to make it relevant to modern students. In council, a "smooth stone is passed from speaker to speaker to designate who has the right to speak.... [As a way to honor everyone's voice, this process] protects each speaker from interruption" (p.14).

With safety established, children are able to speak on topics that have arisen out of their own questioning. Powerful, meaningful questions arise. Here's a very brief sampling: "Why do I feel so alone? How do people who love you, hurt you? Why? Why have we hurt the Earth? Is there a God? Where do we go when we die? How did life begin? How can I create the peace within me that will create peace in the Universe?"

Clearly Kessler cares about her students, and this caring may be the most important factor in creating the requisite safety. She enjoins teachers to reach into their own caring capacities. She reminds them that they need silence too. She talks of the risks and opportunities there are for teachers to engage in their own self-discovery. She even goes so far as to say that teachers not only have to self-discover, they have to have a collegial atmosphere that allows for the sharing of their insights.

Perhaps what is most exciting is that Kessler has a wonderfully broad perspective on the factors needed to bring spirituality into the classroom. Having seen to the safety and support of her students and teachers, Kessler directs us to the core of her inquiry: "The Seven Gateways to the Soul in Education." They are:

1. The yearning for deep connection
2. The longing for silence and solitude
3. The search for meaning and purpose
4. The hunger for joy and delight
5. The creative drive
6. The urge for transcendence
7. The need for Initiation

In the next seven chapters, Kessler, with a great deal of care, communicates to the reader exactly what she means by each of these "Seven Gateways." Laced throughout these chapters are stories of children's experiences told in their own words, stories that illustrate Kessler's points while always respecting the privacy of the students. While it is tempting to delineate what Kessler means by each of these I feel that right belongs to her and to you as you read the book. The names of the Gateways themselves—connection, silence, meaning, joy, creativity, transcendence and initiation—invite us into the children's lives, into Kessler's insights, and into our own self-discovery. It is beyond the work of a reviewer to prejudice that with her extrapolations and interpretations.

At EnCompass, a non-profit holistic family learning center I co-founded, I have facilitat-

ed Rites of Passage for children, adults, and for whole families together. I am also a student of spirituality and spiritual literature. Therefore, given my work and interests, I find it refreshing that Kessler relies on her own inquiries with students. The *Soul of Education* would not have the ring of authenticity that it does were it to depend on theory or scripture. Thus the value of this book reaches beyond the classroom teacher for whom it is primarily intended. Anyone who has teenagers in her or his life in any capacity, be it as a parent, youth group facilitator, or simply a neighbor, will find this book inspiring and useful.

This is not to say that Kessler has written some kind of manual. Even with this book, it will be difficult for adults who have not met the nurturing of their own deep inner or spiritual needs for silence, inspiration, and transcendence to guide a youth through a land they themselves have never walked. Moreover, Kessler writes, "If, as teachers, we do not have the support or guidance (in our own lives) to uncover what lies in our own shadows, we may hurt ourselves or our students. When we uncover what we too have disowned, we become much safer, more responsible teachers. What we do not see in ourselves we may project onto our students and colleagues.... What we suppress from our own awareness may erupt in ways that are often out of our control" (p.83).

Kessler has other words of caution which should not be underestimated. Diving deep into the heart of youth, we may inadvertently unleash a Pandora's box of pain, sorrow, loneliness, deep anguish or abuse. Without experience or training, the unskilled person would be faced immediately with his or her own shortcomings as well as potentially embarrassing or hurting the student. With the words of Lisa Lopez Levers, chair of the counseling and human development program at the University of Rochester's School of Education, Kessler offers the teacher/reader guidance on how to handle such pain and sorrow: "The teacher's job is to listen, be nonjudgmental, acknowledge that this is a really big problem, and have the pragmatic conversation: 'Who do we need to talk to next?'" (p. 111). In short, get help!

Kessler shows us that the thirst for transcendence or going beyond the limits of the known is present in every teenager. Transcendence offers the individual a new way of *seeing* which dawns from within. Young people are curious about but vulnerable in regard to these things: "If we do not guide young people into this domain, *they will go there without us* - and many lose their way" (p.134; author's italics). The urge for transcendence is recognized throughout holistic education. Scott Forbes, recipient of the first advanced degree offered by Oxford in holistic education and former headmaster of the Krishnamurti school at Brockwood, England, contends that "Ultimacy" is the aim of all holistic education. Our holistic approach to child development, Natural Learning Rhythms, points to the wisdom that is guiding each developmental stage. EnCompass is dedicated, in all of its programs, to honoring the transcendent in children, to "going there with them" as Rachael Kessler might say.

To understand the importance of transcendence for all humanity, consider the piercing question posed to us by Carl Rogers: "How does it happen that the deeper we go into ourselves as particular and unique, seeking for our own individual identity, the more we find the whole human species?"[1] The importance for each child to find this meaning and purpose in her or his own life goes beyond words. Perhaps we can understand how terrible the lack of appreciation for meaning and purpose is when we recall that we often drug our children who don't fit into the conventional definitions of how they should behave. Perhaps, instead, we should attempt to understand their motivation, and consider what it might it be like if we provided opportunities for their self -discovery, of meaning and purpose in their lives.

Carl Jung also spoke at length about the need of the human child to "individuate," a term he used in a way similar to Maslow's use of the term "self-actualization." In an interview, Jung pointed to social pressures which make people "stupider and more suggestible" and which work against individuation. When asked how this unfortunate gullibility could be cured, Jung responded that part of the solution lay in developing "[e]ducation for fuller consciousness."[2] In holistic development, we would say, education of the whole human being is inclusive of his/her wisdom nature. Rachael Kessler's book is a beautiful contribution to a curricular approach that addresses these fundamental issues. Kessler offers us a rich array of experiences that feed the deep inner and spiritual nature, a nature we might call "soul."

Notes:

1. Carl Rogers (1993) as quoted in Holistic Education: An Analysis of its Intellectual Precedents and Nature, Scott H. Forbes. Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1999. p. 90.

2. Carl Jung (1977b) as quoted in Holistic Education: An Analysis of its Intellectual Precedents and Nature, Scott H. Forbes. Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1999, p. 88.

The Soul of Education

by Rachael Kessler

Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, March 2000, 181 pp.

Josette Luvmour is the Founding Director of EnCompass, a center designed to support the well being and wholeness of children and families through an array of integrated holistic programs and facilities, and to engage Holistic Education in theory and practice. Josette serves at EnCompass as the Family and Adult Program Director. She is an author and consultant specializing in holistic education and family dynamics. Together with her husband, she created and developed Natural Learning Rhythms-a holistic understanding of child development that honors wholeness and well being in children. NLR is the basis and philosophical foundation of all of EnCompass' programs. Josette is the co-author of four books: *Natural Learning Rhythms,Everyone Wins, Tiger by the Tail*, and the soon to be published *Rites of Passage: Stages of Life: The Complete Family Guide*, she has worked with families, educators, therapists, and schools on all facets of relationships with children using NLR for over twenty-one years. EnCompass on the web: www.encompass-nlr.org

Simplify, Simplify

An Interview with Cecile Andrews

By
Charlie Miles and Jill Boone

Cecile Andrews is the author of The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life *(HarperCollins 1997). She is a former community college administrator who left her full-time job to devote herself to the spread of simplicity study circles. She directs the Simplicity Circles Project for Seeds of Simplicity (www.seedsofsimplicity.org), a program of Cornell University's Center for Religions, Ethics, and Social Policy.*
She has her doctorate in education from Stanford University, where she is at present a Visiting Scholar. She is writing another book, entitled The Barefoot Teacher's Handbook: Saving the Earth, her People, and Yourself. *For more information, visit Cecile's web site at www.simplicitycircles.com. Cecile can be reached at cecile@simplicitycircles.com. Her work is featured in the PBS documentary* Escape from Affluenza *and in Turner Broadcasting System's* Consumed by Consumption*, featuring Cecile, Phyllis Diller, and Ed Begley, Jr., and hosted by Jane Fonda. (Go to www.seedsofsimplicity.org).*

Editor's Introduction: *In May 2000, the Homeschool Association of California held a simplicity gathering at a retreat center in the San Bernardino Mountains. The featured speaker for the event was Cecile Andrews, a former college administrator who has become a prime mover in the simplicity movement. The author of the widely influential book* The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life*, Cecile is also a community educator, the writer of a weekly column for the* Seattle Times*, and a much requested workshop leader for simplicity gatherings. Those of us who were privileged enough to work with her at the gathering last May can easily understand why Cecile is in such demand.*

At our gathering, Paths *editorial assistant Charlie Miles and editorial board member Jill Boone interviewed Cecile for this issue of our magazine. As I think that you'll see both in the interview that follows and in the excerpts from her book that we reprint, Cecile embodies the principle that persons truly dedicated to social change work from their heart and in doing so enliven the spirit of us all. We hope that you enjoy this journey into a philosophy of simple living whose implications for the world at large are quite profound.*

—Richard Prystowsky

What is Voluntary Simplicity?

Charlie: I thought I would start by asking some basic questions about voluntary simplicity, for readers who may not know anything about it. In addition, a member of our editorial board, Robin Martin, has read your work and is a big fan of yours. She is sorry she couldn't be here to meet you, but she gave us some questions to ask.

Although the voluntary simplicity movement may be well known among many alternative thinkers, others of us are less familiar with the concept. Can you give us a little background information about what it is, and tell us specifically about how you became involved with it?

Cecile: I think of voluntary simplicity as the examined life, as a form of critical thinking, as a values clarification. Voluntary simplicity is the process in which we, as people, think through the consequences of our behavior on the quality of our lives, on the wider community, and on the environment. We have to think through the well being of the people and the planet. What are the long-term consequences of our behaviors, and what are the short-term consequences? For me, the important part is this thinking through.

In the simplicity movement there is, I think, a "school of thought," if you want to call it that, that does just give people a list of things to do. Some people believe they know exactly what others are supposed to be doing. If you aren't doing it, you are wrong. To me, that defeats the whole thing. We want to get people to think for themselves. I think our biggest problem is this kind of manipulation, people not thinking for themselves. That means, for me, that voluntary simplicity is critical thinking, in terms of people and the planet.

Ch: In your book you bring up the idea of authenticity.

Ce: It is interesting, because when I looked up the word "simplicity" in the dictionary, "authenticity" is actually listed as a meaning for simplicity. One of the things my editor wrote about my book, and that I really loved, had to do with the "stripping away of inessential things." You can say, really, that a person who is authentic is stripped away of inessential things, so they have stripped away all the stuff that isn't necessary. I have come to the conclusion that simplicity is the stripping away of stuff that isn't important, and that that leads to an authentic life.

Ch: Practitioners of simplicity, then, don't feel deprived, as if they are missing out on something?

Ce: Simplicity is definitely not deprivation. It is about figuring our how to have a more joyful, meaningful life! Sometimes I introduce myself as the hedonist of the simplicity movement. We are redefining the good life. It is not about more stuff or status, but about time for the things that matter, like friends, family, and community. It is about slowing down to enjoy the little things, taking time to laugh and hang out.

When I ask people "Who are the people you think of who have practiced the simple life?" most people will mention someone like Ghandi, Thoreau, or Mother Teresa. I usually bring up the ones that most people forget—Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre. They practiced the life of the café society, which is close to my vision of simplicity. In the café society, people gathered together, enjoying each other. To me, that definitely is not deprivation.

Ch: In reading your book, one of the things that struck me was your talking about eating out at restaurants. I was surprised by your thoughts on this, which gave such freedom and such permission. I thought, "You mean I don't have to be growing my own food, practicing organic agriculture, while doing all the other things I have to do in my life?"

Ce: Some people absolutely love growing their own food. They just absolutely love it. Now, I love eating it, but I like growing flowers, particularly wildflowers. I love to throw the seeds out, and I enjoy weeding. I have thought about this a lot. Why do I like to eat out so much? To me it is the café society. There is a whole lot of research that shows that the café society tends to be less of a consumer society. So, it is not just that I am a hedonist. However, there are a lot of people who would be very critical of me for saying that. I want to stay away from the "simplicity police."

I spent my early adult years doing a lot with the Quakers. I love this story about William Penn, one of the early Quakers. Quakers are pacifists, you know. This guy who had just become a Quaker came to Penn, and said, "Part of my uniform, part of my job, is to wear a sword. What should I do?" William Penn said, "Wear it as long as you are able. You only make these changes as a result of an inner prompting."

This thought ties into concepts about vegetarianism. I don't eat a lot of meat, but I am not a strict vegetarian. I really do not feel called to it, but the person I admire most in history is Thoreau. And Thoreau was a vegetarian. Nevertheless, I haven't adopted it just because Thoreau did it; but I do feel that eating less meat is important not only for the environment but also for my health.

So, simplicity is not self-deprivation. If people feel deprived, they are doing it wrong, and they are not going to attract other people to the movement. Others will feel repulsed.

Consumerism, Wealth, and Balance

Ch: Have you ever had anyone call you a socialist, and if you have, how do you respond to that?

Ce: If you look at socialist societies, which I very much prefer, I would probably prefer Sweden's system of doing things. But even there, even in socialist countries, people still consume a lot. Just because you are a socialist does not mean that you won't consume very much, although I have a feeling that there would be more balance there. I generally try not to put labels on things because people have such different ideas.

I have been speaking about this since 1992. Earlier, I was always speaking about women's things, and the thing I was asked to speak the most about was balance, which is just a short hop and a skip from simplicity. I usually will criticize the fact that we allow people to get really wealthy in this country. It is not fair. It is not a healthy thing to have gaps between the rich and the poor. I have always said that. When I used to say that, in 1992, I could watch the audience draw back in horror. Now, I don't get the same response. Instead, I get nods of agreement.

I feel strongly we are going to have to figure out some way to deal with the fact that we allow some people to be excessively wealthy, because it will hurt this country in the long run.

Ch: Do you have ideas about how to go about that?

Ce: Well, I think that one idea is progressive taxation. That is what we used to have. People who earned above a certain level were taxed at 90% of their income, I think. On the other hand, I also think that we are going to have to have—and we used to talk about this but we don't anymore—a guaranteed national income.

Voluntary simplicity is the process in which we, as people, think through the consequences of our behavior on the quality of our lives, on the wider community, and on the environment.

Now, it may have to be done in different ways. Instead of giving people money, give them health care or subsidized housing because, unfortunately, I don't think people know how to handle money.

We are going to have to talk about the whole thing of people saying that there has to be a ratio of something like 1:10 in terms of the pay of the top employees and the bottom employees. In the beginning, obviously, that's not going to be able to be legislated, but it is going to have to be done by example, which is, I think, the way things happen.

J: But that isn't an example that has caught on. There are businesses that do that, but we don't see many others following that example.

Ce: In fact, they have a hard time, like Ben and Jerry's. When they wanted to hire a CEO, they simply couldn't get one, and


Cecile Andrews

they had to make an exception to that rule. I think it is a very difficult problem, but maybe the first change will be campaign finance reform. The biggest thing that extreme wealth does is that it undermines democracy.

One of the obvious ways wealth undermines democracy is that rich people and corporations have too much influence on elected officials because of campaign donations. Further, we no longer have a free press—something essential to a democracy—because corporations own the television networks and they can control the news we hear. Magazine content is influenced by advertising.

But there are other, more subtle, issues: For instance, people of great wealth tend to go to more prestigious schools and get jobs that put them in positions of influence. Probably the greatest harm, though, is that people with less money often feel inferior to people with more money and feel that they have no right to speak up. I think that people must "feel" equal if we are to have a functioning democracy, and that isn't true in our society. In any event, as a start, people need to talk about this problem and keep talking about it.

Simplicity and Children

Ch: How does one go about teaching voluntary simplicity to kids? Kids are so easily influenced by what they see around them, and even kids like my own, who aren't exposed to a lot of media, nevertheless absorb what they see from billboards or hear on the radio. I have found that it is difficult, sometimes, to explain the relationship between what they are doing in their everyday lives and the overall health of the planet, as well as the relationship between what they are doing in their everyday lives and their inner lives. Can you talk a bit about this?

Ce: Well, it is interesting. My kids are now 30 and 31 years old. I always did have a television. I told them, "You can only watch something that you really love." I didn't say, "You can only watch for a 1/2 hour," or something like that. And somehow, for them, that seemed to work. But now, if I had kids today, I don't think that I would have a television, just because I wouldn't want the hassle of arguing all the time. I think that now the pressure by the media to go after kids has become so much more intense.

J: I think that when we think of children and voluntary simplicity, we think of them not consuming. It becomes an anti-consumer movement, which is a difficult thing to teach to children. But if you look at the voluntary simplicity movement as following your passion, then that is something that we can impart to our children. After that, the thing with the consumerism and what they buy tends to get in line. If they are really granted the freedom and encouraged to follow what is in their hearts and go in that direction, then....

Ce: Yes, I think that that is the ultimate. People who follow their passions have no desire to go to the shopping mall. I have a chapter on that in my book, and I think that that is the ultimate answer. Those of you at this weekend's gathering have been homeschooling and so you have been able to control this somewhat, but when we think about what goes on in the schools, with Channel One and all of the advertising.... Again, I think we are going to have to step in with legislation at some point. In other countries, it is illegal to advertise to kids. The citizens in these other countries think that advertising to kids is not fair. It is improper, like selling drugs to them. You can't do it.

Do you know about the book on the Virtues Project? Have you ever seen that? I don't know if it has been widely published. It is a little thing for families that features a virtue a week, let's say "courage." They will provide a very simple definition of what it is, and then ask, "What do people who are courageous do? What does it look like?" The purpose of the book is to help families sit down and have a discussion about this virtue, kind of like a family study circle [editor's note: see the book excerpts following this interview, especially the excerpt entitled "Why Study Circles?". The family members can then reflect on how they have acted on this virtue today, what made it difficult to act on this virtue, and so on. The book covers all the important virtues: Courage, integrity, love, and compassion. These are the things that we are really talking about. The thing, I think, that makes the most difference, is what kids see their parents do.

I was thinking about simplicity when my kids were little, and I sent them to alternative schools. The name of their first school was Orca, and it was called that after Jacques Cousteau came to Seattle. There was a huge theme of environmentalism. My kids grew up with those themes, and they didn't just come from us. The schools took them on protest marches, especially about the environment. They would carry these big signs saying "Save the Whales."

During the very brief time when Carter was president, we had a 55 mile per hour speed limit, and at that time my husband was an environmental reporter. We had this little thing that we kept in the car that said, "55 Please." We would drive down

Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre. They practiced the life of the café society, which is close to my vision of simplicity. In the café society, people gathered together, enjoying each other. To me, that definitely is not deprivation.

I think that alternative education and voluntary simplicity are all part of this counter cultural movement that is trying to move against a commercialized society that says that "more is better," that we have to "move up," that we should accumulate more stuff. We are resisting. We are saying, "No. There are other things in life that are more important."

the highways, and if we saw people going faster, the kids would flash them the sign that said "55 Please." The kids, of course, loved that. My son, Daniel, would hold the sign up and chant at the same time, "Save the Whales! Save the Whales!" At first, I thought it was funny because there is no obvious connection between the two. But underneath, of course there was!

So I think that when kids get to go to protest, when they are around it, this just becomes their way of thinking. Later, my daughter went to Evergreen, and that way of thinking was continued because Evergreen is an alternative college. I have pictures of my kids lying on the floor listening to adults talk. They were really quiet, shy kids, and so they didn't want to join in much, but I think that this listening to adults talk is an incredible thing. Having a study circle and allowing the kids to listen in on the discussions is good for them.

Both of my kids have turned out okay. My son doesn't even have a bank account, doesn't have a car, and he hitch hikes across Hawaii. He lives on Maui, in a town that seems as if the sixties have never left. There are places like that. Daniel barters for where he lives; sometimes he barters for food. My daughter is a computer programmer, but she and her husband, who does sign language for a local high school, live on less than one income and they save almost all of their money. They think, "Well, this is what you do, isn't it?" As a result, before they were even thirty, they bought a house in Seattle, after they had both worked part-time for several years.

I think that the important thing is the conversation that people can have about these issues. We will never have any change unless we talk about change. The study circles are a way to formally talk about issues, but we should talk about issues like simplicity or advertising with our families in particular. As John Dewey said, "Democracy begins in conversation."

Getting By with Less

Ch: Recently, I took my daughter to a concert at Universal Studios, and I had to wait a few hours while she attended the concert. Outside of Universal Studios is a street called City Walk, which is just lined with shops. My idea was to go sit in a café and drink coffee for four hours, but I had my son with me and that was not his idea of a good time. He wanted to move, and so we went through every shop there. I was exhausted by the time the concert was over because I had spent the entire time talking to him about what was for sale. He, of course, found in every store at least one thing that he thought he might like to have. Over and over I would have to go through an explanation of why it was probably not a good purchase, and how even though now it seemed like a really cool thing, would he really use it once he got it home, and on and on. He was so taken in.

Ce: Exhausting! One of my friends decided that she was going to quit working so she could stay home, and she told me, "I

Jill Boone and Cecile Andrews

can honestly say to my kids, 'We can't afford it. If I were working full time, I would be lying if I said that.'" So I think that is a very interesting insight. When the kids complain, you can say, "Well, would you prefer that I went back to work?" Usually, kids will say, "No."

J: Just last week I was talking to my kids about possibly relocating to New England, and I told my three kids, "Look at it this way. If I went and did this particular job that I would really love, and I had my place to live in, and I had a minimum income, you guys would all get college scholarships." They were all denied scholarships because I make too much money. We all looked at that and said, "How can they think that I have this much money, $7,000 per kid for college?" My kids thought about it and said, "Wow, that's really cool." By limiting my income, I would open up a door that would help them in their education. Perhaps it would be worth it. There are all sorts of back roads into doing things.

Ce: One of the things that we have done, that I would never have thought of, is that we have this really big house, in this wonderful part of town that everybody is dying to live in. There is no way we would want to sell it, but it is a very big house, much bigger than we need. And so, we have created an apartment on the top floor and an apartment on the bottom floor, and we only live in between. Property prices in Seattle right now are not as bad as in the Bay Area, but housing is scarce. So we rent out the top and the bottom. We saved up our money so we could pay our house off, and that helps me to not have to earn as much money.

Ten years ago I would never have thought of that. I would have thought, "What will people think? Poor Paul and Cecile have to take in boarders! They're failing! They are failures!" But now—and this is what is great about being in the Simplicity Movement— they think, "She's simplifying her life!"

Voluntary Simplicity and Alternative Education

Ch: This question was written by Robin Martin, who is the Coordinator for the Paths of Learning Resource Center. She wanted me to ask you how voluntary simplicity and the alternative education movement can complement each other. Do you consider voluntary simplicity a movement?

Ce: I do consider it a movement. I know it is a movement because I have been in so many. It is nice being my age because I have been able to participate in the peace movement, the women's movement, and in the civil right's movement. And I can tell, not just because of numbers, but by how excited people get that voluntary simplicity is a movement. In the early women's movement, people talked about that "click" that enabled them to suddenly see things differently. And that same thing happens with simplicity. Suddenly people just see things differently. I know it is a movement, partially by numbers and partially by the way I see people become so excited.

I think that alternative education and voluntary simplicity are all part of this counter cultural movement that is trying to move against a commercialized society that says that "more is better," that we have to "move up," that we should accumulate more stuff. We are resisting. We are saying, "No. There are other things in life that are more important." The thing that is the biggest mover for the simplicity movement is, of course, the environment. Most of alternative education, I think, also pays attention to the environment.

I usually will criticize the fact that we allow people to get really wealthy in this country. It is not fair. It is not a healthy thing to have gaps between the rich and the poor. I have always said that.

So I see the similarities to lie in resisting this commercialized society. Voluntary simplicity would probably not succeed without an alternative education movement. And I think that alternative education means not only for kids, but also for adults, which is what I see in study circles. I think that it would be interesting for me sometime to hear your views on what happens when your kids, who have been homeschooled all their lives, encounter the culture's values in college. The values in colleges now are sometimes no better than the values in the public schools. How do we deal with that?

As I said, I had the alternative of sending my daughter to Evergreen, which is right down the street. The values are great, it was a good price, and it was wonderful. But we don't have a whole lot of Evergreens around. We still have this in us, this desire to have our kids go to the best college. Going to the best college does not make these kids happy, necessarily. They have more suicides at Stanford.... They encounter so much pressure.

What can we do for alternative education for adults?

Ch: I think that is a really good question. As homeschoolers, we often say that we don't only homeschool our kids; we homeschool ourselves, too, or we "de-school" ourselves. We try to examine the values, the school values, that we unconsciously internalized and have taken with us, and then sometimes harmfully put forth on our children.

Ce: Right. And they are going to get that in college.

J: They tend to go into college, though, with a slightly different point of view because they really are themselves. At least this was true for my two. When they went to college, they were able to combat it. They were able to look at it and say, "What is this?" and not become part of it, not become caught up in it.

Ce: And if they are able to resist, then it is better. But are we giving them positive alternatives that do what schools should be doing? Maybe Antioch does that, and perhaps Goddard.

J: But it is possible, perhaps, to get it in other places besides school. My daughter Cristie, who is almost 22, spent five months in Europe and traveled and worked in outdoor education and achieved a lot of what we hope that kids will get in a college education in alternative ways.

Ce: Right. That is very important. And of course more and more schools are starting to give credit for experiences outside of a traditional setting.

Simplicity Circles

J: Can you tell us about simplicity circles, give us just a brief description? How do they work?

Ce: The simplicity circle comes from Sweden. It is basically a small group of people who get together and educate themselves. I took the form of the study circle, which always totally fascinated me, because it allows people to go on educating themselves. It is so close to homeschooling because it is people taking charge of their own education. In Sweden, they have actually referred to it as "Education by the people, for the people and of the people."

I took the form of the study circle from Sweden, and the philosophy from Folk Education from Denmark. Study circles were used in Sweden in the 19th century to try to find a way to help the peasants learn the skills of democracy. "Folk Education" is the name of an approach to adult education that is very popular in Denmark. "Folk" education means "people's" education. Both approaches are very similar—essentially, they are a way of adults educating themselves. These two approaches are grounded in the belief that people can find their own answers in their own experience. They don't need the experts and authorities telling them what to think. This is the belief that people know enough already, but that they need to be brought together in a setting where they can talk about it.

What I did when I wrote the book, *Circles of Simplicity*, and even before, was to run a whole lot of study circles to see what would work. I knew intuitively that I wanted people to feel free to speak, to feel not judged, to feel non-competitive, to be changed by the experience. I kept trying to figure out what would do this. I had had lots of experiences with dysfunctional discussion groups. You know, we replicate what we have experienced in college, which is to fight to prove who is the smartest, to compete for who knows the most, to participate in very subtle put-downs. So I thought, "What can I do?"

I was on a list-serv once that was the most brutal list-serv that I had ever seen. People were practically calling each other names. The moderator came on and said, "Remember the rules! Don't attack each other. Be open to new ideas," and on and on. They all came back and said, "We thought that that

was what we were doing!" I thought to myself, "Wow! Rules don't work." Instead, we have to change the structure.

I have been in women's consciousness raising groups. I have gone to Al Anon. From all these groups, the thing that I remember the most is going around the circle. I don't know if you have been to a 12-Step Group, but people go around the circle and they tell their story. Others sit and listen to people go on and on. It is incredible. I tried to put together all of these different ideas.

The simplicity circle comes from Sweden. It is basically a small group of people who get together and educate themselves.... It is so close to homeschooling because it is people taking charge of their own education.

I go to places where people will say, "Let's break up into small groups so that we can talk more easily." And they break up into groups of 15. With a group that large, you are still fighting for air time.

I wanted to make many changes so that it would be a really incredible experience. I decided that simplicity study groups have to be small. I tried different sizes. We are going to go around the circle. We are going to use our personal story.

I am sure that you guys have led groups. When you lead a group, sooner or later you become a police officer, trying to get this person to be quiet, draw that person out. You have taken control. On the one hand, there are people who will control a group. I certainly was. I was always a person who talks a lot in a group. Talkative people never think they are getting enough time, anyway; at least that is true for me. On the other hand, my husband, who is totally quiet, doesn't want to be drawn out. He doesn't want someone to say, "Paul, what do you think?" But he would still like to talk.

I realized that if you have people go around and time themselves it eliminates the problem. The fact that no one is competing for air time anymore is an incredible burden lifted. So people use an old fashioned egg timer that automatically gives them three minutes.

Ch: And what is the ideal size of a group?

Ce: Between 6 and 8, just like a good dinner party. In this way, everyone gets a chance to talk. If you go up to 10 people, and you are there for two hours, no one will have as much time to talk. 4 will work, but 6 is the ideal. Going around the circle, when people are no longer competing for air time, really relieves a burden, both for the talkative ones and for the quiet ones.

I have made several changes to what we normally experience when working in a group. First, the size. Second, going around a circle, but timing ourselves. I don't pass a talking stick because I feel like it is a rip off of Native American things.

Ch: In Sweden, do they limit the size of study circles, and do they time themselves?

Ce: Well, it is interesting. I don't know a whole lot about how they do the Swedish ones. I have read some about it, but they mainly talk about it in theory.

J: Do they do study circles on different topics?

Ce: Yes. They do them on everything. In fact, one of the things I think is so fascinating is that the government uses study circles not only to inform people about issues but also to get feedback from them. For instance, at the time we had our debacle over health care when the Clintons first came into the White House, if we had had study circles all over the country, we could really have studied this. Instead, we were at the mercy of what we heard. People bought those horrible advertisements, those "commercials." Sweden uses study circles for all kinds of things.

They are on all sorts of topics. Recently, an exciting thing happened to me. Periodically, I go through the simple living network on-line, and I found a simplicity circle in Sweden that was using my book. I was so excited. I e-mailed them, and talked to a fellow. It was exciting because study circles came from here and went to Sweden, then came back to here and then back to Sweden.

In the early 19th century, when Sweden was very poor, people visited the United States to look at our form of adult education in our Chatauqua movement. Part of this movement was the home study circle. The study circles were started in the 1870s, and by 1915 there were 15,000 circles. Many of them were women's study circles, a reaction to the fact that women were not allowed to go to college, although most people didn't go to college then, anyway. The Swedes took the concept of the study circle back to Sweden with them, and used the concept to help create a country that is one of the most committed to the welfare of people and the planet. Sweden has been called a "Study Circle Democracy," and two-thirds of adults there participate in study circles at some time in their lives. So, in a sense, we have brought study circles back to their birth place. When I discovered someone in Sweden using my book to start study circles, I felt the circle (pun intended) was complete.

The Examined Life

Ch: How do simplicity study circles give people a chance to lead an "examined life"?

Ce: Simplicity circles give people a chance to lead the examined life because there are so few opportunities in our society to reflect and discuss—two things essential to an "examined life."

The whole purpose of the simplicity movement is to figure out what matters, what is important, so you must take time to think and talk about the issues. In simplicity we want people to learn to resist the manipulation of the commercial society and to trust themselves, to trust their own judgment. In a simplicity circle, you have people listen and take you seriously and affirm your experiences, something that is rare in our regular lives. The very act of being listened to helps you learn to trust yourself.

Ch: What happens when a couple in a committed relationship differ in their approach to simple living? What if one person is drawn to materialism, sees shopping as a kind of entertainment, whereas the other person would like to simplify his/her life?

Ce: I think that this can be very difficult, but is really no different from other fundamental disagreements. I don't believe in telling people how they should live, even a husband! Money has always been a big problem for couples. When you talk about simplicity, you move to bigger issues, like, "What are our true goals?" If a husband and wife find some bigger

goals, they usually want to consume less so that they have the freedom to pursue those goals. They learn to live more frugally, something that is only a part of simplicity.

So instead of just focusing on money, a couple might want to develop long-term goals of working less, or traveling, or moving to the country, etc. When they focus on the bigger questions of how they want to live, then living more frugally comes naturally.

It always comes back to conversation. Simplicity begins in conversation.

Ch: I heard, Cecile, that you attended the WTO protests that were held in Seattle. I am curious about your reaction to them and your reaction to the way in which they were reported.

Ce: Yes, most of us involved in simplicity were in the WTO demonstrations. My husband and I were home by the time the riots started! Most of the people were totally peaceful and ecstatic about being able to express their values and opinions.

The small groups who disrupted things knew they had to do this to get any attention at all! The press would have ignored the thousands who where there if there had not been some disruption.

But think of it! There really was no real violence. No one was killed. Now of course, the police didn't handle things well, but ultimately the whole experience got us attention! The sad thing to me is that we haven't found a way to keep the focus. Here is where study circles would have been important. We must bring people together to keep them talking, keep them educating themselves.

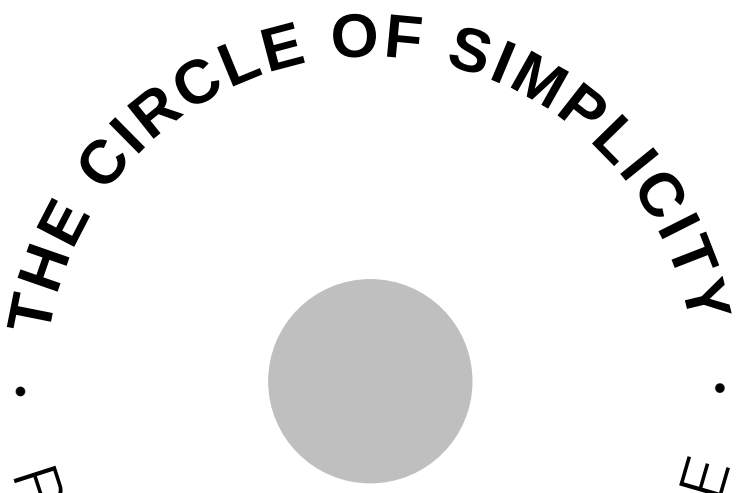
Ch: Bringing people together, in cafés or in study groups, to converse and recognize each other seems to be the emphasis of your work.

Ce: What we need to remember is that we are all searching for ways to live a joyful, meaningful life. To do that, we must take the time to think and reflect. We must ask, "What is important?" "What matters?"

Study circles are a way to ask those questions, and simplicity is the answer many people have discovered. The simplicity movement is redefining success, redefining "The Good Life." It is challenging the idea that more is always better. The simplicity movement is an effort to live with more balance and harmony—harmony with oneself, with others and with the earth. People see simplicity as a way to spend more time with their friends and families, a way to begin to save the earth, a way to rebuild concern for community and the common good. It is a way to challenge a culture that has come to accept profit as its central goal. We are asking for a new bottom line, a triple bottom line: First a concern for people and the planet, and then profit.

I always end any talk as I ended my book, with Thoreau's words as he redefines success: "I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual. It is surprising how contented one can be with nothing definite, only a sense of existence. My breath is sweet to me. O how I laugh when I think of my vague indefinite riches. No run on my bank can drain it, for my wealth is not possession but enjoyment."

If the day and the night are such that you greet them with joy, and life emits a fragrance, like flowers and sweet-scented herbs, is more elastic, starry and immortal—that is your success.



by Cecile Andrews

WHY REDUCE CONSUMPTION?

Consumerism destroys nature. As William Wordsworth wrote, "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers: Little we see in Nature that is ours."

Many experts give us only thirty to forty years before we reach the point at which our damage to the environment becomes irreparable. Much of this damage is the result of the things we buy. The production of every single product means we have used up some of the earth. We can see it by taking a look at something as mundane as a hamburger. The *Use Less Stuff Report* takes us step by step: first, the bun. It's made of flour, which starts out as a grain, which is grown with water, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, and sometimes fungicides. When the seed is sown and the grain harvested, farmers use tractors and threshers and combines, which are made out of metal (which has its own production process) and use lots of oil. Using oil, of course, uses up a finite resource and pollutes the air with carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas which causes global warming.

Then the grain is transported, sorted, milled, stored, and sent to bakeries. The buns are wrapped in plastic and shipped to stores. Every step burns fuel and produces pollution.

We haven't even reached the beef! Once again, we start with grain for feed. Then lots of water, until the cow is big enough to he shipped off to the stockyard and then to the processing plant where it is slaughtered, packaged, and shipped to warehouses in refrigerator cars and trucks.

At the warehouse, the meat is ground into patties, frozen, and stored. Then it's shipped in freezer trucks to restaurants where it's kept cold until ready to cook, using more energy. Each step uses up resources, particularly oil. And we haven't talked about cutting down the rain forests in order to graze cattle, which further produces global warming.

For one little hamburger are we willing to bring ourselves closer to a barren planet? Global warming means drastic shifts in climate, with hot places like the Midwest turning into deserts. It means the flooding of sea coast towns as the oceans rise, and the drying up of water sources. Air pollution means plants die, people die.

How can we save the earth? The fate of the environment depends on the directions of technology, population, and consumption. We need more efficient technology, like solar heating and electric cars, and we need to reduce the birthrate. Until recently, people had assumed that those two were enough. Now we know that it is just as important to reduce the rate of consumption by major industrial countries. For instance, we have more cars, we drive more, we have bigger houses, we have more air-conditioning, we fly more, we eat higher off the food chain. The industrialized fourth of the world uses fifteen times as much paper, ten times as much steel, and twelve times as much fuel as the rest of the world. American houses are twice as big as they were forty-five years ago; we have more shopping centers than high schools; we drink more soft drinks than tap water. In our time-starved lives we turn to environmentally expensive conveniences: prepared foods, disposables, clothes dryers, and kitchen appliances. We're using up nature.

WHY DO WE CONSUME?

Think of the last time you went shopping. Not just to get something you needed, but when you went just to browse, to walk around. Think about why you went, what you felt like. I know I've gone shopping when I've felt bored and anxious. We're anesthetized by the ersatz music, the artificial lights, the bright unnatural colors, the white noise, the carefully controlled temperature. Thank God, no real life intrudes. We can escape. And it's so clean and neat, and the sales people are so nice. Why do I have to go home to that messy kitchen and those whining kids?

Not surprisingly, many of the reasons that we shop are similar to the reasons for not shopping. They are the other side of the coin. While consumerism decreases self-esteem,

we turn to it hoping to *increase* our self-esteem. This is why author Philip Slater talks about *wealth addiction*. Just as in drug addiction, we keep going back to the thing that we know will eventually kill us. We get a high from it, but sooner or later the high wears off, and we need a stronger fix. I think of it as the Costco high! It's a cold and rainy Sunday afternoon, you haven't seen the sun in months, you're sick of your dirty house, so you go to Costco. It's exciting getting all that stuff for so cheap. But the thrill wears off, and next Sunday you re back for more.

Slater has said that we consume because we are empty and trying to fill up that emptiness. What is the cause of this emptiness? Much of our emptiness comes from not meeting our real needs for self-esteem and community. We need to feel accepted and acceptable, to feel that we have value, that we are unique, that people care for us. We all must have a sense of our own worth, a sense of being valued. But our uncaring society has undermined it. Consumption tries to fill this need in several ways.

The Alternative Shopping List: Becoming a Caring Consumer

1. ***Do I really need this? Is there anything I can use instead?***
   Here's where the joys of ingenuity come in. It's fun to find substitutes. For instance, do you really need a nightgown or pajamas when a big shirt will do as well?

2. ***How will this item affect the quality of my life?***
   Will it help me engage in life more fully, like sheet music or gardening supplies or a swimming suit? Or will it just make me more passive—like an extra TV?

3. ***Is the cost of the item worth the amount of time it takes to earn the money to buy it?***
   This is the question suggested by Dominguez and Robin in *Your Money or Your Life*. For instance, how many hours do you have to work to buy your daily espressos? Is it worth it? You may say yes, but at least you've thought about it.

4. ***Could you buy it used? Borrow it? Rent it? Share the purchase with someone else?***
   Buying a used car can save thousands of dollars. Or, think of buying a car with someone else and sharing it. Or try to get along without a car and rent one when you need it.

5. ***Where should you buy it?***
   Consider these possibilities:
   - A small, locally owned business that keeps your money circulating in the community
   - A business you value, one that adds life to the community—like an independent book store
   - A business that contributes to the community, perhaps by donating to a charity
   - A business that treats its employees well
   - A cooperative or worker-owned business, particularly one where you can be a member and have input

6. ***How will this purchase affect the environment?***
   - Is it biodegradable? (Compare your dish-washing soaps and cleaning agents.)
   - Can it be recycled or repaired? (Don't use disposables like disposable batteries or cameras,)
   - Will it use up resources to maintain? (A hand mower uses up much fewer resources than does an electric or gas powered one.)
   - Is it over-packaged? Packaging pollutes, uses up resources, and swells our landfills. (If you can't avoid it, try leaving the packaging with the store.)
   - Can you buy it in bulk and avoid packaging altogether?
   - How far do you have to drive to buy it?
   - Is it worth wasting your time and your gas to drive a long distance to save a few cents?
   - Where is it made? How much energy was used to import it? Think of the energy costs to ship that pineapple from Hawaii. Do you really need a pineapple? When you do purchase something not made here, try to buy things made in Scandinavia, where the regulations on environmental damage are stronger than ours.

7. ***How were the people who made it treated?***
   Were they paid poorly? Was their health put at risk with pesticides? Were American jobs lost so corporations could make bigger profits?

Remind yourself that the more we consume cheap things from other countries, the less likely corporations are to make high-quality things in this country.

Some worry that if we reduce consumption, we're not being loyal Americans. But don't confuse being loyal to a corporation with being loyal to this country. We are forsaking our values of life, liberty, and justice for all by consuming, not by reducing our consuming.

If we reduce consuming, our corporations will have to change. They should reduce the wages to their top CEOs before we start worrying about their well-being. In 1995, many CEOs' income packages doubled as they laid off masses of workers.

Instead of buying an item, spend money for services that keep people employed. Whenever I eat at a small, locally owned restaurant, I know I'm helping keep six or seven people employed.

FINDING AND LIVING YOUR PASSION

> Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it onto future generations.
>
> —George Benard Shaw

> Most of us would like to end our lives feeling both that we had a good time and that we left the world a little better than we found it.
>
> —Philip Slater

The October 26, 1995, edition of the *Seattle Times* had a story about a seventy-seven-year-old woman who discovered that she had accidentally saved a million dollars. She did not realize she had reached a million until her broker told her. How did she do it? Had she spent her life pinching pennies, poring over the stock market reports, and figuring out the best investments? Had she worked as a doctor or a lawyer, earning big money?

No, for most of her life she had worked at modestly paying service jobs, and for the previous several years she had worked as a volunteer: at the age of seventy-seven she spent three weeks teaching English to children in a remote Polish village. At seventy-six she was part of the disaster-response team that went to Houston after a major flood. At seventy-five, she learned cross-country skiing in Finland. For years she volunteered as a *guardian ad litem* in the court system, working for the interests of children.

She was simply more interested in life than in shopping and spending money. And of course, hers is not an isolated story. More and more people are realizing that high pay is meaningless if you don't get joy out of what you're doing. Read the daily paper and you'll read about the corporate vice president who resigns his job to teach high school, the college dean who resigns to live in the country and write, the executive vice-president of sales who turns her back on her $250,000 job to become a carpenter.

They all say that they've never been happier. And further, you will almost never find them at the malls. They simply have too many things that they would rather do. It's obvious, then, that the very best way to reduce your consumption is to get involved with your passion, doing something that you absolutely love to do, something that is much more exciting and challenging than shopping malls or television.

One of the core concepts of voluntary simplicity, then, is finding your passion.

Some live as artists traditionally have—finding a source of income that takes as little of their time and energy as possible and devoting the best of themselves to their passion. If they make money, great; if they don't, they keep on trying. As one artist said to me, "When the economy collapses, it's not going to make much difference to the artists. We're the cockroaches of society, and we can survive anything."

In fact, it was a conversation with a friend about artists that helped me decide to give up my well-paid, secure, full-time position. She said, "You should think of your teaching as your art. Artists have always been willing to sacrifice for their art."

And then, I realized, we should all think of ourselves as artists.

WHY STUDY CIRCLES?

As long as you live, keep learning how to live.

—Seneca

...Let us then discuss as quickly as we can the sort of education that is needed... let it be founded on poverty.... Next, what should be taught in the new college, the poor college? Not the arts of dominating other people; not the arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital.... It should teach the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds, and the little arts of talk.

...The aim of the new college, the cheap college, should be not to segregate and specialize, but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to cooperate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life. The teachers should be drawn from the good livers as well as from the good thinkers.... Competition would be abolished. Life would be open and easy. People who love learning for itself would gladly come there. Musicians, painters, writers, would teach there, because they would learn. What could be of greater help to a writer than to discuss the art of writing with people who were thinking not of examinations or degrees or of what honour or profit they could make literature give them but of the art itself?

They would come to the poor college and practise their arts there because it would be a place where society was free; not parcelled out into the miserable distinctions of rich and poor, of clever and stupid; but where all the different degrees and kinds of mind, body and soul merit operated. Let us then found this new college; this poor college; in which learning is sought for itself; where advertisement is abolished; and there are no degrees; and lectures are not given, and sermons are not preached, and the old poisoned vanities and parades which breed competition and jealousy.... The letter broke off there.

—Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf wrote *Three Guineas*, from which the quotation above is taken, on the eve of World War II, shortly before she ended her life by walking into the sea. In this passage, Woolf is answering a letter to someone who has asked her to use her influence to help stop war. In considering how to stop war, she naturally thinks of education, but she realizes that education helps produce war, because it perpetuates the traditions of competition and greed. So she proposes a free college, an experimental college.

That's what simplicity study circles are: they are free schools, schools for life, a learning experience that helps people break free. Their goal is similar to Woolf's goal: to teach people to talk together about real things and make real changes.

In one sense, study circles are remedial. They are trying to correct or counteract the evils and failures of our schooling. Virginia Woolf captures the true meaning of what study circles do—teach us the *arts of human intercourse* and how to be *good livers* as well as *good thinkers*. This is not what we learn in school.

Think about your experience in school. What was it like? Do humiliation and shame come to mind? One woman remembered a time in her childhood when she was singing with the other kids, and the teacher stopped and said, "So

you're the one who's been singing flat!" She never sang in school again.

Most of us have a story like that. My worst one was from graduate school, when I would meet with my dissertation committee. As I sat there listening to them tear my work to shreds, I kept repeating to myself, "I am not going to cry." Since that time, I've always thought about writing an article called "Groveling My Way to a Doctorate." It's hard to get through school with your sense of self-esteem in good shape.

But it's not just that schools undermine our self-esteem, they seem to be totally unaware that there are problems in the world. Schools act as if there is nothing wrong. They act like the environment has nothing to do with them. But our problems are everyone's problems.

To more fully understand the need for study circles, we need to get a clearer picture of how schools are failing us.

HOW SCHOOLS FAIL US

- Schools are not giving people the skills to solve the problems they will face in life. In fact, many of our problems in the world are caused by educated people. It was educated people who developed the nuclear bomb, educated people who develop weapons; it is educated people who use up the world's resources.

- Our schools fail to nurture the values of *caring and community*—values that people will increasingly need to survive in an ugly world. Instead, we are taught to compete and win. Without a value system of caring, a community will not survive. Many of the Germans working with Hitler were highly educated people.

- Our system of *democracy is undermined* because students don't experience democracy in the classroom. Democracy doesn't just mean voting. It means participating, joining in, speaking up, having your say, getting involved. Instead, students sit and take notes and ask, "Will that be on the test?"

- We live in a society where most people have i*nferiority* complexes. When you're working for a grade, you're working on someone else's goals and learning someone else's answers—and you're not developing the inner authority that allows you to believe in yourself.

- Schools also give us *superiority* complexes. Schools encourage an arrogance in us, causing us to disregard the ideas of other cultures at home and around the world.

- By focusing on the intellect and learning to be "objective," *we do not learn to feel deeply about things* and thus, cannot discover our passion, or care about the problems facing us, or even develop lasting relationships. If you ever got really excited about something in college, you knew that you had lost the argument. To win, you had to stay cool.

- We learn an *adversarial approach to the truth*. We learn to fight over who's right or wrong, who possesses the truth. It's a consumerist approach to the truth. We learn that truth is something that exists independently of us. It's something the people who write books know, something that only the "great minds" possess. We don't learn that there are many different routes to the truth, that we can all create and discover knowledge and wisdom ourselves.

- The academic world makes us feel inferior about our intelligence because the academic world *speaks in jargon which few can understand*. People feel stupid when they read an academic work. They don't say, "Why can't this person communicate better!" They say, "I can't understand, I must be stupid."

Education as it exists *creates a caste system*. In our society people with more education not only get better jobs, they are treated with more deference, have more privileges. Schools are often only a "legitimizing factor," that is, it is really one's income and educational background that guarantee success. Of course, a few poor people always sneak through so that people can say the system is fair. Tokens are always used to make a closed system seem open. Schools support a society that is "parcelled out into the miserable distinctions of rich and poor, of clever and stupid."

We need something different. We need to develop, again in Virginia Woolf's words, "good livers as well as good thinkers." Nell Noddings, Stanford professor of education and author of *Caring,* says the main role of schools should be caring—to teach caring and to give students the experience of being cared for. Imagine if we adopted Nodding's curriculum: caring for the self, caring for others, caring for the planet, caring for animals, caring for things. One simple concept and we could change the world.

Ultimately, schools should move away from their narrow focus on training people for jobs. They must focus on *learning for life*: learning that is concerned about the preservation of life, learning that helps people live life fully.

SIMPLICITY CIRCLES AS LEARNING FOR LIFE

Life-Enhancing

Learning for life is the central concept of simplicity circles. *In learning for life* simplicity circles, the purpose is to learn how to live life to the fullest. You don't struggle to memorize a computer program that may be out of date when you get a job. You learn how to discover what really gives you joy. In this approach to education, you don't just read and take notes on a book and continue with life as usual—you renew and revitalize your life.

Life-Transforming

Did your schools really transform your life? Can you even remember one fraction of the facts you learned? All those facts we memorized! What difference did it make? *Learning for life* is not about gaining credentials or absorbing information. Simplicity circles help you become a different person, a transformed person.

Learning to Sustain Life

In school, we learn a little about our ancestors, but do we ever discuss our descendants? That is, do we think about what life will be like for our grandchildren, do we learn to care about them? Simplicity circles must help us discover how to live so that future generations can live.

Answering Basic Life Questions

When was Napoleon born? What is the theory of relativity? Would you rather learn to answer those questions or the basic life questions of Who am I and How should I live my life? Which set of questions will help you live more fully? Simplicity circles help you discover the meaning and purpose of life.

Whole-Life Learning

Think of a person you admire. Are they cold and rational, inspiring respect and fear? Or are they warm and lively, people who smile and laugh a lot? Can you connect with them emotionally as well as intellectually? No one learns with just their head. We need to integrate emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and moral learning. In Woolf's words, "The aim of the new college...should be not to segregate and specialize, but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body

can be made to cooperate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life." Simplicity circles combine laughter with reflection, feeling with analysis.

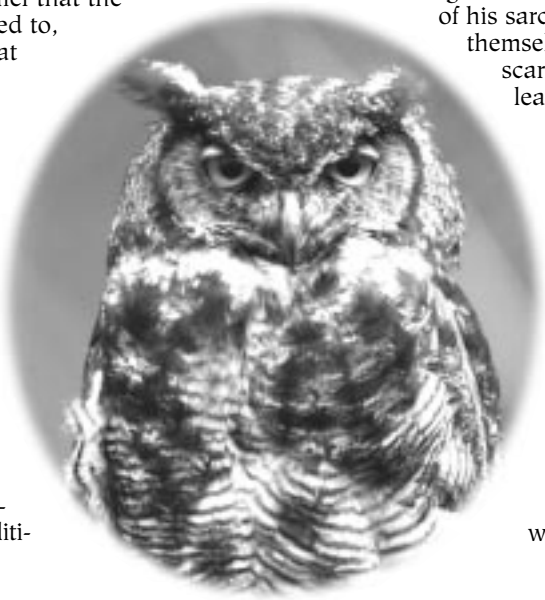
Living Democracy

What is one of the most humiliating thing[s] you can experience? To be raked over the coals by your boss, to be chastised and demeaned and not be able to respond, nor speak up and defend yourself. That is the workplace for many today. Our life blood is speaking up. Defending our own dignity: that's the core of democracy. Simplicity circles strive for a democratic community—a community based on the belief in the individual, a belief that the common person must be treated with dignity. It is the belief that the average citizen must speak up, be listened to, and make a difference. It is the belief that experts and authorities won't solve our problems, only the ordinary person has this power.

In a simplicity circle, since people are equal and equally responsible, they learn to move away from domination and submission. A simplicity circle creates what Lappe and Dubois call *living democracy*—democracy that gives power to the ordinary citizen.

Understanding Life Around Us

How do you decide how to vote? How do you decide what car to buy? People need to be able to make decisions in their own long-term best interests and to recognize when others, like politicians or advertisers, are trying to manipulate or exploit them. In simplicity circles people share their knowledge, pool their information, help each other analyze the forces in everyday life that work to undermine the common good.



Enlivenment: Bringing New Vitality to Learning and Life

How many lectures did you fall asleep in during college? How often did you drag from class to class, waiting for the day to be over to begin your real life? Or, think about the way you would freeze up around some college professors. I remember an economics teacher I had in graduate school. There was no way I would risk raising my hand and suffering one of his cutting comments. My mind was numbed by dread of his sarcastic statements. Students often find themselves bored and dozing in one class, scared to death in another. How much learning takes place?

Learning shouldn't be boring or deadening or full of fear. Learning should make us feel alive, excited about life: it should be *enlivening*. Simplicity circles are enlivening because people are talking about real things and no one is grading you or judging you. People leave each meeting feeling more energetic, more hopeful—more alive.

Simplicity circles, then, are vital to preserving life, to understanding life, and to living life fully. They are a way to make life "open and easy. People who love learning for itself would gladly come there.

Learning More About Voluntary Simplicity

A Resource List Compiled by Robin Martin

Voluntary simplicity is a growing movement, inspiring thousands of people every year. Whether you are teaching, home schooling, or learning in alternative ways, simplicity circles and study groups around the world offer informal, life-sustaining ways of enlivening your own self-education.

Circles of Simplicity: How To Get Involved

As explained by the Seeds of Simplicity web site, "A Simplicity Circle is a participatory, small group form of personal and social transformation that helps people lead lives of high satisfaction and low environmental impact."

To learn more about Voluntary Simplicity and how to create study groups, or circles, in your own local area, please visit "Questions & Answers On The Road To The Circle Of Simplicity," online at: www.seedsofsimplicity.org/circlesfaq.asp. Or, pick up a copy of *The Circle of Simplicity* at your local library or bookstore. In it, Part Seven: Keeping the Fires Burning (pp. 203-241) is all about the whys and hows of simplicity circles.

To join or start your own simplicity circle, tap into the growing database of study groups and simplicity circles at www.simplicitycircles.com. With listings in every state and around the world, you can find the study group nearest to you or announce a new group that you would like to start with friends and neighbors.

Recommended Books on Voluntary Simplicity

The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life, by Cecile Andrews (1997, HarperCollins). Using the metaphor of gathering around a campfire, Andrews paints a vision of learning that is about personal meaning and social change—"rekindling our sense of joy in life." After showing how "The American Dream" translates into "The American Nightmare" within our social institutions, Andrews builds on the works of Thoreau, the Quakers, and Duane Elgin to portray another vision for clearing space to live life more fully.

Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective, edited by Michael Schut, (1999, Earth Ministry). A collection of essays from more than 20 respected authors in the area of voluntary simplicity, this expanded revision of their successful *Simplicity as Compassion* provides an excellent anthology for individual study. Although this book is meant for churches, the selections are quite radical and not necessarily Christian. (For more information see: http://www.earthministry.org/SLCL.htm, or call Earth Ministry, 206-632-2426.)

Voluntary Simplicity, by Duane Elgin (1981, Bantam/William Morrow). Elgin describes why most industrialized countries are now in the "winter" of their development, a stage of systems breakdown. For Elgin, the answer to a smooth transition from the "breakdown" era of despair to the "high growth" era of faith is multifaceted-cutting across many dimensions of ourselves and society. He writes about the importance of moving toward greater awareness of possibilities for recreating meaning in our lives and finding a common social purpose toward revitalizing civilization.

Walden, by Henry David Thoreau (many publications available). Thoreau writes, "I went into the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach." *Walden* is a classic in literature and although written in a different century from ours, it shows the heart of voluntary simplicity. For more information about Thoreau, the Walden Institute has created the Thoreau HomePage -ambitiously attempting to bring together everything by and about Thoreau, http://www.walden.org/thoreau. For used versions of *Walden*, search www.bibliofind.com, where you can find dozens of copies on sale around the world from 95 cents to $350.

Your Money or Your Life: Transforming Your Relationship With Money & Achieving Financial Independence, by Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin (1993, The New Road Map Foundation). This best-selling book details a nine step program for becoming financially independent ("FI"). The authors describe how we can develop a healthier relationship with money; get out of debt and develop savings; resolve inner conflicts between values and lifestyles; convert problems into opportunities to learn new skills; attain a wholeness of livelihood and lifestyle; and save the planet while saving money.

Select Videos on Simplicity

Affluenza (1997, NPR) - Produced by John de Graaf, this 57-minute video examines the high cost of achieving the most extravagant lifestyle the world has ever seen. In 1996, Americans, who make up only five percent of the world's population, used nearly a third of its resources and produced almost half of its hazardous waste. Add overwork, personal stress, the erosion of family and community, skyrocketing debt and the growing gap between rich and poor, and it is easy to understand why some people say that the American Dream is no bargain. Many are opting out of the consumer chase, redefining the Dream, and making "voluntary simplicity" one of the top 10 trends of the past decade. Copies of *Affluenza*, as well as its sequel *Escape From Affluenza*, are available from the "Resources" section of www.simpleliving.net.

Escape From Affluenza - one-hour PBS special providing practical solutions to the problem of "affluenza," the epidemic of stress, waste, over-consumption, and environmental decay. *Escape From Affluenza* shows how some Americans are calling a halt to keeping up with the Joneses and abandoning the consumer chase. More information and copies are available from KCTS online at: http://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/escape/

People Count: Consumed With Consumption (2000, TBS) - an expansion of CNN's Fall 1999 segment (30 minutes - available free in Sept. 2000 with a membership in *Seeds of Simplicity*, http://www.seedsofsimplicity.org/join.asp)

For additional books, videos, or other resources about voluntary simplicity and related topics, please visit Simple Living Network's online Resources database, online at http://www.simpleliving.net/.

Organizations and Web Sites on Simplicity

Center for the New American Dream - a not-for-profit membership-based organization that helps individuals and institutions reduce and shift consumption to enhance our quality of life and protect the environment. Its web site offers free monthly features, take-action ideas, online discussion, and a site map linking you to a wide array of educational issues from agriculture to justice, and much more. http://www.newdream.org/

Folk and People's Education Association of America (FPEAA) - although not called "simplicity," the activities and intentions of the FPEAA are directly related, and in many ways serve as the historic precursor to the simplicity movement. According to its mission statement, FPEAA "is a grass-roots association of North American folk schools, popular education centers, community and academic institutions, resource organizations, and individuals. The common thread is involvement or interest in learning that affirms life and strives to build communities that are just, democratic, and environmentally sustainable." http://www.peopleseducation.org/

HopeDance Magazine - "the purpose of HopeDance is simply to report on the inspiring activities of creative, loving, and outstanding individuals and organizations (regardless of their spiritual tradition or political agenda) that truly make a difference." http://www.hopedance.org/

New Roadmap Foundation (NRM) - This is perhaps the most well-known of the simplicity organizations, its founders include the authors of the best-selling book *Your Money or Your Life.* As an all-volunteer organization, NRM promotes service as a route to personal health and social revitalization. To date, their primary educational works have focused on personal finances, health and human relations. NRM also offers grants to educational programs and other nonprofit organizations that model and teach frugality, reducing consumption, and service. http://www.newroadmap.org/

Northwest Earth Institute - "The Northwest Earth Institute is a pioneer in taking earth-centered education programs to people where they spend their time—in their neighborhoods, workplaces, homes, schools, and centers of faith." http://www.nwei.org/

Seeds of Simplicity - this is the organization that Cecile founded. It is a national, nonprofit membership organization working to help mainstream and symbolize voluntary simplicity as an authentic social and environmental issue. As a membership organization, it offers free resources on simplicity to anyone who joins. Other benefits include free consultation to members on starting or maintaining a circle. Address: P.O. Box 9955, Glendale, CA 91226; phone and fax: (818) 247-4332, 1-877-UNSTUFF. http://www.seedsofsimplicity.org/

Simple Living Network - Probably the largest voluntary simplicity site on the Internet, Simple Living Network offers a wide range of simple living resources to the general public. In addition to worldwide resources and networks of people, this site also offers an interactive guide called the Web of Simplicity that provides an overview of the movement, highlights core resources, and gives a virtual tour of this growing web site. http://www.simpleliving.net/

YES! A Journal of Positive Futures - published by the Positive Futures Network whose goal is "to enhance the power of people working to create a more just, sustainable, and compassionate future by increasing their public visibility, their sense of interconnection, and their access to visions, tools, stories and techniques for change." http://www.futurenet.org/

If you would like more information about these and other resources, we invite you to visit our Online Action Guides, at http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm, where you can more easily link to the referenced books and web sites as well. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about simplicity and education, just call 1-800-639-4122.

Wishing

by Cristie Boone

I wish I could dance through life like I did last night

I could feel the rhythm down to the very creases on the bottoms of my feet
a pulse not quite my own
intertwining with my heartbeat
sending freedom surging through my veins

I was dancing into myself
taking the very essence of Me and letting it move my limbs
curve my arms
toss my head
close my eyes and twirl

Pure expression
no thought
no preconceptions
no self-doubt

Three hours of powerful liberation
a brief note in time wherein I find I can speak with my deepest instincts
I can reach that place in myself that I usually keep hidden
I can move my darkest wordless secrets up and out
and show the circle that there is true beauty in honesty

The passion was enough to nearly make me cry
immense desire to rip through my own tender spirituality
tear through any fragile glass bubble of a barrier I may have built
to expose myself to you as who I truly am

There is strength in connection
cleansing in the sweat that meandered down my skin
vivid expression in the aches that still manifest in my calves
and my shoulders

Eyes closed
still balanced
still swaying
I found my truth in simple perfect rhythm

I wish I could dance through life like I did last night.

Cristie was and always will be a homeschooler, but she's also now happily studying at the University of Washington. She wishes she had more time to dance.

Editor's Note: *One evening, at the simplicity retreat featuring Cecile Andrews, some of us gathered to do some group drumming. As the evening progressed, several persons began dancing to our drumming, clearly letting themselves go and experiencing, from what we could tell, a wonderful sense of freedom. Their dancing quickly became an inseparable part of the group encounter, in which drummers and dancers formed a wonderful whole.*

Among these dancers were the siblings Cristie, Curtis, and Paul Boone. The drumming went on, nonstop, for hours, as did their dancing. They danced to the drumming; they danced to each other; they danced with the spirit that filled the room with wonder, electricity, and synergistic energy.

Not long afterwards, we at Paths *received this poem, written by Cristie Boone, which moved us deeply. We offer it to you, our readers, so that, by reading it, you, too, can join the dance.*

Relational Education
What It Is, What It Does

Editor's Introduction: *About a year ago, Emanuel Pariser, a member of our editorial board, and Mary Leue, our Editor Emerita, began discussing the idea of our publishing a cluster of articles on the concept of "relational education." The concept, in its various manifestations, is central to the work of most, if not all, good-faith educators, whether or not they use or are familiar with the term "relational education." To help showcase this approach to teaching and learning—an approach that focuses on honoring the relational dynamics in the student-teacher partnership—we present, below, three articles on relational education, written by three veteran teachers of this practice. We invite you, our readers, to send us your own stories involving relational education—whether or not you yourself use this term, and whether or not your stories have to do with school experiences* per se*. Like relations themselves, relational educational experiences are many and varied. We'd like to hear about yours.*

An Open Letter to An Educator
by Emanuel Pariser

12/12/00

Dear Educator,

I am writing you as a teacher/counselor who has worked with students for the past 27 years. The Community School in Camden, Maine, founded in 1973, is an "alternative" high school that only accepts students who have left conventional schools and have chosen to come and learn with us. We now run three programs - Residential, Passages, and Outreach. The Residential program accepts eight students twice a year for a five and a half month term during which they can complete high school regardless of prior academic performance. The Outreach program serves graduates, their families, and students who dropped out of the residential program, as well as teacher/interns. Begun in 1994, Passages, is the nation's only home-based "Walkabout" program for 26 teen parents, bringing high school to their homes.

Our students at the Cschool (as we refer to it), despite all they have experienced, haven't given in to cynicism, or rage or despair. At the Community School they have found a place where they have chosen to be, where they fit, and where they can achieve their goal of completing high school. After many students and many years since we began, we have come to call the focus of our work "Relational Education."

What is Relational Education?

To practice "Relational Education," a school or learning community puts a primary emphasis on creating an environment where all members of the community develop healthy, reciprocal relationships. These relationships strive to be authentic, and to be embedded with trust, intimacy, curiosity, and nurturance. We have identified some of the core elements of relationally focused programs: Creating a sense of trust, paying respectful attention, developing strong advisor/advisee relationships, creating a sense of belonging, allowing for informal time between all members of the community, working to develop the co-creation of knowledge, and creating student centered curricula. Although this is not an exhaustive list, it is a fairly good start. In any event, the guiding principle behind this practice is that if one honors the heart, the mind will follow.

Why Do We Need Relational Education?

We are all human beings with the same fundamental needs to be engaged in meaningful activity, to be connected to others we respect, to be learning about who we are, to be cherished, and to cherish others. I will let Ron Miller, author and educator, describe the importance of this in the following quote from the May 1999 conference on Relational Education we held in Camden, Maine:

"What has always struck me about the Community School is that it is doing education the way human beings should be learning. It brings us back to what education really should be. We are told in the national media that the tragedy of Columbine High School is a wake-up call but there is not much agreement about what it is we are supposed to wake up to. Is it that we need more metal detectors or should we be censoring videos or that there is evil in the world that we forgot about. And I believe that what we are being asked to wake up to is that we have forgotten what it means to be a human being. For many thousands of years we have evolved into creatures who learn through community, through partic-

Emanuel Pariser co-founded and co-directs the Community School with Dora Lievow. Emanuel has been writing and thinking about Relational Education since 1973 when the CSchool was started. The Community School is a learning community for nontraditional students and unconventional teachers.

ipation in things that matter to the people around us and in the last 100 or 200 years we have developed a culture that is technocratic and mechanical and reductionistic and we have lost the human connection between the learner and the community, between the learner and the natural world." [1]

At the turn of the twentieth century we live in a social flux that has never been more fragmented. Since the 1960s the nuclear family has been changing dramatically. More than 50% of children in schools today have experienced the divorce of their parents. A large percentage of students have always lived with a single parent. Many students now live in blended or mixed families, where each member of the family can have a different last name, and no two children may have the same biological parents. The extended family has also weakened: In 1900, 96% of us lived in walking distance of a relative; in 1999, 4% of us do. There are few aunts, uncles or grandparents to fill in when relationships at home get strained or stop working.

"yeah I have attention deficit, I never got enough attention when I was growing up, I crave it now!"

For many teenagers, informal time with adults is almost non-existent – in school they are in classes only with age mates and teachers have little time for informal, personal interactions. For students undergoing cataclysmic personal changes, the relevance of the curriculum to their lives takes on a heightened importance. They need an anchor; something "to grasp", to hold on to, in Jeanne Bamberger's words. Any curriculum that does not engage them, that does not allow for the adults present to truly pay attention to them will be resisted and rejected. Curriculum must be connected to their world in order to be worth studying and this study must include both the tremendous suffering they are encountering and the interests and passions they have developed.[2]

We need to look at how education can work for the majority of students who, unsettled from a home life in flux, without serious responsibilities in any of their living environments (school, home, community), without real connections to powerful, fulfilled adults, are drifting through life under a barrage of "identity creating" advertising that tells them that to be "real" is to own a fancy car and wear clothes with the right names on them; to be known is to be seen on T.V., and to be happy is to have a lot of money and products. Relational education is an antithetical challenge to all of this.

Let's begin, then, with some of the basic elements of a relationally focused education.

Core Elements of Relational Education

Trust

How does one build a sense of trust and intimacy within a learning community? In a relationship between adult and adolescent, student and teacher?

Due to the betrayals and dysfunctions that many Cschool students have experienced they have good cause to be distrustful of adults. They have good cause to expect that the future will bring nothing worth working for because "things never work out." So, how do we build trusting relationships at the Community School? Key program elements that develop trust at the Cschool are: Choice - students have chosen to come to us of their own free will, they have applied to the School, gone through an extensive interview process, and have had the courage to continue their education despite being shamed for being pregnant or having a baby; Sensible structure - day to day life in residence at the Cschool makes sense - students work at jobs in the community during the day, are responsible for daily household chores, and study at night; for Passages students who get taught at home, day to day life is a constant challenge, but it makes sense for them to learn in an environment in which they can be close to their children. Finally, paying attention to who our students are is a critical aspect of building trust. Below, I will elaborate on how we do this:

Paying Respectful Attention

In 1962 Paul Goodman wrote that "adolescents (in America) are spiritually abandoned. They are insulated by not being taken seriously...Disregarded by adults, they have in turn excluded adult guidance."[3] "Terry" (not her real name), a graduate of the CSchool, recently commented that as a teenager she often felt that her life had no meaning.

When she saw the world this way she wondered what she could possibly gain from positive efforts. Why not find pleasure wherever and whenever available? Fortunately, she also had a sense that finishing school was worth doing and that perhaps if she completed something she would find meaning in her life, and/or that her life had meaning.

As Terry reflected on her experience at the Community School, she said that it was at the school that she began to take herself seriously, because other people were paying attention and listening to her. For the first time she experienced adults who took her seriously, who wanted to know what she thought and felt, and who also expected her to manage a wide range of tasks and responsibilities. Her life began to have meaning to her because she saw that it had meaning to others.

Deborah Meier, who also spoke at the May conference on Relational Education, describes the importance of this kind of attention:

"One reason we need to keep our schools small and close and know our young people well is because it is only those of us who love them for who they are right now who can really protect their interest in who they could become tomorrow. This is enormously important in the culture we are currently in because decisions are being made about our kids that are increasingly removed from the people who cherish the children themselves for who they are right now. And I remember when I think about that, that it isn't only a need of children, it is a need of all of us as human beings to be in an environment where we are respected and the phrase that comes to mind is respectful affection or affectionate respect."[4]

Advisor/Advisee Relationships

At the Community School we have an advisor-advisee system that brings students together with a teacher/counselor on a weekly basis for what we call a "one-to-one meeting". In these meetings that last anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour, the teacher/counselor becomes active listener, coach, cheerleader, manager, and empathic audience. The student is given the space to share the most immediate issues in his/her life.

"... the guiding principle behind this practice is that if one honors the heart, the mind will follow."

When a one-to-one pair works, the teacher/counselor focuses caring, respectful attention on the student, subtly encouraging the student to focus the same attention on herself. The student has a chance to get to know her teacher/counselor in a more complete way as well. Expectations of support and acceptance get built between the pair. A successful one-to-one process elegantly encourages students to open up to other members of the school community, as well as to themselves, by giving them a sense of themselves as persons who are worth paying attention to, and by giving them a successful experience trusting and being trusted by an adult.

Advisor/advisee relationships can be problematic. Relationships between one-to-ones can get too exclusive - the bond can become an alliance - a separation from the community instead of a bridge to it. The relationship may never really develop into a trusting resource for the student. Issues may arise that require a deeper level of counseling and therapy, and the advisor may feel overwhelmed by them. Or a relationship may not weather a "betrayal" of the developing

trust. In this instance, if our learning community is functioning well, relationships with other adults and peers will informally take the place of a non-functioning one-to-one.

The increasing national interest in mentoring relationships stems precisely from the identified need for every young person to be connected in a positive fashion to at least one adult. Advisorial systems have been successfully incorporated into public high schools - The Jefferson County Open School, in Evergreen, Colorado started by Arnie Langberg,[5] has a very strong advisorial system (for an in depth discussion see Tom Gregory's book *Making High School Work*) and I am sure many other schools have found this an incredibly effective tool for building the trust needed to sustain a meaningful educational enterprise.

To become effective "one-to-ones", teachers have to go beyond the blackboard, and past the field of multiple choice questions into the messy, entangled curriculum of the student's life. We have rarely been trained for this work by our schools of education or through professional development. In fact we may have been led to believe that this is what guidance counselors and social workers are for, and that we should not be getting "close" with students because we do not have sufficient "counseling" training! (This is wonderfully circular reasoning - the institution won't provide you with the training to do a job that it won't hire people to do, and that you can't do because you haven't had the training to do it.)

As with any skill some people are naturals and others find it a challenge. Not everyone has an empathic supportive presence conducive to helping others become more open - but this quality is not necessary for a one-to-one to work. Ultimately, and here is a leap of faith, it is the actual human encounter, the being together, the connection that can be or that can lead to transformative experiences for the one-to-one dyad. Formalizing a structured advisorial system in which student and teacher can really listen and speak creates a crucial foundation for the development of trusting relationships.

Brenda Wentworth, a 1979 Community School graduate, who is now a social worker writes of this experience: "Meanwhile back at the Community School some staff person was deciding to make me her social cause of the year, or so I thought. Yes, I was a bit jaded for such a young one. Anyway whatever the reason, she took to focusing her love on me. I didn't trust her, pushed her away with words and behaviors, but she wouldn't budge.

She just stayed in my face with that stupid smile on hers and her arms opened wide...at a distance of course, which is all I would allow. Under the gates of my resistance, she slith-

ered. I couldn't seem to defend myself from her insidious persistence. No judgments, no scorn, just gentleness and persistence.....

No matter what asinine behavior I exhibited, she always took the time to comfort me BEFORE asking " what had happened, why, and what could I do differently next time"...I found myself wanting to please her...to get her attention and win her approval.... She had succeeded where many others had failed; she loved me unconditionally, just because I was alive and in her mind deserved a chance. With that she began to crack my solid steel fortress of rage and despair."[6]

Twenty two years later Brenda clearly remembers the impact this relationship had on her. When schools do not make this kind of opportunity available they create situations such as those that Deborah Meier describes below:

"My son went to a large New York City high school. He realized there wasn't a single teacher who could write him a letter of reference. Not because he had a bad record in that school, it was because there wasn't a single adult in that school who knew him. As a result there was no particular reason for me to have any relationship with that high school because there was no one there I could have an alliance with because the odds were there was no one in that high school that knew my son well enough for me to go in and consult with.

So we have created schools in which not only young people are powerless but adults are powerless. More and more not only are young people not known by these adults, but these adults are not adults who could help them learn to be grownups. You can't learn to be a tennis player without having tennis players around you. You can't learn to play basketball without having basketball players around you. We have asked our young people to grow up into grownups in the absence of grownups, in the absence of people around who are powerful models of what it could be like to be a grownup, both school people and people in their communities. And, in fact, the most common thing that young people experience in school aside from teaching is grownups who will say to them 'well that is just the way it has to be'."[7]

"Attention Deficit", An Alternative Definition

As relational educators we understand that we can no longer sacrifice our students to the kind of inattention Meier speaks of. Doctors, psychologists and the psychopharmaceutical industrial complex have banded together to identify attention deficit as a chemically treatable biochemical disorder affecting thousands of children. Another definition for this disorder was given to me by a student of mine who once noted that, "yeah I have attention deficit, I never got enough attention when I was growing up, I crave it now!" Never underestimate the profound power that paying attention individually to your students has for them, for your own practice as a teacher, and for the sense of community that it engenders in your school or program.

Developing a Sense of Belonging

With the rapid fragmentation of society and the changing structures of many of the institutions we used to belong to—i.e., neighborhoods, organized religions, families, political parties, work places—the basic human need to feel a sense of connection, or belonging has been increasingly harder to meet. Learning communities can create a sense of belonging for their students and faculty. Detailed below are some strategies that encourage the development of a sense of belonging: Student involvement in behavioral issues and upkeep of the physical plant, and providing time when all members of the community can meet informally.

Giving Students Responsibility

We need to give our students opportunities to take responsibility for structuring their own learning environments. Students need to have choices within the curriculum, choices that allow them to follow a train of thought that intrigues or disturbs them, opportunities to co-create the physical environment they learn in, and serious involvement in developing and enforcing the environment's "code" of conduct.

Responsibility for Behavior

In her interview for the book *Changing Lives: Voices From a School That Works*, Patty, a Cschool graduate talks about the interpersonal responsibility she learned at the

Cschool: "I had much more freedom at the School than I did at home. But learning that with freedom comes a certain responsibility, and what you do not only affects yourself but other people - that's the big thing I learned. It's okay to make choices. But how do you make those choices? What has carried through until now is the thing of including others in your choices. How is it going to affect other people - the people I love, the people I work with?"[8]

At the Community School we use a quasi-legal system in which the rule offender brings his/her misdeed to a panel made up of a current student, current faculty member, and "judge" (usually a Cschool graduate). This group decides whether or not to accept the misdeeders' or an alternate proposal, and the judge announces the verdict to the student. Other schools following the model established at Summerhill utilize a full school meeting that can be called at any time to deal with behavioral issues.

In his book, *Making it Up as We go Along: The Story of the Albany Free School*, Chris Mercogliano describes how this elementary school, started in the late 60's by free school pioneer Mary Leue, established a process called the council meeting:

"The mechanics of a council meeting, where many a future conflict is prevented and many a current one resolved, are as follows: Anybody can call a meeting at any time. By general agreement....when a meeting is called, we all drop what we are doing and go to the largest room on the first floor of the building where we sit in a large circle on the carpet. Three nominations are forwarded, and a chairperson is elected. It is the chair's responsibility to recognize speakers, keep the discussion on track, and maintain order....The general rule of thumb is that meetings are called only for urgent matters, and only after other alternatives have been exhausted....." [9]

Running the Physical Plant

When students run necessary school functions they feel needed, useful and engaged, all of which contribute to a sense of belonging. At the Community School, students do a lot of the daily work necessary for the upkeep of the building as well as cooking the major meal each night. They also work in the community, earning a portion of their room and board costs. Engaged students bring a much broader array of strengths to the educational enterprise than simply their current abilities to compute and read. They bring their whole selves. In addition, they learn how the school runs, and become "co-workers" with the faculty. Conventional schools ARE often impoverished environments for kinesthetic learners because these kinds of opportunities have not been made available to them.

What happens when schools and educators increase the number and kinds of opportunities available for students as a part of their day and this work is considered as important as the development of academic skills? Students who have found no success in school and have created the equation that school = learning = failure, will finally find themselves succeeding at something that the institution deems important. Valued success subtly works on the aforementioned equation, loosens the connections between learning and failure, and counteracts the sense that school has to be a place where one suffers and feels bad about oneself. Success breeds success, and hope. Students may once again be willing to risk effort in areas where they had previously failed once they have tasted the possibility of success. With the support of the interpersonal environment and the experience of their own successes - students' self-confidence grows, and their energies become more organized and focused.

Carol came to the Cschool unimpressed with her own intellectual abilities and talents. She wanted to be done with school, and get on with her life. However, she had no idea of what she would or could do for her next step into the "real world." After she interviewed for the position of teacher's aide at a local Montessori school and was subsequently offered the job, a light began to shine in her eyes. She became the only teacher in the program truly able to connect with a young hyperactive boy. By the end of the term she was a valued member of the Montessori school which offered her continued work. She also had become an incredible resource to the family of the young boy. Carol left the School having found her passion, and continues to this day working with and running programs for young children in pre-school and day-care settings.

Informal Time

In *High Schools As Communities* Gregory and Smith discuss the community building importance of informal time being available to student and teacher:

"A major problem for teachers or students in any school is finding time to talk informally to each other. When a school is structured to fill every minute of the day, it eliminates most of the possibilities for students and teachers to "just talk"...when the daily schedule of a school is relaxed, time for spontaneous discussions begins to appear. Some small high

schools have adopted a scheduling format where teachers and students both have large blocks of free time.... During "free" time, students have the opportunity to engage in conversations with teachers.... Both teachers and students, have the opportunity to really get to know each other as people."[10]

Time is of the essence in modern schooling. When students and teachers choose to affiliate with one another in their informal "free" time, we know we have taken a big step towards building the interpersonal fabric of our learning community.

Co-Creation of Knowledge and Resistance to Authority, Working With Your Students

Student mastery of basic cognitive skills such as reading, critical thinking, and computation is the central overt purpose of schooling. The system assumes that the mastery of these skills will "prepare" students for successful functioning

in the "real world," where they will have to compete with others to get into college or training programs, and eventually hold a job and support themselves.

"Paying attention to your students as learners and human beings. Have them teach you how to best teach them."

When students and families resist this one-dimensional, future-oriented, lock-step thinking - they challenge us to make the actual experience of school immediate, relevant, and engaging. And, as Cschool graduate Pat asked after being told by a visiting adult that "things will be different in the real world," "If I'm not in the real world, then where am I? And why would they take me out of the real world and put me in school if school is supposed to prepare me for the real world?"

The learning we do in school should have intrinsic value to both teacher and student. In the relational model learning is founded on a reciprocal relationship between student and teacher. The student instructs how best s/he can be taught, how best she can learn, and what her primary interests are. At the Cschool, we try to get an oral history from each student covering his/her schooling that addresses traumatic and positive schooling experiences, learning preferences, anxieties, interests, strengths, and weaknesses.

The teacher/counselor's function in this relationship is to bring their love of the subject matter, their ability to pay attention to the student's learning process, and their desire to facilitate the student's success. Teacher and student function as equals creating a dialogue out of which learning and new directions for research arise.

Speaking from her own experience, Cschool graduate Brenda Wentworth describes a common dynamic between teacher and student in a conventional school that stratifies teacher above student:

"So what about the traditional educational process, why didn't it work for me? I say this, externalization of power.... [T]he need to exert power over a person I believe is the nemesis of the traditional education process. When a student feels less than and the teacher feels more than there can be no real helpful educational exchange.....Anyway, there is a time in all of our lives when we discover that truth and reality are very relative concepts. It is at this time that we need the most guidance but it is too often at this time that many people perceive this to be the most threatening. When a student realizes that a teacher's beliefs are just that, beliefs, the student often begins to challenge the teacher and here is where the traditional educational process often takes a major nose dive. Instead of perceiving this as a perfect educational juncture, the teacher, fearing exposure, often perceives it as a personal attack and attempts to hide behind his or her armor of adult status. The student seeing through the teacher's defensive maneuver steps up the intensity of his or her offensive tactics which often causes the teacher to impose punitive measures.

Students are often left feeling overwhelmed and confused asking themselves, "Isn't this teacher supposed to be teaching me about life? Why am I being punished for asking questions?" After repeated encounters like the ones above, students often retreat into despair. Sometimes this despair turns into depression, sometimes rage. Behavioral implications become quite obvious and it is sad to say we don't have to look too far for concrete examples of what despair and rage can actually do in an adolescent."[11]

A Glance at Curriculum,
Don't be Mesmerized by the Mandates

In high school, the curriculum becomes a holy thing, and credits are critical. By forcing knowledge of no intrinsic interest upon students, conventional schooling may create many of the learning disabilities that it then tries to remediate. We are doing harm when we forget the person in our determination to focus on the subject matter. Our high school students are entering a period of their lives that is tumultuous and they are extremely vulnerable physically, emotionally, and socially. In secondary education we lose sight of the person too often. It is a primary goal of relational education to reverse this trend.

If you are teaching in a conventional setting, do not be hypnotized by mandated curricula. They are usually a loose amalgam of information amassed by someone in a text book company, a legislatively mandated state committee, a "curriculum development office" at the state level, or by a college professor somewhere who has determined what "one needs to know" about a particular subject at a particular grade level. The principle underlying this process assumes that some distant expert knows what your students should know and therefore what you should teach them. It also assumes that you don't have the time or knowledge to figure out an appropriate curriculum.

For relational educators, this assumption raises questions: How does this expert know what our students need to know if s/he doesn't know my students personally? Can a body of knowledge stand outside of our lives - and be relevant to all of us simultaneously? Why can't we have the time to fashion an authentic curriculum relevant to both our students' and our own interests?

Arnie Langberg proposes a helpful definition of how to focus curriculum so that it is relevant. He proposes that there are four kinds of experiences students encounter in and out of school—in school planned experiences which are what most teachers and students think of as curriculum, in school unplanned experiences, out of school planned experiences—trips/seminars with family, groups etc., and out of school unplanned experiences. The most powerful experiences for students are usually the unplanned out of school and in school experiences because they involve their social life and often the most traumatic events that they encounter. Langberg suggests that teachers and schools consider all four of these kinds of experiences as "the curriculum" because they deal with the heart of the student's experience as an individual.

In co-designing the curricula with your students, ask yourself the following kinds of guiding questions: Where are the

most important, life shaping experiences going on for teenagers and adults? How can our curricula both reflect and respond to the needs of our students? How can we help our students to reclaim those parts of themselves that yet remain at the core of their being active, engaged, and curious learners? If you do not have the time to develop these curricula outcomes, then how can you help your students to achieve them?

How the Relational Approach Leads to Success

As a relational educator, you will need to have faith that your support of students' emotional and intellectual functioning and your encouragement of their interests and aptitudes will do far more to prepare them for success than will your and their simply getting "through" the required curriculum. If you have helped your students to find their confidence and autonomy as learners when they need to know something they might have missed in your class, they will be able and willing to go back and pick it up when they see the need for doing so. The following story demonstrates this principle:

Martha came to the Cschool when she was 15; she graduated at 16. She was bright, rebellious, and nobody was going to tell her how to do anything! Despite her resistance she had chosen to come to the School because traditional school was completely boring and unsuccessful for her and she wanted to finish high school. For six years after she was graduated, Martha traveled across the country- holding part time jobs and returned home to Camden, Maine, to rest every few months. She got involved in working on the Schooner Boats that provide summer excursions for tourists in Camden and fell in love with the ocean and sailing. She decided that she wanted to become a captain of a small vessel.

"To practice "Relational Education", a school or learning community puts a primary emphasis on creating an environment where all members of the community develop healthy, reciprocal relationships."

To get her license she had to apply to a maritime academy that told her that she needed more math to get into the program. What Martha remembered of math included some algebra, percents, and fractions, but many pieces were missing. Martha had eight weeks to cover algebra 1, 2, and trigonometry. She was panicked but determined. She arranged tutoring for herself, and an independent study course, and kept in touch with the Cschool's Outreach program that supports former students.

Martha worked six hours a day for most days of those eight weeks, and scored very highly in her course work. She had found her math sense, and pulled together three years of math in 40 days of intensive study. Although Martha had missed important segments of high school math, she was able to recoup them quickly and effectively when she had the necessary self-confidence and a specific goal in mind.

What are Essential Qualities of a Relational Educator?

Anyone who engages the principles below is working as a "Relational Educator." The outcomes of this approach for members of the learning community will be: A love of learning, an engagement with the social and natural world, and a positive sense of self. You are teaching relationally when you are:

1. Cherishing the children you work with for who they are right now, as Deborah Meier put it so well. There is no substitute for this kind of nurturing acceptance which is especially needed when students become teenagers and are moving headlong towards the unknowns of adulthood.
2. Being honest and self-reflective in your teaching practice. Let students know how their behaviors make you feel as a person - both the good and the bad. The courage you display in your honesty and self-reflection is one of the most fundamental gifts you can offer. Be real, it will help students feel real in turn.
3. Understanding that you are a co-worker, co-facilitator, co-creator of students' knowledge. Everything that they learn will be governed by how ready they are to learn, and your primary function is to create the environment that sponsors readiness, and then to be there with resources when the moment arrives.
4. Paying attention to your students as learners and human beings. Have them teach you how best to teach them.
5. Understanding that students need informal time with you in order to discover who you are as a person, and to be able to identify with you on a deeper level than your role as teacher may permit. Be aware that authentic conversation is not a "waste of time" or a sidetrack from the important curriculum. It is absolutely critical in laying the foundation of your relationship with students, it is itself a major component of the curriculum.
6. Filling your teaching with choices so that students feel ownership of what they are studying.
7. Including your students' lives as part of the curriculum.
8. Being respectful of your students, and in Brenda Wentworth's words, "open to their 'truth' while holding your own center."
9. Paying close attention to your reactions to your students; do not be afraid of negative emotions!
10. Never putting in more than 50% of the effort on a project with them otherwise you will become a barrier to their autonomy rather than a support.
11. Taking Care of Yourself. Be aware that relational education is transformative work, and as such it is risky. If you are doing your job properly you will come into contact with unexamined aspects of yourself that you have avoided or ignored until a student illuminates them for you by his/her behavior or response to you. Getting in touch with and working with your own emotional baggage is the reciprocal product of helping your students to confront their behaviors.

Outcomes of a Relationally Based Approach, 26 Years at the Community School

If you teach in a conventional situation you probably will have to defend the time needed to follow this approach. The following are a few arguments that you might find helpful in your attempts to convince your colleagues and supervisors

that adopting this perspective is ultimately in the best interests of the students, teachers, and school as a whole.

First, think of the amount of time lost in the classroom to "behavior management" - at an extreme how many tens of thousands of hours of schooling were lost to the students at Columbine High? If schools made Relational Education a primary focus of their efforts, it would take less time than is now being expended on the "management" of students who are not engaged and would significantly lower the chances of another Columbine because there could be no unattached students in any effective relationally based school.

Second, our experience at the Cschool with some of the most unsuccessful students, has been so positive once they have recovered their sense of confidence and hope. They have found goals worth working for and their limited time working on academics at the Cschool did not seem to impede them, but rather set the stage for a re-opening to learning in general.

Over 350 students have arrived at the Cschool since 1973. To start with they were often demoralized, angry, and resistant. Yet they were also hopeful and willing to give this new form of schooling a chance. 80% of these students have completed high school; 40% have gone on to post-secondary programs; 75% who had previously been incarcerated have not recidivated; 70% have been in contact after leaving the program (with well over 600 contacts from former students each year); and many have created successful families.

In 1995, the University Press of America published a book by Jane Day about the Community School called *Changing Lives: Voices from a School that Works*, that documents stories of students who have been graduated from the Cschool since 1973. Since in this article I have been able to mention only a few of these stories, I would like to direct your attention to this superb book, in which you will find an inspiring collection of individual student outcomes – fashioned and told one life at a time.

Conclusion

Many of us are teachers because we ourselves love to learn, because we want to help our students find a love of learning for themselves, and because we want to do something useful and productive with our working lives. We find ourselves working more and more with children wounded by our culture, who are neglected, scapegoated, disenfranchised.

To get intellectual skills and "habits of mind" these students need reciprocal relationships with caring, empowered adults. When they feel connected, when they have a sense of belonging and a revived confidence in themselves, their cognitive abilities can bloom. The relational focus sets the stage for students to want to think, to want to create, to want to succeed at learning new things. They have re-found reasons to be connected to their own futures and to the future of the world around them.

I hope that writing this letter to you has supported your best impulses as a person and a teacher. I hope that you can go back into your school or learning community and carve out time for students who need it. I hope that you can use the material in this essay to validate your attempts to change things on whatever level is possible, but most importantly at the level of your work with individual students. Take care of yourself and give me a call if I can help.

Good Luck

I have enclosed below a reading list and email addresses of books and people who are resources on many aspects of relational education.

Notes

[1] Miller, Ron. Addressing the May 8 Conference on Relational Education, Camden, Maine, May 1999.

[2] Ibid, 1.

[3] Goodman, Paul. *Compulsory Miseducation*, New York: Vintage, 1962, p.74.

[4] Meier, Deborah. Addressing the May 8 Conference on Relational Education, Camden, Maine, May 1999.

[5] Formerly with the highly successful Mountain Open High School, in Jefferson County, Colorado, Dr. Arnie langberg has been a leader in developing educational alternatives in public schools for many years, helping innovative educators share their ideas and form national econtacts,m particularly those working in alternative settings for nontraditional learners in the public schools.

[6] Wentworth, Brenda. Addressing the May 8 Conference on Relational Education, Camden, Maine, May 1999.

[7] Ibid, 5.

[8] Day, Jane. *Changing Lives: Voices from a School that Works*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1994.

[9] Mercogliano, Chris. *Making It Up As We go Along: The Story of the Albany Free School*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1998, p.30.

[10] Gregory, Thomas B. and Smith, Gerald R. *High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered*, Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1983, p.45.

[11] Ibid, 6.

Other Important Books

Gibbons, Maurice. *The Walkabout Papers*, Vancouver: EduServ Inc., 1990.

Gregory, Thomas B. *Making High School Work: Lessons from the Open School*, New York: Teacher's College Press, 1993.

Henry, Jules. *Culture Against Man*, New York: Random House, 1977.

Holt, John. *How Children Fail*, New York: Dell, 1964, p.12.

Meier, Deborah. *The Power Of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Postman, Neil and Weingartner, Charles. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, New York: Delacorte Press, 1979.

Email Addresses

Emanuel Pariser: emanuel@cschool.acadia.net

Arnold Langberg arnie_langberg@ceo.cudenver.edu

Ron Miller: milleron@together.net

Deborah Meier: dmeier@essentialschools.org

Jeanne Bamberger: jbamb@mit.edu

Relational Learning Say What?

By Chris Mercogliano

The title of this essay reflects my nervousness at education's growing trend toward coining catchy names for new ideas and approaches. This is especially the case when the term involves converting a verb into a noun. Examples such as "experiential learning," "service learning" and yes, "relational learning," the subject at hand, come immediately to mind.

The reasons for my concern are twofold. First of all, learning is a dynamic act, full of complexity and nuance, even mystery. I can't tell you how many times over the years I have been unable to identify just exactly how a certain child actually learned to read. But, when an action, such as a young person's learning directly from his or her own experience by means of observation, experimentation and discovery, is reduced to a thing, such as what is popularly known today as "experiential learning," it is rendered into just that, a passive, inert thing. It becomes something—*some thing*—to manipulate and measure, to bottle and sell, always at great cost to the mystery. My worries are confirmed when I start hearing statements like, "Let's add an experiential learning component to the curriculum."

Which leads me to my second concern: When an innovation gets dressed up in a catchy label, it isn't long before it attains buzzword status, often endangering the meaning and intent of the original idea. An example would be young people's spontaneous desire to serve others by volunteering in soup kitchens and nursing homes being turned into completing the service learning requirement the student needs in order to graduate from high school.

SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN, this "relational learning?" What I like about the term, even if it is the stuff of which buzzwords are made, is its dual meaning. There is the idea of learning *within* relationships, and then of learning *about* relationships.

Perhaps the best description I have ever read of the former can be found in Sylvia Ashton-Warner's classic book, *Teacher* (Simon and Schuster 1963):

> From long sitting, watching and pondering (all so unprofessional), I have found out the worst enemies to what we call teaching. The first is the children's interest in each other. It plays the very devil with the orthodox method. If only they'd stop talking with each other, fighting each other and loving each other. This unseemly and unlawful communication! In self-defense I've got to use the damn thing. So I harness the communication, since I can't control it, and base my method on it. They read in pairs, sentence and sentence about. There's no time for either to get bored. Each checks the other's mistakes and hurries him up if he's too slow, since after all, his own turn depends on it. They teach each other all their work, sitting cross-legged knee to knee on the mat or on their tables, arguing with, correcting, abusing or smiling at each other. And between them all the time is this togetherness, so that learning is so mixed up with relationship that it becomes a part of it. What an unsung creative medium is relationship!

Ashton-Warner spent the first twenty-five years of her career working primarily with the wild children of New Zealand's aboriginal people, the Maori. She quickly discovered, as did other teacher/writers such as Jonathan

---

Chris Mercogliano has been a teacher at the Albany Free School for the past twenty-seven years and a codirector for the past fifteen. His book about the school, *Making It Up As We Go Along*, was published in 1998 by Heineman. Other essays and commentary have appeared in *SKOLE: the Journal of Alternative Education, Friends Review*, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, the *Albany Times Union*, *Yes! Magazine*, the *Journal of Family Life*, and *Mothering* magazine.

"There is the idea of learning within relationships, and then of learning about relationships."

Kozol, Herb Kohl and Elliot Wigginton, that conventional school methodology, one that depends on keeping kids separate from each other, was getting her nowhere fast. She began to see the children for who they were, not for who she needed them to be to fit into her daily routine. And who they were was a mad tangle of relationships, in all of its noisy, chaotic, unpredictable glory. As soon as she began to honor their "unseemly and unlawful communication," the environment transformed itself into a place where "learning is so mixed up with relationship that it becomes a part of it."

Meanwhile, nearly all teachers live in fear of losing control of the classroom; hence, the desks all in rows, the steady stream of busy work, the perpetual quiet—and the resulting absence of relationships between and among students. Not having experienced Ashton Warner's successful letting go, or George Dennison's at the First Street School—which led him to write in *Lives of Children* (Random House 1969), "The principle of true order lies within the persons themselves"—these anxious educators insist that the sole learning relationship be between teacher and student. The conventional structure that they cling to like a drowning person to a lifeboat demands that they be the nexus of all interactions in the classroom, eliminating any possibility of the kids' educating each other.

In my school, the Albany Free School, we teachers make every effort to do just the opposite, to stay out of the middle of the action whenever possible. We avoid placing ourselves at the front and center of rectangles, and instead we work in the round, as it were, sitting with students around tables, and in circles of chairs or cushions on the floor. Or we are busy with our own projects while the kids are busy with theirs, knowing they will come to us when they need us. We always leave room for a little anarchy, so that the possibility exists for everyone to meet their own needs in their own way.

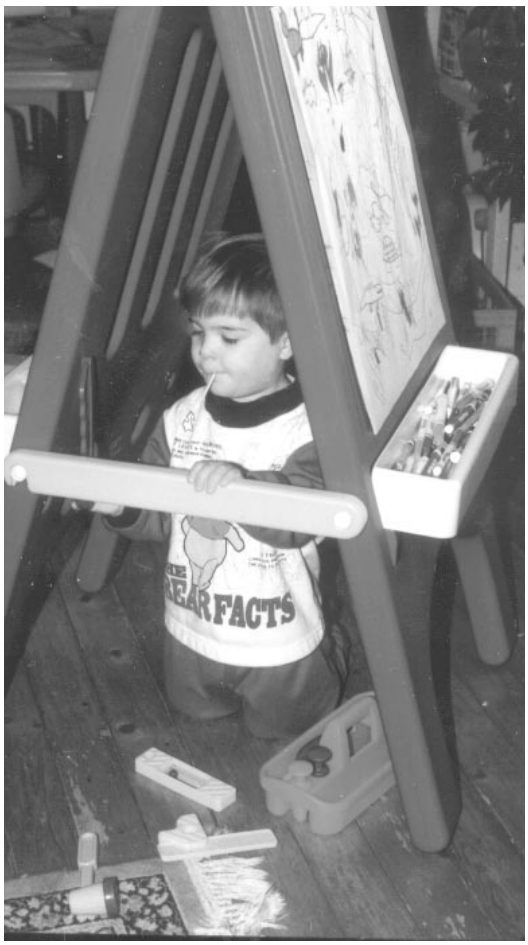
Like Ashton Warner, Dennison, and countless others, we observe daily how much children revel in teaching and learning from each other, whether it be math concepts, computer techniques, or new songs and dances. This peer-level educating extends beyond the conceptual and physical to the moral realm as well. For instance, in our dual-purpose school government and conflict resolution forum that we call the council meeting system, kids frequently inform other kids of their current grasp of right and wrong. They share hard-earned personal lessons, and in so doing they help each other to build character. You might call this "relational teaching." It often carries significantly more weight than even the best sermon from a well-meaning adult.

Allowing children to relate to each other autonomously doesn't mean that we adults abdicate our natural influence or authority. When it is appropriate for us to guide, we guide. If I see two angry combatants on the verge of doing serious harm to each other, I will step between them and encourage them to substitute verbal for physical blows. What allowing children to relate to each other autonomously does mean is that, by avoiding the temptation to micro-manage the interactions between students, we enable them to learn to manage themselves and each other.

All of this, of course, isn't to devalue solitary learning. Many of us make some of our most profound discoveries when we are alone; in fact solitude and self-reflection are two of the primary ways of attaining Socrates' imperative of "knowing thyself." Though this, too, might be viewed as a kind of relational learning, the newly acquired knowledge representing the end result of a deeper relationship with one's inner world. Therefore, it is essential in the context of school that students be given the time and space to act alone. I'm referring not to kids' performing assigned tasks in isolation at their desks, but rather to their having the freedom to collect their own thoughts, to daydream and to muse, and even to do what might appear to an outside observer as "nothing."

A DECADE OR SO AGO, the federal government hired the Carnegie Institute to produce a White Paper on education. The subject: The ongoing crisis in American schools. Every level and facet of our educational system was examined by a bevy of researchers, who concluded that, while there was room for improvement just about everywhere, the real emergency lies at the middle school level. Emerging adolescents, the paper reported, have a unique set of needs that the nation's schools are almost entirely ignoring. What young people need above all else during this unique

"What is "relational learning", if not an exchange between or among people that is grounded in love?"



developmental period is support in helping them to grow socially and emotionally. Their primary concern is finding out about themselves and each other—*relational learning,* in other words, although the phrase wasn't yet in common use. Continuing to try to stuff their minds with information is a waste of time, because they simply are not in a receptive state. The fine-tuning of the intellect can wait until high school, when the inner turmoil of puberty has subsided and young people are ready to return their attention outward toward the world.

I was astounded that a government-sponsored study could contain such insight, and even more thrilled to discover that it didn't propose as a solution some sort of special curriculum on adolescent relationships. What it did recommend was the radical restructuring of middle schools in order to make relationships possible in the first place, so that young people could learn from their own first-hand experience. Schools should contain no more than 200 students, each of whom should have a readily available mentor so that no one feels anonymous. Teachers should teach in teams, in order to encourage communication and cooperation among themselves. Even more importantly, teachers should be easygoing, trusted role models, not authoritarian taskmasters. And the atmosphere of the school should be relaxed, not pressure-laden, with allowances in the school day for the kids to have informal downtime with each other.

While I absolutely commend the Carnegie Institute for pointing out the glaring failure of the nation's middle schools to address the all-important relational needs of adolescents, I was left to wonder to myself: What about our pre-, elementary, and high schools? Surely they are as anti-relational as the middle schools. And it isn't only thirteen-, fourteen-, and fifteen-year-olds who need ample opportunity to learn about the art of relating to others.

What the Carnegie White Paper stopped short of saying was that schools—*all schools*—should be communities, the real, not the euphemistic kind. They should be places of cooperative endeavor where teachers and students are on the same side pursuing common goals and where there are frequent exchanges of energy, affection, and inspiration. Schools that empower students to share in the responsibility for educating themselves and each other, and for keeping the school on track, are veritable laboratories for interpersonal relations.

And what could be more important than learning about the politics of people—the earlier the better? As A.S. Neill was fond of pointing out, all of the knowledge in the world is nothing more than fool's gold if the individual in possession of that knowledge is unhappy with his or her standing in the world. Doesn't such happiness depend, perhaps more than anything else, on one's having satisfying and meaningful relationships with others? In first world countries, where food and medical care are plentiful, loneliness and despair are the leading causes of death.

THIS BRINGS US TO ANOTHER FORM of relational learning that might more properly be called "relational healing." I'm referring here to the healing power of friendship. We have seen more than a few emotionally and attitudinally wounded kids at the Free School who have been kicked around and denied by life to such an extent that, by the time they get to us, they are so angry and confused that they are disconnected both from self and others. They no longer have much interest in learning about anyone or anything.

Because our school is a very diverse community that fosters intimacy and connection, before long even the most alienated children discover someone to whom they want to be close. Even when it is only one other person, the transformative effect of the deepening friendship bond is unmistakable. It's beautiful to watch kids who have become accustomed to guarding themselves with hostility slowly soften and learn to trust and reach out. Over time, the healing will extend to other relationships, and it will also rekindle an interest in new ideas and experiences.

Aaron was a classic example. When he came to us at the age of ten, he was in very rough shape. He had gone to live with his father because his mother was back

"What the Carnegie White Paper stopped short of saying was that schools —all schools—should be communities, the real, not the euphemistic kind."

in a drug rehab program for the umpteenth time. A drug abuse counselor, the dad did not at all like the fact that his son had been taking Ritalin for the past three years; he had heard that the Free School refused to administer such biopsychiatric, so-called "medications."

Aaron had a long history of school failure and accompanying behavioral problems. He spent his first couple of months with us zooming around, generally wreaking havoc everywhere he went. Every day he would find a new limit to test. Fortunately, at the same time he was gradually falling in love with two other boys in his age group. Of course, his rampant homophobia would never allow him to admit to such a thing, but a love affair it was. The three became inseparable—and at times insufferable.

One of Aaron's new friends, thankfully, was an artist. He began teaching Aaron and the other boy to draw, and by mid-year the three could be found spending hours at a stretch co-creating magnificent battle scenes with pencil and large pieces of paper. In the process, Aaron slowed to the pace of the rest of the children. His attention span lengthened dramatically. He seldom got angry any more.

By the end of the year, Aaron was even beginning to do some math and reading. And then, during the summer, he decided that he wanted to return to his old neighborhood school. No longer on drugs, he re-entered at grade level in a normal classroom and had no difficulty keeping up academically. I know this continued to be the case for the next several years because Aaron would visit us from time to time to tell us how he was doing.

ETHAN WAS THE FIRST STUDENT to teach me about the healing power of the mentor relationship. When Ethan was a young child, his father was a drug dealer; his mother, an alcoholic. He had never been successful in school, and by the time he found us at the age of eleven, he was virtually allergic to structured learning. What he wanted was an adult friend and mentor, not a classroom teacher. In fact, I don't think he ever did do any formal schoolwork during the two-and-a-half years he was with us.

I became a young mentor figure for Ethan. As his trust in me grew, he began telling me about his deeply traumatic past. I also learned that Ethan loved nature and the outdoors. Whenever possible I would take him out to the country so that he could roam the fields and streams in search of wildlife. He spent months refining his designs for animal traps, never really caring whether or not he caught anything.

Oddly enough, it was at home in the city that Ethan had his closest encounter with one of nature's creatures. One morning, while he was on his way to school, he happened upon a tiny starling hatchling. It was still alive, though entirely featherless. When he showed it to me and said that he wanted to take care of it, I thought to myself that there was no way this tiny little bird was going to survive.

The first question was what and how to feed the baby. I suggested to Ethan that he call the wildlife division at the Department of Environmental Conservation and ask for instructions. The expert he spoke with, who turned out to be the New York State Wildlife Pathologist, told him to make a paste out of dry cat food and water and then to use a small stick to get the food all the way to the back of the bird's throat. To have any chance of surviving, the baby bird must be fed every two or three hours around the clock.

Ethan fashioned a nest box while I went home for some cat food. Amazingly, the hatchling readily accepted Ethan's offering and ate hungrily several times that first day. Ethan took the bird home with him at three

o'clock, saying that he would use his alarm clock to awaken himself for the night feedings.

Although I didn't expect to see the bird the next morning, I kept my astonishment to myself when Ethan arrived, looking a bit bedraggled, live bird in hand. Days then stretched into weeks, with Ethan proving to be an excellent mother. The starling's feathers grew in handsomely, and when the time came, Ethan even helped it learn to fly.

Before Ethan released the bird back into its urban environment, I encouraged him to bring the bird to the conservation department offices to show it to the wildlife pathologist, as a way of thanking him for his help. Ethan and the man got along beautifully, and by the end of the visit, the two had made arrangements for Ethan to begin an apprenticeship in the lab there.

The apprenticeship was successful beyond words. Ethan proved to be a capable and trusted assistant. He would even get his mother to drive him out to the lab when there was work being done on Saturdays. He and the pathologist became good friends.

Ethan moved away at the end of his seventh grade year at the Free School, but he has kept in touch with me, and with the wildlife pathologist, his second mentor, ever since. He went on to have a very successful high school career, followed by a four-year stint in the Marines. Currently, he is attending college, having been told by his friend the wildlife pathologist that there is a job waiting for him upon his graduation.

The postscript to Ethan's story has everything to do with relational healing. Sometime between high school and the Marines, Ethan wrote an essay about his experience at the Free School. He was trying to understand the amazing transformation he had undergone, and he summed up the primary reason for it in a single word: Love. The love that he had received from the school community, which he gradually learned to return, was what had enabled him to believe in himself and to reach out for the connections and the challenges that would help him blossom into adulthood.

What is "relational learning," if not an exchange between or among people that is grounded in love?

CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL, the learning that goes on within relationships and the learning that goes on about relationships are a fundamental part of the educational process. Anyone who has observed children in a setting that is based on cooperation and mutuality knows this to be so. If there are to be schools at all—and the arguments against them grow more compelling every day—then certainly their justification has to begin with their serving as safe, caring environments where kids can learn from and about each other, where they can establish enduring relationships with teachers and mentor figures, and where can they experience the interconnectedness of all life on a daily basis.

Relational Education

by Mary Leue

It really never occurred to me to label what we've always done at the Free School as a category that could be characterized as "relational education" until Em Pariser's proposal that we write this cluster of articles about it. When Chris Mercogliano's articles, which we had originally published in *SKOLE* (predecessor to *Paths of Learning*), turned into his book about the school, he gave it the title *Making It Up As We Go Along* because that has always been our style, and because it's the truth about what and how we were doing things at the school, probably still are.

I guess Em is right to call this teaching/learning style "relational," and his school has always been a superb example of how this style works with kids, whether or not these kids are "in trouble." In this context, it is essential that anyone reading Em's significant exegesis for the genre to step back and attempt to analyze and extract from it those aspects that may be substantive and those that may be accidental in their evolution as teaching/learning "techniques." I'd like to try to do this, drawing from generalities and particularities in comparing the two schools, the Free School and the CSchool.

Since Chris is in a better position to address the specifics of life at The Free School than I am, having been gone from there for some time, I will address some of the more philosophical aspects of relational education. Em's and Chris' accounts of education do not focus on what perhaps needs to be called the spiritual—the "metaphysical"—dimension of the realm of interaction between adults and children. Of course this dimension shines through every word of their accounts, but, because of our national origins, we often have a heck of a time allowing that spiritual dimension of our activities free expression in our descriptions of educational practices. In other words, our anti-religious secularity based on a separation of church and state makes it "dangerous" for there to be anything spiritual in school. Yet that is really what we are talking about when we try to describe what we mean by relational education.

What Em describes in eloquent language is what it takes for children to take hold of their world and make it their own in ways that enable them to sort out for themselves what they see as good from what isn't, what they themselves can latch onto and what is more peripheral, and thus probably not for them. Its core is not really generalizable at all, whether or not we call it by a generic term like relational education, because it is about the actual people involved: The teachers, the students, the families. It is about the ways in which the teachers and learners interact with one another, and about the effects they have on each other. That's what Em and I both call "relational education," because what is learned is a by-product of the relationship between two human beings, one the teacher, the other the learner. To see learning in any other terms is, for me, to miss the boat entirely!

Since kids are always going with someone else's program instead of creating one themselves, relational education is also very much about our helping kids create learning paths that work well to enable them to fulfill their own goals, to feel the grasp of what they are learning. Everyone involved in the teaching-learning relationship tries to understand how to organize the learning process so that it flows pleasurably for the learner, allows her/him to feel successful and in charge of the process, and not just be a passive recipient.

But learning principles like these—i.e., the subject matter of the learning, the teaching techniques by which it is to be conveyed to the learner, the measurement of outcomes in order to be in a position to assess the effectiveness of the process used—are taught in schools of education, and are at least theoretically the basis for all schoolroom teaching.

So how come they don't work more effectively across the board, in America's "poor" schools as well as our "rich" ones? It is my contention that other issues have to be brought into the discussion. It's here that the Cschool and the Free School are—or can be—bellwethers for the unsuccessful schools that bring down the national averages, which represent the degrees of success or failure in goal achievement that elected officials and school boards alike love so much to focus on! And of course it's here as well that the lie can be blown back into the faces of these people who claim to have the welfare of the "loser" kids at heart, not just the bad scores they get in achievement tests, when these kids fail to learn in school situations in which "learning principles" may be followed conscientiously yet still produce poor results. In other words, sometimes kids fail not because the programs or even the teaching methods are bad, but because they feel unappreciated and this sense of invalidation makes them feel bad and mad. (This notion is what Herb Kohl is trying to get at, too, when he talks about the role of assent in learning.)

Can this thesis—namely, that successful learning is not to be predicated solely, perhaps not even even primarily, on the application of pedagogical principles of teaching

at the Free School

Mary Leue is the retired founder and director of the Albany (New York) Free School and the founding editor of both *SKOLE: The Journal of Alternative Education* (the precursor of *Paths of Learning*) and the *Journal of Family Life*.

and learning but must be hinged to an assessment of the quality of the interaction between and among the people involved in the process—be made convincing to "educationists?" It may be that our two schools are precious here, the Cschool in its way, the Free School in ours, as living examples of the success of the results that follow when this human factor is given pedagogical primacy. We at the Free School take only kids who choose freely to come to our school; the CSchool takes primarily court-appointed kids—but in actuality, the choices are very similar, because, among other things, our school functions as a "school of last resort" for lots of kids, and not just as a kid's dream of freedom (which it also is) for middle class (not just ghetto) kids. We bus them in. Also, both schools work because the kids themselves write their own success stories, either right away or later, after they have finished "testing" their one-to-ones, as Em has described—and as pretty often occurs with Free School kids as well, kids being what they are and life being what it is. In this sense, "testing" is understood in the psychological sense of being provocative or negative to see what a teacher will do, so they find out what's beneath the surface.

Take the case of Albert. Albert was a runty kid about thirteen years old who looked and acted like a six-year-old. His eyes looked in different directions most of the time, his hair stuck up in unruly peaks and his impulse life was so compelling for him that he did things like trying to fix an old TV set, only to be knocked flat on his back by a jolt when he stuck a big screwdriver deep into the works. He even stole welfare checks out of mailboxes a couple of times. I bailed Albert out of the police station twice that I can remember. But that's getting ahead of the story. I'll do better to reproduce the story the way I described it in my "History of The Free School" (*Challenging the Giant*, Volume I, pp. 38-75).

One snowy day a bedraggled little troupe of four children resembling nothing so much as Wendy and the lost boys from Peter Pan arrived on our doorstep from out of the soft white opaqueness that covered the city's ugliness. "What's this place?" asks one. "A school," we answer. "Can we visit?" "Sure, if you behave yourselves." So in they come: Kitty, a skinny girl of fifteen (as we subsequently learned) who could pass for twelve; Jimmy and Ernest, her brothers, ten and eleven, one light-skinned, the other white; and Albert, their white cousin, a kid of thirteen the size of an average seven-year-old and with a manner to match, squint-eyed and "hyper," having been labeled by the school psychologist as retarded, with an IQ of 60-some and in a "special education" course, a total non-reader, and slated for residential warehousing in a state school for the retarded like his older brother Dooley.

Naturally, these truants were delighted with us all, and immediately asked if they could join the school. Standard response, "Go home and ask your mother. If it's O.K. with her, it's O.K. with us." Well, Albert was sure his mother would approve, and dashed off to ask her. Kitty, who seemed to be the spokesperson for all three members of her family, informed us that her

mother was dead and that her father probably would not agree, but said she would ask anyway. Half an hour later, Albert appeared virtually dragging his mother, who reluctantly gave her approval of his admission, saying, "Well, I was just about ready to send him to Rome anyway (a state institution for retarded children which subsequently became notorious for its flagrant abuse and neglect of its inmates and was closed down). I can't do nothin' with him, and that school has him in one of them special classes. He ain't learnin' nothin'. If he wants to come here, it'll be the first time he ever wanted to be in a school, so I guess he can come here."

Albert was so overjoyed at this that he whooped and sprang upon me, wrapping both arms and legs around my body and squeezing tightly, as if to insure a permanent bond that would never again come loose! And actually, it never has!

Albert was with us for three exciting years, during which time he managed to create lots of drama around himself. Once he nearly electrocuted himself fiddling with the guts of an old TV set. Twice I had to bail him out of the local police station, once for stealing a bike, again for robbing somebody's mailbox of their welfare check! Mainly, however, he couldn't sit still in one place for more than a few minutes. It was as though his energy system simply worked too fast for him to be able to slow down long enough to learn how to decode the verbal symbols, which to me was an odd definition of retardation. Is it "retarded" to live too rapidly? The spirit in that "retarded" body was absolutely pure and sweet, even while operating at supersonic speed.

But the miracle of Albert takes up long after we left off trying to teach him to read and for me is the most confirming evidence of the real nature of learning I have ever known. When he left, at the age of nearly sixteen, he still couldn't read, although his math was pretty good. He didn't learn to read for many, many years—despite enrolling twice in adult education programs after leaving us. He finally quit trying and got a job in a garage for a while until they fired him for not being able—or willing—to complete jobs. The next thing we heard, he was married, at about seventeen, and had a child. He would come back from time to time, full of optimism about his future, but he couldn't seem to stick at anything for long. For a while he lived in Florida on welfare with his wife and child. Then we heard he had enrolled in another reading course, still unable to read, and had been drifting from one job to another and from one part of the country to another. Yet, somehow he seemed to have kept the dream in his mind of learning to read.

I saw him on the street near his house during one of his periodic trips home about six years after he left us. I asked him how it was going. He answered, shaking his head solemnly, "Well, I had to leave my wife and come back home. We were fighting too much. But Mary, you should see my room now. I got shelves all around my bed and I keep buyin' books to put on them. I love books!" Could he read? No, not really, not yet. I parted from him with wet eyes and a hug.

One day some years later I got a call from a Catholic priest in a nearby city who wanted to know if this young man Albert was for real, did he really want to learn how to read, was what he was telling him actually true? By this time, Albert must have been around twenty-four or so. In ordinary terms, his story was pretty unbelievable, I guess. I said it was all true, that he was somebody special, and urged him to do the best he could for our Albert. I don't know if it was this time he made it or the next time, but somehow, some way, he got through that narrow door! One of our teachers, Chris Mercogliano, who had known him at school, saw him at the supermarket just before Christmas. Chris was blown away. He said Albert had grown almost a foot, that his crooked eyes were now straight, and that he looked manly—his hair was no longer sticking up in unruly points, and he looked at you clear-eyed and steadily. Albert told Chris that he could now read, and loved it, and had a good job and a good marriage with four kids—that his life was great! Chris told us he could see that it was true. We don't take credit for that. It is Albert's triumph. But he learned that ability to believe in himself with us.

"...because what is learned is a by-product of the relationship between two human beings, one the teacher, the other the learner."

I've spoken with Albert since then as well. He told me he now has the perfect job working as a kitchen helper in a home for Jewish elders. "Mary, they love me," he told me—and I believe him! "They beg me to spend as much time with them as I can. I read all the time now, but I don't understand math as well as I'd like, so I'm gonna start learning that now." And he will. Oh, he will. Because he's Albert, my crazy little Albert who became a man in any true measure of the term. A loving, kind-hearted, earnest MAN.

Can anyone tell me that that criterion isn't the real goal of education? No one has or had to push and prod Albert to reach the level of satisfaction with his life he was craving for. Focusing exclusively on the "outcomes" of his years of reading failure could easily have made such an ultimate outcome impossible. And who knows what the despair of years of total educational failure might have meant to him, what bad habits he might have fallen into as a result of that despair?

I had an inspiring conversation recently with a man who is studying at the University in Albany and who is writing a paper on the subject of intelligence based on his experiences at The Free School. He mentioned a book by Stanley Greenspan entitled *The Growth of the Mind, and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence*, which he had found singularly helpful and inspiring. I looked it up on Amazon.com's booklist and read the reviews there. What readers were saying about this book made so much sense to me and seemed so important to pass on to *Paths* readers that I include one of the reviews below:

The Growth of the Mind,
and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence

By Stanley I. Greenspan,
Beryl Lieff Benderly (Contributor)

Reviewer: A reader from Falls Church, VA:

May 17, 2000:

Bravo! In this work, Dr. Greenspan provides the reader with a general thesis on human development, from birth through mature adulthood. His arguments center on the role that emotions play in our mind's growth, from birth through death, and in so doing reveals the foundations of both our human fragility and greatness, on an individual and societal level. This is powerful, intoxicating stuff: it will resound in your heart what you've suspected all along, make clear what was hidden, and lay bare what makes us most human. As a layman unversed in the field of psychology, I found it absolutely riveting and exhilarating —and as a father of an 8 month daughter, it provided a sound framework on which to base my parenting—to see the forest through the trees and approach my role as a father with true confidence and newfound excitement.

Reviewer: jphewitt@bellatlantic.net
from Mahwah, New Jersey.

Alberto, the researcher I referred to above, told me that Greenspan mentions the profound implications of the view that "reality cannot be grasped by what we think it is but by how we experience it," which another reader's review ascribes to "quantum physics." Alberto called this image of reality we all have "theological." Immediately I flashed on another student I'd had in my little class of five kids ages somewhere between ten and twelve. One of them was a highly sensitive and intelligent black boy named Colin, a new kid who, although evidently very bright, had joined us that September because he was in such deep trouble in public school. Colin could not seem to keep his mind on what the rest of us were totally immersed in learning, but spent his time attempting to distract the rest of us from paying attention.

After a couple of weeks of this behavior, we finally grew tired of his maneuverings—especially his best friend Monty—and had a strategy meeting to decide what to do about it. In our school, we have a practice of asking the kids themselves to come up with solutions to "discipline" problems. If their proposals aren't too outrageous and are clearly not vindictive, we try to follow their suggestions. The kids (with my concurrence) decided that we should all sit on Colin long enough to find out why he couldn't seem to be with us. So we did—all four of us—very gently, and with actually only a half-hearted struggle from Colin himself. We began asking him why he acted as he did. At first he claimed he didn't know, but when we persisted on sitting there, and after all the squirming and protesting, he began realizing we were willing to take as long as necessary for the answer, and he finally gave it to us. His was indeed a theological problem.

"I'm a debbil," he told us, "And God's gonna send me to burn in hell with the other debbils if I don't stop actin' bad."

"How do you know?" we asked him.

"My mom and dad told me."

"How do they know?"

"They say that's what God will do," he answered.

"Oh," we all rejoined—and let him up.

It was time for a conversation.

"Colin," I told him seriously. "I know your mom and dad are doing the very best they can to keep you from getting in trouble, and they know that God cares a lot about you too. But, you know, they are not right about God's wanting to send you to hell."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I've talked a lot with church people, and I've read a lot in the Bible too, and what I learned was that God never, never sends children to hell. It's against his law. You may hear about grownups going to hell because they are so bad, but never children! And I'm not even sure about grownups, but that's a different story. But I do know that kids never go to hell. God will not break his own law like that!"

"Oh," said Colin.

"That's right," chorused the other boys.

"So you're really not a devil, because God has to follow his own law, even when you're acting bad, because he doesn't punish children. He knows they have to have enough time to learn how to act. I'm not sure you should try to tell your mom and dad that they're wrong, because it might upset them or hurt their feelings, so you'd better not try, but it's the truth."

"We know you're not a debbil, Colin," his friend Monty told him, "You just act bad sometimes when you feel bad."

"Oh," said Colin. "Yeah, I do."

"So you can tell us when you feel bad, and we'll remind you that God doesn't think you're a devil," I said. "And we can always talk about how you're feeling. Any time you want."

"We always do that," said one of the other kids.

"OK," said Colin, looking relieved.

And that was the end of it, really.

For whatever reason, including the theological one, Colin was able to free himself up to jump in with the rest of us and enjoy what we were all creating together. And he turned out to have a real talent for mathematics, among other things. It was a great year.

We all became very fond of Colin. His parents only let him stay in the school for the one year, alas, telling us they wanted him back in public school, but it was an enjoyable one year for us all, including, especially, for Colin.

"The learning process itself is the key."

I often wonder why it seems to be so terribly important to the people who make policy decisions about kids' lives in school to crack down on them for the slightest infraction of some school rule, and yet seem totally indifferent to the human outcome of those kids' dozen or more years spent in those institutions the policymakers manage. It never seems to occur to any of them that even when the school experience is "successful," the result of those twelve years is all too often a human being who has been essentially prevented from developing what psychologist Daniel P. Goleman calls "emotional intelligence" (see his book by the same title) but which I would much prefer to think of as simply the natural process of growing up through all the developmental stages to become a truly mature adult. A mature adult knows who he is and how to get what he wants out of life, including how to find the tools to get it, because he has been allowed the time and the freedom of choice to discover these things experientially. It's almost as though the educators themselves, as products of the system, have never taken to heart the principle behind the saying, "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."

What real teaching is about is allowing kids to discover how they learn best and enjoy the most—and providing them with the tools they need to get what they want to learn. The content of that process is ancillary to the primary process of "learning to learn." The learning process itself is the key. Once acquired, all learning can become immensely enjoyable. Kids given the choice of how to engage in their own learning processes learn very quickly how to get on with whatever they want to discover—and enjoy equally the company and appropriate guidance of the adults who travel with them along the learning trail. Once you help a kid discover a tool like this, he's off and running. And in that process, because learning is a by-product of teaching, and because teaching is integrally and centrally a function of relationship, understanding intuitively what is going on between teacher and learner is primary.

The key here is to remember that it is not possible to teach anything of substance unless it comes out of a substantially real relationship between teacher and learner. In the absence of such a relationship, what passes for learning is not often retained beyond the immediate testing period. On the other hand, what a kid learns from a teacher she really cares about and who really cares about her can last a lifetime! And kids pick out of relationships what they want and need, sometimes in unlikely conditions—but they are the deciders. We all know this from our own experiences. But when do most schools permit such a relationship-based process to become the core of the learning?

A tremendously gifted teacher in a Missouri public school whose story I published a few years ago wrote about a "method" she had developed in her first grade class that was totally simple, totally brilliant and totally successful. It involved introducing into her class a large rag doll named Madelyn whom the children adopted as a protegee, cared for, helped, taught with utmost gentleness and patience to read and cipher, knowing as they did how important it was for them not to hurt her feelings just because she was slow, and not to allow children from other classes to make fun of her! That teacher was fired at the end of the year. Learning this from Holly made my heart BLEED—both for her and for the children.

The shapers of social policy never seem to ask themselves whether the quality of the actual experiences kids are having during those twelve years of their minority has anything to do with the remainder of their lives as they are lived under our societal laws and regulations. We throw people away in this society of ours with reckless abandon, blaming them every step of the way—if not the kids themselves, then the families or the teachers. No one actually chooses such an outcome, however, and it need not continue to rule the lives of our children. We are all human beings. And since the impulse toward the relational is a paramount human response, I feel reassured that on these terms, at least, I am on the safe ground of understanding and acceptance. So let us begin focusing more consciously on the touchstone of relationship in our schools—and in our lives.

Learning More About Relational Education

A Resource List Compiled by Robin Martin

This guide references additional resources and stories for inspiration related to the philosophy and practices of "relational education."

More About the Schools

For stories and informal research about the specific schools mentioned in this issue of *Paths of Learning*, below are some primary resources as well as contact information.

Challenging the Giant, edited by Mary Leue (Four Volume Set, 1992 to 2000, Down to Earth Books) - a collection of the best of *SKOLE: the Journal of Alternative Education*, and predecessor to *Paths of Learning*. These volumes provide articles that describe alternative schools and educational programs, both public and private, in the 1980s and 1990s whose structures and policies vary widely. The common factors among them include disenchantment with conventional schooling, a desire to reform education, and the belief that schools should be controlled by the population served, including the children. For more information, e-mail MarySKOLE@aol.com, visit http://www.spinninglobe.net/dtebookspg.html, or write to the address indicated below.

Changing Lives: Voices From a School That Works, by Jane Day (1994, University Press of America). This book tells the stories of 40 students, from 1973 to 1989, who in traditional schools might have been labeled as delinquents, juveniles, drug addicts, or simply "failures." Yet, through a unique program at The Community School in Camden, Maine, they chose to take six months of their lives to turn themselves around in their late teens. Were they successful? That all depends on your perspective. In this book, journalist Jane Day attempts to capture these individuals' stories—where they came from, where they are now, and the difference that they feel the "C-School" had in their lives.

Making It Up As We Go Along, by Chris Mercogliano (1998, Heinemann Press) - tells of the real life experiences of The Albany Free School where the guiding principles of educating are "love, emotional honesty, peer-level leadership, and cooperation" (p.19). Mercogliano uses countless examples to challenge views of what learning "should" look like, while he also emphasizes that he is not offering any hard and fast answers for how to school children. Quite the opposite of being a "model" for education, Mercogliano describes the Albany Free School as a grassroots approach to learning that illustrates what schools can become when communities and teachers are ready to let go of standards, dogmas, and models.

For additional works by Leue or Mercogliano, they have both written a number of articles across the years, many of which are reviewed and indexed in the Paths Of Learning Resource Center. You may look them up by author on our main search page: http://www.PathsOfLearning.org/index2.cfm.

Contact Information

To arrange a visit to either school referenced in these relational education articles, contact:

> Emanuel Pariser, The Community School, Box 555, Camden, Maine 04843, Phone (207) 236-3000, http://www.thecommunityschool.org/
>
> Chris Mercogliano, The Free School, 8 Elm Street, Albany, NY 12202, Phone (518) 434-3072, http://www.empireone.net/~freeschool/

In addition, relational themes in learning are interwoven throughout the educational and life writings published and distributed by Mary Leue. For more information, contact:

> Down to Earth Books, P.O. Box 488, Ashfield, MA 01330.

Or, visit Leue's website: http://www.spinninglobe.net -among other things, this site includes links to a wide array of alternative education topics.

Other Resources on Relational Education

Below is an assortment of other authors and some of their most well articulated writings pertaining to "relational education" — only by many different names. Since reaching children in meaningful ways is not limited to the most current knowledge or research, I have included older writings whose insights are timeless. (For all books now out of print, you can find them in most libraries, and good copies can often be found by searching used bookstores. Also, try http://www.bibliofind.com for an online search of used bookstores.)

> *Teacher,* by Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963). In a review by Sydney Gurewitz Clemens (teacher@slip.net), he writes: "Hard for me to write a short review of this book since I've written a

book about Ashton-Warner's contributions to teaching young children. ... Ashton-Warner was a careful observer of the young Maori children she taught. She knew that what she had been trained to do in a college teacher-training program wasn't working, so she really looked to see what the children cared about, and invented ways to teach them based upon their deep interests and respecting their culture, different from her own. ...This book has changed the lives of many, many teachers — I know because they have told me." (Review from Amazon.com.)

Lives of Children, by George Dennison (1969). Now over 30 years old, this book's lessons are still invaluable. It gives the day by day diary of a teacher helping to start a unique elementary free school in urban New York. (Out of print: Emanuel at The Community School in Maine may still have some extra copies.)

The Walkabout Papers, by Maurice Gibbons (1990). The C-School's "Passages" program is modeled after the Walkabout Curriculum invented by Maurice Gibbons of Vancouver and used in several American public and private school programs designed by Arnold Langberg. The metaphor of the walkabout compares high school to the rite of passage in aboriginal Australia. The outback becomes the greater community in which those making the journey to adulthood practice the core skills of the culture. This book is now available on Amazon.com, and highly rated by reviewers worldwide including a number of educators. (Published by EduServ Inc, Vancouver, 1155 West 8th Ave, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6H 1C5.)

Making High School Work: Lessons from the Open School, by Tom Gregory (1993). Describes the well-known Mountain Open School, now called Jefferson County Open School near Denver, Colorado. The Open School provides an excellent and extended example of how the Walkabout and Passages program works in a public school setting. (Published by Teachers College Press, phone 1-800-575-6566, web site http://www.teacherscollegepress.com/)

The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem, by Deborah Meier (1995). Provides both a personal memoir of the history of the dynamic programs in Central Park East schools, and a thoughtful commentary on the state of American education today. In plain, nonacademic language Meier presents a compelling case for a progressive and constructivist approach to teaching and emphasizes the importance of public schools in a democratic community. (Published by Beacon Press.)

The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education, by Nel Noddings (1992). Noddings explains how an ethic of caring involves community and a relationship of trust. "Kids learn in communion. They listen to people who matter to them and to whom they matter" (p. 36). She defines caring in terms of continuities - relationships to persons and places that are built up over time. She emphasizes the crucial need for dialogue - authentic mutual engagement rather than moralizing - which leads to compassion and understanding as well as a critical awareness of the limitations of our own cultural conditioning. (Published by Teachers College Press, phone 1-800-575-6566, web site http://www.teacherscollegepress.com/)

Freedom to Learn (Third Edition), by Carl Rogers and Jerome Freiberg (1994). This book was first published in 1969 by one of the founders of humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers. Since then, it has been referenced as a classic for educators throughout the world, who are studying and implementing humanistic, holistic, and progressive approaches to education. In many ways, Rogers' work could be considered a forerunner and foundational philosophy behind "relational education." Rogers describes in great detail what he calls "significant, meaningful, and experiential learning." (Published by Prentice Hall, Inc. Also, if you can obtain original copies of the 1969 first edition of the book, it is in some ways better than later editions.)

___

For a much wider variety of resources to browse about relational 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 web sites as well. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about relational education, call 1-800-639-4122.

I am an 11 year old boy and I live in Aptos, Calif. I homeschooled for 3 years and have been in school for 3 years. Next year I plan to homeschool again. I enjoy working on the computer, playing video games, skateboarding, surfing, and practicing Tae kwon do.

How I Learned to Read

By Trace Lapid

I'm in the fifth grade and I'm ten years old. When I was little my Mom and Dad would sit with me on the bed and read to me. It made me feel cozy and like they loved me. I got to pick the book and I usually picked my favorite book, "Quick as a Cricket." It's really small. I memorized most of it before I could read. When I could really read, it made me feel excited.

My Mom started to home school me when I was five. She mostly taught me math because that's what I wanted to learn. I don't think I was trying to read until I was eight, because my big sister always read for me. Then I took the S.A.T. test and I couldn't read it. After that I wanted to learn to read, but not that bad.

My Mom took me to a tutoring place. I learned to read by feeling the sounds in my mouth. The letter "d" is a tongue tapper, and the letter "b" is a lip popper. My tutor calls it the LIPS Program. I learned the sounds by playing bingo and fish games.

It was fun to learn to read, but at times it was hard and tedious. The hard part was learning how two letters together make one sound. Also, words that don't play fair tick me off! I struggle with reading in front of my class.

I like to read Calvin and Hobbes, Goosebumps, and Garfield books. I'm glad that I can read, because I can talk to my friends on the Internet. Sometimes my Dad gets me skateboard magazines and books on how to build ramps and do tricks. I'm glad that I can read because it is fun and I can learn from it.

Editor's Note: *In our third issue of* Paths *(Winter 2000), we published a short piece by a young reader, Amanda Woolfson, on her reading experiences. After having invited other young readers to send us essays about their own reading experiences, we received this piece, which we happily offer to you. Once again, we extend an invitation to our young readers to tell us about their reading experiences—good, bad, or in between. In fact, let's extend the invitation even further: We invite* ALL *of our* Paths *readers to write to us about their reading adventures!*

"Testing... Testing... This Doesn't Seem to be Working"

by

Richard J. Prystowsky

Not long ago, a colleague who teaches at the college where I teach forwarded to me, as well as to others, an op-ed piece written by Eugene E. Garcia, Professor and Dean, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, in response to problems with new high-stakes testing in California. I quote below a particularly crucial excerpt from Professor Garcia's article:

> Of critical importance in the [Public School Accountability Advisory Committee's] deliberations was an analysis on last year's SAT 9 scores comparing the response patterns of limited English proficient students and non-limited English proficient students. The comparison indicated that students that were limited in their English proficiency were scoring at the chance level five to six times more than students who were not limited in their English proficiency. In short, English language proficiency seemed to be directly related to the test scores of these students, substantially placing them at a disadvantage compared to their English proficient peers.

Analyzing the many problems with these tests, and "deeply" concerned "that the new state accountability system does no more that further disadvantage[s] non-English speaking students, immigrant students and the state as a whole" (qtd. from a memo sent by Professor Garcia), Professor Garcia understandably concludes his editorial by urging "parents and guardians of non-English speaking students [to] use their right under the law to boycott this year's round of state testing. They should not," continues Professor Garcia, "add to the injustices thrust on them by the State through this new form of 'reform by shame.'"

Professor Garcia's op-ed piece admirably and cogently addresses specific flaws within certain high-stakes tests. However, the idea of high-stakes, standardized testing as such is quite problematic. In *Paths of Learning,* we have published two articles concerning this problem, and we plan on publishing more. In our second issue, we published a piece by Daniel Greenberg, a founder of the Sudbury Valley School and the author of *Free At Last* (among others of his books), who responded critically to Massachusetts' version of such testing (readers might recall that *Newsweek* did a piece on this testing). In our third issue, we reprinted a newspaper article by John Spritzler, who reports on students, parents, and teachers from across the nation who have refused to participate in such testing; some teachers, in fact, have gone so far as to sabotage the tests that they have been ordered to administer. As these articles demonstrate, the problem of high-stakes testing is enormous; it pushes buttons, and it demands a response from us all.

Among its many problems, high-stakes testing seems to have highjacked our educational agendas. The following story is typical of the ensuing consequences.

Recently, a young third grade public school teacher told me how frustrated and demoralized she is becoming over this mania concerning standardized testing. She said that most of the teacher meetings that she now attends (at her school, that is) involve discussions about how to raise test scores; she said, further, that at these meetings virtually no time is spent on questions having to do with learning and teaching *per se.* Moreover, she remarked that her district has hired a new vice superintendent whose sole responsibility concerns testing in the district. Finally, she lamented that what she had been trained to do with her students (in her teacher training, that is) is a far cry from what she is now asked to do vis-à-vis this obsession with testing. She made it clear to me that she is not alone among her colleagues to be quite upset by this whole state of affairs.

This teacher's experiences, far from unique, indicate that we are engaged in a struggle that goes well beyond what is happening to any particular group of students taking state-mandated standardized tests—for example, non-native speakers of English taking high-stakes standardized tests in California. Indeed, we need to oppose such testing not because it is unfair to

Besides editing Paths of Learning, *Richard Prystowsky is a professor of English and Humanities at Irvine Valley College in Irvine, California.*

one or another particular group, but, rather, because it is unfair to students in general, whose learning is hardly served by such rigid standardization and control, and, as the third grade teacher with whom I spoke made clear, because such testing undermines the efforts of good-faith teachers, who know that these tests compromise their work and relationship with their students.

To be sure, Professor Garcia correctly suggests that the poor scores of the non-native English speaking "students who are inappropriately assessed … will go into [the students'] permanent records … [and] will confuse the students, their parents and the public." But by extension, such is the case, too, for any student scoring poorly on any high-stakes test. In a recent paper for one of my writing classes, a student recounted her understandable bitterness and frustration at having been placed in a remedial writing class (prior to her taking my class, that is) on the basis of an assessment test that lasted only a few hours. What about the years of writing that she had done prior to taking this test, she wondered? What about the encouragement for her writing that she had received from her teachers? Unfortunately, in standardized testing, such anecdotal data, however important and meaningful, count for very little.

Professor Garcia is correct that we ought to fight against the discrimination that hurts non-native speakers of English who take standardized tests. However, we cannot stop there. We must also fight against a much larger, oppressive system of standardized testing that in many ways has turned our classrooms into "teach-to-the-test" centers of problematically outcome-based student performance. The entire movement involving more and more standardized testing, national standards, and high-stakes testing is grounded in ways of thinking about teaching and learning that have little, if anything, to do with meaningful teaching and learning. Every good teacher knows this. And you can be sure that every student knows it, too. I recall the discouragement expressed years ago by one of my older, returning female students, who lamented that so much of her college education was of the "teach and test" variety. Unfortunately, it seems that we are now making matters systemically and systematically worse for all of our students with a testing mania whose enormity and pervasiveness is staggering.

This is not a public education versus alternative education issue. This is an issue that transcends such easy categorization. All of us who care deeply about teaching need to come together on this one. I cannot, for one, in good conscience protest that high-stakes standardized tests are unfair if they discriminate against a particular group of students but then say that I support such tests in general. Such tests are in themselves part of a larger problem; as such, they must be protested against, in general and *en masse.* We need, instead, to test our own compassion and insight as educators, as teachers. We need to ask ourselves why we want to work with students and how we can help them to become enfranchised, educated citizens who pursue a meaningful life. Then, we need to teach them accordingly, all the while listening to their voices and honoring their paths.

And we need to be creative in our modes of instruction and methods of evaluation. We need to challenge our students to challenge us with their insight and creativity. I often invite my students to help devise exam questions and encourage them to construct creative responses to the material that we are studying; I always invite my writing students to customize the assignments so that they meet the students' needs while also demonstrating to me that the students understand the material. As much as I'm able to do so, I want to give my students the opportunity to explore the material in a way that makes sense to them and to show me that they are in control of their learning. I want to avoid assuming that their learning or their lives are or can be standardized.

Years ago, the poet, critic, and social activist Audre Lorde taught us that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." The problem with standardized testing, high-stakes or otherwise, is not that it is flawed in one respect but vital and valid on the whole; the problem with standardized testing is that the testing is standardized. Different learners learn differently, and different teachers teach differently, and different teacher-learner combinations work differently at different times and in different ways. Simply put, standardized testing's underlying assumptions about student ranking and about student, teacher, or school accountability are inherently flawed. One cannot fix such tests. Instead, one must abandon them in favor of methods of creative evaluation that are genuinely compassionate and humane and that speak to the authentic needs of teachers and students alike. Whatever kinds of creative tests you and your students co-invent—be they in the form of creative dialogues between the authors of two books that the students are reading, for example, or in the form of a scripted talk show on social justice hosted by a historical figure whose work you are teaching the students—surely, such tests will be better and more meaningful to all of you than any standardized test that you give to your students. There is nothing standard about your teaching, or about your students' learning.

Let us, then, as teachers, reclaim our right to help our students reach worthwhile goals and lead meaningful lives. Let us all come home to what we know is true about ourselves as teachers, nurturers, guides, and, yes, perennial students. Let us set the standards of accountability by teaching to the student, and not to the test. Doing so, we will deeply honor the different ways of knowing that our students and we share when we work together and that so enrich our multifarious educational landscapes.

Note: If you are a new reader of *Paths* and have not yet read the *Paths* articles to which I refer in this essay, I invite you to retrieve these articles by visiting our magazine's website at http://www.great-ideas.org/paths.htm or to be in touch with our business office at 1-800-639-4122 to find out how you might procure back issues of the magazine or copies of the articles in question. Moreover, I invite you to write to us, c/o the address on the inside cover of this magazine, about your own views on testing so that we can add your voice to this ongoing discussion. We will try to publish as many of these views as possible.

Learning More About Standardized Testing and the Alternatives

A Resource List Compiled by Robin Martin

For anyone still confused about all this testing hoopla, or needing evidence to show your school boards, here are some resources to investigate these issues for yourselves.

The Two Big Anti-Testing Organizations

These two organizations provide the bulk of networking, research, and action support for parents and educators wishing to stand against the trend of standardized education.

- Fair Test: The National Center for Fair & Open Testing—"an advocacy organization working to end the abuses, misuses, and flaws of standardized testing and ensure that evaluation of students and workers is fair, open, and educationally sound." Contact: 342 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139, phone (617) 864-4810, fax (617) 497-2224, email Info@fairtest.org, http://www.fairtest.org
- Alfie Kohn Organization. Visit the web site for a list of local contacts, or send an email to getinvolved@alfiekohn.org if there is no contact person designated for your state. http://www.alfiekohn.org

Recent Books About Standardized Testing

The Case Against Standardized Testing: Raising the Scores, Ruining the Schools, by Alfie Kohn (Heinemann, 2000).

Contradictions of School Reform: Educational Costs of Standardized Testing (Critical Social Thought), by Linda M. McNeil (Falmer Press, 2000).

Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society: A Critique of National Educational Goals, Standards, and Curriculum, edited by Ron Miller (Holistic Education Press, 1995).

O*ne Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational Standards*, by Susan Ohanian (Heinemann,1999)

Standardized Minds: The High Price of America's Testing Culture and What We Can Do to Change It, by Peter Sacks (Perseus Books, 1999).

Will Standards Save Public Education?, by Deborah Meier (Beacon Press, 2000).

Alternative Forms of Educational Evaluation

In September 2000, *Education Week* published an article by Alfie Kohn in which he concluded: "To take the cause of equity seriously is to work for the elimination of tracking, for more equitable funding, and for the universal implementation of more sophisticated approaches to pedagogy (as opposed to heavily scripted direct-instruction programs)." While the elimination of tracking and more equitable funding will have to be taken up by other resource guides and people, I would like to share some resources that point toward the "implementation of more sophisticated approaches to pedagogy." Whether or not such multi-dimensional, humanistic and holistic approaches are allowed to become "universal" will depend on many factors, political as well as cultural. This guide merely points to the existence of the alternatives, so that educators and policy makers can consider them.

In addition to the sources listed below, which should be available through your local library or bookstore, please consider any of the other books offered by the Holistic Education Press and advertised in this magazine. These books all offer alternative models for thinking about and practicing education that openly invite alternative ways of ensuring that students succeed in creating valued and meaningful lives for themselves.

Freedom to Learn (Third Edition), by Carl Rogers and H. Jerome Frieberg (1994). This book was first published in 1969 by one of the founders of humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers. Since then, it has been referenced as a classic for educators throughout the world, who are studying and implementing more humanistic, holistic, and progressive approaches to education. Rogers describes in great detail what he calls "significant, meaningful, and experiential learning." As an alternative to the overemphasis on achievement tests, this book illustrates how to incorporate the use of self-assessments, by teachers and learners, into all sorts of educational settings.

The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem, by Deborah Meier (1995). Provides both a personal memoir of the history of the dynamic programs in Central Park East schools, and a thoughtful commentary on the state of American education today. In plain, nonacademic language, Meier presents a compelling case for a progressive and constructivist approach to teaching as she emphasizes the importance of public schools in a democratic community.

Elementary Schooling for Critical Democracy, by Jesse Goodman (1992) - illustrates a thorough ethnographic study of Harmony Elementary School, telling the story of a progressive school from multiple perspectives. In particular, Goodman delves into the importance of a vision for learning in a democracy by examining both the power and participation of school members, as well as the curriculum and instruction that is implemented. Rather than advocating the need for an open curriculum, this book examines the need for a teacher-centered curriculum that balances the needs of the individual with responsibility toward the community.

The Schools Our Children Deserve, by Alfie Kohn (1999) contrasts the "Old School" methods with nontraditional and progressive education, in which teachers help students to move beyond a "one right answer" approach to education. Kohn contrasts cooperative and collaborative learning with coercive teaching. He also describes the whole language approach to teaching reading, which uses meaning and phonics; "why the basics don't add up"; and a "who cares?" approach to teaching math. The book itself mixes many different approaches to learning, rather than rigorously showing the consistency within a single approach. The benefit of reading it is not to gain a solid understanding of the alternatives so much as to see how they are all in stark contrast to a testing model for education.

Critical Friends Groups—a project that is part of the National School Reform Faculty, sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation. These small groups of 8 to 12 teachers and administrators meet regularly to discuss teaching and learning practices, look closely at their own curricular practices and studentsí works, and identify school culture issues that affect student achievement. Although not necessarily leaving behind traditional models of standardized testing, the professional and personal development emerging from these groups indicates a trend toward portfolio assessments and other more in-depth means for assessing what gets learned in schools. These groups include a network of over 5,000 teachers and principals devoted to improving classroom practice and rethinking school leadership. http://www.harmony.pvt.k12.in.us/www/cfg1.html

* * *

If you would like a wider variety of resources, including a wide array of online articles, about standardized testing and the alternatives to it, please visit our Online Action Guides, at http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide, just call 1-800-639-4122.

People

Sunsets, death,
go on for nothing or return?
I suppose.
How am I? What to say-happy, sad or no-
I just am.
Here, not a place
Understand the words never said.
Confused minds panic.
I love you.
The pain you give me.
I want to stay here.
Unsure your eyes look.
Smile alone and remember.

Tyler Rogers

Tyler Rogers is a fifteen-year-old homeschooler from Paonia, Colorado. He likes to write poems.

A piece of inspiration

A place to find more of myself.
A person I know.
Iíll never forget she long since understood.
A wonder I thought, why so difficult to be a better person.
A lack of perception that minimized my inspiration.
Most things lead me to something better.
Everyone sees a little different.
The art of life that never keeps a person waiting.

Tyler Rogers

Anger

Anger, it comes from boiling pits,
as it heats a musty smell arises.
Anger, in the pits of horror and despair,
anger grows to destructive sizes.

Anger, it charges forth with strong power,
and leaves trails of destruction.
Anger, up against this horrible feeling,
there is no imaginable protection.

Anger, escape is a mere mortal wish,
but in all the world there is a cure.
Anger, yes there is a cure that exists,
it is friendship, I'm quite sure.

Nick Hertzberg is currently 12 years old, a 6th grader at Kaneland Middle school, and lives in DeKalb, IL. His hobbies include chess club, fishing, and playing Ultima Online, an internet role playing game.

Nick Hertzberg

REVERSING PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM

by Don Glines

J. Lloyd Trump, one of the ten most outstanding educators of the twentieth century—who had the weight of the National Association of Secondary School Principals with him—wrote to me in the early 1980s, shortly before his death, that "we were witnessing the most disappointing time in his fifty professional years." He died discouraged, because twenty hand-picked Trump Plan model school project sites—with planning and staff training partly financed by the Danforth Foundation—had disintegrated. Unfortunately, 2001 is historically even worse. If the successes of the early century Dewey era, the 1930 decade Eight-Year Study programs (see below for more details), and the correctly implemented open schools of the 1960s are reviewed, there were absolutely beautiful environments of choice—true Camelots. All eventually fell prey, but not to program difficulties. They were crushed by vote-seeking politicians and past-oriented "school people," none of whom were risk-takers or visionary Trump-style educators. Robert Anderson of the famed *Nongraded Elementary Schools* publication (1959) witnessed similar reactions in spite of all the research and common sense dialogue he documented. Forty years later, schools are still locked into grade levels.

Therefore, my sense is to write that personally, after 45 years of trying to be a "change agent," and after successfully leading the creation of some of the most memorable school programs of the past century, I should extend the Lloyd Trump observation to the 21st century—that now "schooling" is worse than it was in 1980. Politicians—with no opposition from "school people"—have made a mockery of the education field. Therefore, I should be ready to abandon the impossible dream! The "windmills" have seemingly won!

However, there are all those thousands and thousands of children and youth locked into public institutions that are wrong for the majority of them and for society as a whole. As the minister of education for Nelson Mandela (Mr. Bengu) stated: *"Democracy means the absence of domination. Whilst our model of schooling is riddled with domination, we are clearly on the wrong track, assuming, that is, that we actually believe in democracy."* Our education society does need alternatives in the public as well as the private sector. In spite of overwhelming odds, visionaries must continue the essential task of

Author's Note

Most of us who have tried to apply startling, neglected research, student-centered innovations, and well designed change processes in the public schools over the past five decades, if honest, would have to admit we have failed; it would seem to be impossible to create significant, holistic alternatives within the traditional system of schooling. Most frustrating is that we have not tried to change every school, but have only advocated the implementation of same-cost diverse choices *of learning/living styles. In spite of multiple and varied proposals, the controlling majority has refused to relinquish the one-size-fits-all mentality. Everyone must belong to the same church (school), for there is only a "correct" way to worship (learn); families certainly cannot be agnostic, for their children are required to fulfill their twelve-year sentence. The fortunate ones can escape to private schools, home schooling, at-risk individualized centers, or even drop-out by passing equivalency exams.*

Dr. Don Glines is Director, Educational Futures Projects, P.O. Box 2977, Sacramento, CA 95812. The *National Observer* cited him as "one of the foremost apostles of educational innovation," and acknowledged his famous Mankato Wilson School, Minnesota State University to be "probably the most innovative public school in America." The *Kappan* cited him as a "vice-president for educational heresy." He combines the need to change school structures now with a vision for global futures.

"Reversing Public School Reform" away from the negative political mandates while moving student climates toward new directions of child-centered choices within a democracy. Fortunately, Don Quixote and his team still have another time at bat.

The following descriptions and illustrations of what is wrong in the public sector, and the suggestions for improving learning opportunities through self-selected alternatives are based on a real city district in a real state in 2001. The challenge is to determine how public schools can change and offer meaningful, available to all, options in most communities, or how to enroll more youth in private alternatives. We cannot abandon all those so-called "7th graders" still locked in their local "public jails" (classrooms). The examples express in specific terms the philosophy espoused in my earlier article, "Imagineering Future Learning Designs" (*Paths*, Winter 2000). A more definitive article with recipe methods for change will follow in a future issue.

For now, it is important to remember that Don Quixote still has the bottom of the 9th inning, though it will take a bases-loaded homer to tie. It will not be easy, but we need to turn societal dreams into learning realities. We must rally to create equal opportunity in the extra-innings. Quixote, and the three runs scored to date, provide hope that the home team still has a chance:

New Directions

It is sad but true that in this new century local public schools, partially created to ensure democracy, are ironically among the most undemocratic institutions in America. Their major rivals, the prisons and the Marines, can be avoided by behaving or not enlisting. There is no escape from "schooling," as everyone receives the same sentence. The existing uniform factory assembly line model called education, in vogue in most districts, is not now, nor has it been for most of the 20th Century, appropriate for the *majority* of students. New paths of learning and better options for families and communities are essential while we are moving toward 2010.

Present systems, with their mandated same programs and requirements for *everyone*, based upon group-paced instruction, are wrong. Voucher plans, charter and magnet schools, alternative centers for dropouts, gifted and some special education programs, independent study, and home schools would be unnecessary if mandatory rigid schooling for all were replaced by individual learning plans. The affluent and those who can make great financial sacrifices sometimes can find relief in the private sector, but the vast majority of families and students have no hope for parole.

The Scoreboard, 2001

Inning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Windmills	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1		
Quixote	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0			

Backward Reforms

School reforms are desperately needed, but not as in the current politically generated mandates. Those are headed in the wrong direction. *Education has become politics*, and in spite of the rhetoric, learning is not student-centered. Many state legislatures have recently required that students pass an exit examination before they can receive a diploma and have eliminated social promotion. These and similar measures have a negative effect on students, and therefore will not help overall, regardless of the politically motivated slogans of the advocates.

A longer school year structured the same as for the currently popular 180 day requirement, will only give disenchanted students more time to hate school, and the cognitively advanced youth more hours to be bored. If legislatures are serious regarding remediation, why do they cap "summer school" funding? Why let students fail for nine months and then try to remediate the failure in four to six weeks? Why not remediate after nine weeks year-round, or provide opportunities often for enrichment? Why remain locked in Average Daily Attendance (ADA) financial figures—a common practice—and spend perhaps three million dollars for audits to determine if schools are cheating, when even most state school board associations advocate a change away from such enrollment accounting?

The dictatorial edicts of local school districts—prime examples of undemocratic bureaucracies—pay lip service to improving with slogans, target outcomes, and mandated book adoptions, but input from dissenting voices is not allowed or is ignored. Teachers are overwhelmed with requirements, pressures, and restrictions on their creative interests. In many communities, permissive "democratic" two minute public comments at Board meetings are disregarded. Committee decisions involving parents are merely rubber-stamp approval of planned administrator outcomes. Local school site councils seldom have experience in envisioning; they focus on what exists. There is a rejection mentality for any adverse opinion, especially a recommendation to deviate away from the accepted "normal" school structures. Boards and administrators do not want to consider creative optional designs and all the research that is available, for this would interrupt uniformity.

Voluntary Astronauts

Major industries spend ten to fifteen percent on Research and Development (R&D); smaller companies spend five to ten percent. Schools spend less than one-fourth of one percent; their R&D usually consists of money to administer and report test scores. There is little doubt why schools do not improve. Private businesses would go bankrupt if they followed the slow and almost nonexistent processes for change that we see in so-called education reform. To improve educational opportunities and methods, R&D Centers can provide exciting experiential studies, and should be an essential learning system priority.

Nationally, most local districts have refused to create R&D centers where parents, teachers, and students could volunteer to be "education astronauts" to fly the Endeavor, Discovery, and Columbia design models. Such NASA style centers are desperately needed in all states. Space flight officials have indicated that they could land people on MARS—an eleven month trip plus return—in twenty years, given support. If the United States has the intelligence and technology to reach Mars, then certainly in the next two decades "school people" should finally be able to figure out how to eliminate the 7th grade—**by far the worst school year for most youth**.

R&D Centers could *1) provide immediate optional choices of learning environments and lifestyles for volunteers, 2) implement known research results not currently being used in most schools, and 3) offer a climate for exploring, experimenting and developing new approaches and materials that could benefit individuals and society.*

Scotch tape did not "suddenly appear." The Kitty Hawk airplane is no longer flying; typewriters are almost extinct. Medicine, after fifteen years of rejection, adopted penicillin, and now there are transplants; instant communication is changing access to information. However, the education enterprise continues to rely on a century old model, *somehow hoping that yesterday will get better*.

Family Options

Nationwide, the need for choices for public school parents and students is beyond question. Many not now in charter or home schooling patterns are craving new opportunities, but they are powerless as individuals. Groups have to form to "fight," even if they are citizens and taxpayers and want only to improve the learning environments offered as options for students. State legislatures (politicians) try the quick fix with erroneous new laws aimed at ALL regardless of validity. Local districts insist that schools are improving when there is no significant difference in learning. The test scores may show modest gains, but at least 30% of the students still receive D and F grades and remain potential "push-outs."

In numerous districts, long overdue school repairs help. Votes for bond issues are usually not one of confidence in the system or trustees, but finally the realization by even conservative taxpayers that students were desperately in need of better facilities if they were to be sentenced there for seven hours a day for twelve years. Many communities are in disgrace, allowing school buildings to deteriorate to where, perhaps over the past fifteen years, conditions have been atrocious. What has happened to the essential door-to-door support and combined power of such groups as the Chamber of Commerce, churches, the League of Women Voters, newspapers, and the business sector in these communities? Regardless of politics and questionable school administrations, there has never been a national excuse for deterioration of learning facilities, and especially in the recent so-labeled "robust economy." Money has never been the real issue, but rather the failure to place caring for people above partisan politics. To overcome the excuse of being "overcrowded," year-round education schedules would solve many immediate problems. Though a new high school may be needed in a district, year-round could save approximately 35 million dollars for a 2000 student facility, if the issue were construction cost. If bonds for facilities are finally approved, then does it take another 15-30 years to change outmoded learning programs?

The current grade-level system began in 1847 in Quincy, MA.

The existing "teaching" methods of the schools, even with greatly improved facilities, and with the continued political expedience proposals, rules, and policies of governors, legislatures, and district administrators, will not in the long run create significantly better learning, nor will mandated single series textbooks for reading and math focused primarily on raising test scores. Research and Development centers, and choices for families are truly essential priorities which could address many of the problems, but existing school districts refuse to even consider deviations from Marine-style uniformity.

Age Levels

As further evidence of the need to reverse the current national "reform" trend, it is well known that student differences at each grade level are extreme. If legislatures wanted to focus on learning and not politics, the members could address, as illustration, the kindergarten dilemma. Now most states determine the readiness of a child for school based upon one minute on the clock. If Sally is born perhaps at 11:59 PM on November 30, she may be eligible for kindergarten when she turns five. But poor Billy is born at 12:01 AM December 1, and therefore is not eligible for school at age five. Something happens in that magic minute or two: perhaps the inherited genes automatically change with the date on the calendar. This one minute dilemma can even happen with identical twins.

How absurd a law can legislators create? It is not based on growth and development or learning, but only political whim—a need, they think, for a cut-off date. A kindergarten teacher has students entering with a sixteen month chronological span (counting transfer students from states with diverse magic dates). Add to this the motivation, maturity, cultural, and home environment factors, and the span ranges beyond twenty-four months. Kindergarten teachers have an impossible task, especially in states where kindergarten is offered but not mandated. Soon after nine months of half-day "schooling," there exists a plus and minus four year developmental span at each elementary "grade level"—another of the erroneous concepts of "school people" and politicians.

By the time the students reach "7th grade," the academic growth spread as measured by the inappropriate state-mandated tests, ranges from grades 2-3 to grades 12-13, depending upon the communities. Physiologically, the students are spread a minimum of six years. Some are "9th graders"; they are men—and ready for the National Football League. Others are still physically "5th graders;" they have not even heard of puberty, let alone progressed through it. Yet they are all in "7th grade" physical education and play flag football (or equivalent) as required. The "5th grader" gets physically hurt and then laughed at in the showers, but the school proclaims they have good programs.

It is absolutely impossible to have 7th grade courses of study, requirements, lunch (they are not all hungry at 11:25 AM), football, and standards. There are no such "7th" level youth. Only fifteen percent somewhat reflect proclaimed "7th grade averages;" the other eight-five percent are either way ahead or way behind or interested in other than the required but outmoded grade level concept group-paced curriculum. Separating youth into fast, medium, and slow classes is especially wrong. There is nothing worse (almost) in the entire world than the 7th grade—no one should be sentenced to it—yet most schools have such a grouping and then pretend they have good programs. National and local education leaders have forgotten that there is nothing so unequal as to treat unequals as equals, when it comes to creating appropriate learning environments.

School Structures

The traditional 164 year old elementary schooling structure is hard to improve, as thousands of teachers and principals have learned over the past many decades. The current grade-level system began in 1847 in Quincy, MA. The organization ideas were imported from Prussia by Horace Mann, where the "graded concept" had been used since the 1500s, initially to prepare youth for the military—at each age level, specific "skills" were to be mastered. State departments of education and state legislatures have made this archaic format worse wherever they have mandated incompatible standards, authentic assessment, accountability, promotion denial, and required subjects based upon the "grade level" in school.

Most districts label grades 6-7-8, or 7-8, or even 7-9, *Middle Schools*, but there are few true middle schools in communities, as envisioned originally in 1965. The overwhelming majority are still intermediate schools based upon a seventy year old junior high model. They have not understood the philosophy behind the four year age level designs ("grades" 5-8) as nationally planned. The "junior"

format, promoted in the 1930s, remains instead: period 1-2-3 schedules, ABC report cards, and inappropriate but required group-paced curriculum for ALL—English, history, science, math, physical education, and six or nine week exploratory units (the latter a long outdated concept).

To replace the junior high, the originators of the middle school, led by William Alexander, University of Florida, proposed the inclusion of such concepts as nongradedness, interrelated curriculum, year-round and flexible scheduling, individual evaluation (no ABC style report cards), teams of teachers, self-selected advisors, self-selected teachers, experiences rather than courses, continuous progress and self-pacing, multiple learning resources, no overnight homework (usually a waste of time), trust as in "with freedom goes responsibility," focus on the affective over the cognitive domain (the person not math had the priority), and four years to develop through puberty in a warm, caring environment with modernized, clean, pod-oriented facilities.

> Is it any wonder that the majority of students are not excited attending school each year?

The desired elimination of the junior high and intermediate school syndromes was not a whim of a few, but instead was supported by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). In fact, the two major studies by ASCD, *The Junior High We Need* in 1961 and the follow-up 1964 report, *The Junior High We Saw*, led to the realization that never would the observed outcomes meet the desired goals. Thus in circa 1965 came the plan for an entirely new organizational design. It was the first time in 50 years to invent, create, and implement a major improvement in education. What is more appropriate for youth chronologically ranging from 10-14 years old, but developmentally spread much greater? It was truly a time to dream: "What is a middle school"? A few districts initially followed the original plans, but later the majority saw it only as a fad, or used it to justify placing the 9th grade back in the high school to fill those buildings in an era of then declining enrollments. *The latter changed the name over the door*—altering the grade levels assigned (from 7-8-9 to 6-7-8)—but they left the old obsolete junior high format in place. Almost forty years later, most communities still do not understand what the 1964 national study determined was wrong with the "junior" design.

High schools have done no better. In most locations nationally, the traditional pattern has remained the same for almost one hundred years. Reviewing, as illustration, high schools during the 1930 era of the *Eight-Year Study*, most had period 1-2-3 schedules (a terrible way to organize for instruction—the current fad erroneously labeled "block scheduling" is no better), hall passes, required English, history, math, science, social studies (by grade level—again wrong), ABC report cards (a non-defensible manner of measuring achievement), 30 desks facing the chalkboard, cheerleaders, football, Spanish Club, homework, single course text books, lockers, and schedule conflicts among classes offered only once or twice a semester. The only thing different is Computer Club, though most schools yet lack enough updated technology to make a difference in learning methods and outcomes. Further, even if the buildings are painted, the roofs repaired, classrooms air-conditioned, and bathrooms cleaned and modernized, the conventional facility design of "boxes holding 30" is still a detriment, for this continues the practice of one instructor in isolation teaching a separate subject. The slight deviations in program offerings, such as the high school gifted format are almost worse, for many districts have only added "zero" period classes (or equivalent) and a Marine Corp mentality of "rigorous" absolutes. Sadly, most new high schools are being designed, though more "modern" in arrangements and amenities, to replicate a 100-year-old dysfunctional pattern. Few districts have been willing to "imagineer" for the future.

Rethinking Curriculum

The famous *Eight-Year Study* of the 1930s (Harper/Row, 1942) involving 300 of the most recognized universities and 30 of the highly acclaimed high schools proved conclusively that success in college and later life were completely unrelated to what courses were taken in high school. In fact, the graduates of the "gooniest" programs had the best results when evaluated by traditional outcomes (income, marriage, employment, et al). In spite of this, the high schools continued their conventions which were then adopted by the newly formed—and named—"junior" high. When the middle school was designed, many advocates voted for a combined nongraded K-12 structure, as in the famous Wilson Campus School at Minnesota State University, Mankato, but the grade levels 5-8 format won, based on more easily selling the concept to the public. More importantly, the four-year span was to allow students to grow into adolescence without pressure. The available studies indicated that the "5th" students were closer to the "6th" and "7th" developmentally than "4th," and the "9th" were closer to the "10th" than "7th" or "8th." Further, 5th and 6th were found to benefit from specialized curriculum areas as in art, music, physical education, and home and industrial projects. The research indicated that there is no reason to separate ages, except as sometimes appropriate, as in a family at home with multiple age ranges of children. As a result, rather than restrict the middle school to grades 5-8, a better arrangement is to overlap grade levels with the elementary and high schools, as in K-5, 5-9, 9-12 (or similar one or two year configurations) to allow for better placement of students related to maturity and comfort, without any stigma. The less mature can remain longer with the younger group, while the more mature can join with the older students.

Individual accommodations are essential, for unfortunately, the curriculum in both the junior and senior highs in most districts is particularly out of sync with reality. Algebra is a good example, regardless of the "grade level" involved. No one needs such an obsolete course, not even engineers. What engineers and transportation planners (all college graduates) need is a course in common sense. This obvious observation is reinforced every day for anyone trying to enter or leave a freeway on most central city on/off ramps—a complete disaster related to safety—and a prime example of failure to plan for the future. Attempting to park in most multi-storied garage buildings is equally taxing, yet these facilities again were designed by college graduates who passed algebra but "failed" the class in common sense. They were also approved by local planning commissions and city councils—again composed primarily of college graduates. Algebraic concepts should be interwoven with a continuous interdependent "systems" curriculum. Knowledge is not segmented, but is interrelated. It cannot be placed in separate courses and departments. Algebra should never be required, any more than Latin, which used to be mandated for college until Latin teachers were phased out. If the legislatures want "basics," why not return to their favorite important class—Latin?

> Student differences at each grade level are extreme...A kindergarten teacher has students entering with a sixteen month chronological span.

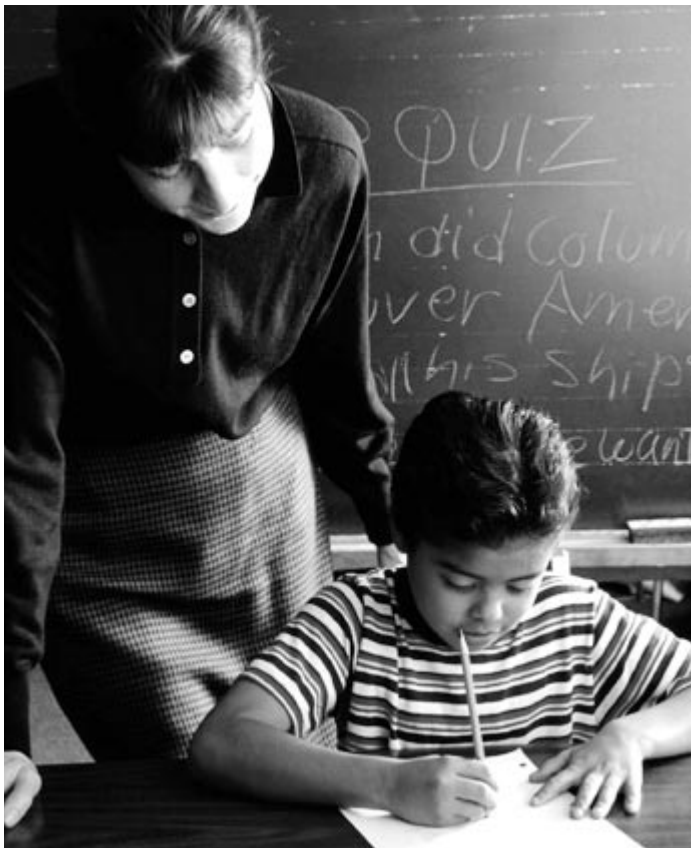
If algebra is offered, it cannot be taught for 36 weeks a year for all students (September to June). The Cal Tech/MIT university caliber students can learn it in 6-8 weeks. Give them a book and get out of their way. The "slower" in math, but still a college prep student—perhaps a future sociology major and Peace Corps worker—may need to know about radicals in politics but not in algebra. In any event, this latter learner may need 50 weeks to complete the experience satisfactorily.

Good veteran teachers know that only three in a class of thirty need algebra for 36 weeks (the current school year); the other twenty-seven need less (6-12-18-24 weeks) or more time (40-44-50 weeks). But all thirty youth are sentenced to the same pattern because school

The percentile score basis [standardized tests] for comparison is even worse. Fifty percent of the students nationally must be below average—always.

administrators are afraid to be creative and change the schedule and curriculum format to allow students to proceed at their own pace. The standard 36 weeks for everyone results in the bell-shaped grading curve which ensures A, B, C, D, F student report cards in each class.

Is it any wonder that the *majority* of students are not excited attending school each year? In most districts, approximately thirty percent of the grades given are Ds and Fs; forty percent are Cs. At best, seventy percent of the students are average, mediocre, below average, unsatisfactory, failure. How many "C" students are truly excited regarding learning? "Oh, I love school, it is wonderful, I get Cs." Think of the attitudes of D and F youth, and even more of those who are "pushed-out." Of the thirty percent who receive A and B grades, half are bored, as they are not challenged. They may "like



school" because of friends, gifted classes, Halloween parties, football, and college preparation. But when asked regarding their courses, they are not enthusiastic. Think of the algebra student who could finish in six weeks, but must wait thirty-six weeks; he or she could also finish four years of traditional math in two years or six years in four, but is not allowed to move forward, for her doing so would destroy the system. Such youth are sentenced to years of boredom.

Evaluating Students

The standardized tests used in almost all states, regardless of publisher, are inappropriate; if given, they should only be used as in the medical model for individual diagnosis and prescription purposes. They are of no value in comparing students and in comparing schools. Such "smart/dumb", "good/bad" distinctions are contrary to the real mission of learning—developing the human and societal potential by maximizing the worth of each student. Passing the exam does not mean the student has learned, but only temporarily retained enough to qualify for the next round. The Scholastic Aptitude Tests for college are not appropriate either; many youth who do not do well on them can graduate from college with honors. The same is true for the Graduate Record Exam. Students who "fail" it, but are finally accepted often complete their degree with 3.5-4.0 averages. State-mandated tests can be passed if teachers spend hours teaching the "correct" answers. The percentile score basis for comparison is even worse. Fifty percent of the students nationally must be below average—always. If everyone improves, the tests are re-normed to keep half below fifty. If all in one city score above, then all in an equal population city must score below. If all in one large state are above fifty, then all in a similar state must be below. This makes no sense—to evaluate learning by always keeping half the nation "below average."

It is not hard to raise percentiles on tests through immersion concentration on test-related items. Raising scores several percentage points is not especially significant. If they soar to 60, why not 90? The intent should be for students to *learn*. There is still a classroom mentality of grading on the curve where 70 is passing and 69 is failing. Neither is true; of 100 items, the student knows 69. If he or she needs to know the other 31, then the necessary time and methods must be made available for him or her to achieve this result. If the 31 "errors" are not that important, they probably should not have been on the test. Should not the one who scored 70 also know most of the other 30 "correct responses" on the test?

Medical doctors know that to be a good physician, one must individually diagnose and prescribe. Schools assume everyone in the "7th grade" has the flu, so they all receive flu shots (mandated same curriculum), in spite of the fact that one has a broken arm, one has an earache, one has a cut foot, and most are otherwise quite healthy. Even more of a malpractice is the fact that if a student transfers from out-of-state a week after school opens, the schooling people have already decided the previous spring, before ever meeting the individual, what site will be assigned, what courses will be required, what teacher will be mandated, when lunch will be served, what books will be used, and what evaluation system will be in place. Even the medical profession is forgetful; it sometimes creates a group approach for school admission by combining measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines, though there is growing support that these shots should be given separately, one year apart. In any event, national curricula and standards are not the answer to the problem posed here. Rather, curriculum and teaching methodologies that meet the needs of individual learners, along with physically and spiritually healthy learner-centered environments, are the paths for improving education for all youth.

Algebra and the flu syndrome are not the only improper approaches. English is the same. Again experienced teachers recog-

nize that in a class of 30, only three or four (not counting non-English speaking youth) need semi-colon instruction at the same time. Even in elective classes, as in French, the four-in-thirty ratio holds. French usually involves college prep students, yet the ABCDF syndrome prevails there too. The gifted language students are ready for the chapter one test on Tuesday, but they must wait until Friday to receive their A. The "average" students are almost ready on Friday, but the struggling ones are not. Yet they all take the same exam. On Monday the papers are returned marked with red, with scores of A through F, but then the D and F students are told to study harder and "catch up" for there is a test on chapter two (even though they do not know chapter one) on the coming Friday.

Given such a system, it is no wonder that schools do not succeed in reaching all but the gifted or "above average," and giftedness is not

> In spite of multiple and varied proposals, the controlling majority has refused to relinquish the one-size-fits-all mentality.

total. Some are brilliant in communication but only fair in math; others may be outstanding in art, but poor in physical education. In many districts, all gifted classes are group-paced and isolated from classes for the "average" students, again both wrong practices.

Even more, if foreign language is to be taught, there should be immersion programs in K-4, not in high school. Elementary youth can fairly easily become bilingual, whereas high school ages struggle. The 5x55x9x2 formula is one for illiteracy, but students must be illiterate to enter many universities. Few students, if any, can learn French, Japanese, or Spanish studying it 5 days a week, 55 minutes a day, 9 months a year, for 2 years. They may receive an A, but they cannot speak, read, or write the language even semi-fluently. It is an exercise in futility, *yet now that they are illiterate*, they can enroll in "higher education."

The elementary level is just as outdated. The self-contained classroom is impossible. One teacher in a small box with very limited facilities must teach fourteen subjects in comprehensive schools, though even the best teachers cannot do it. In districts stressing basics, the subjects leading to success for some students—art, science, physical education—have been abandoned. Learning "basics" can often best be achieved through home economics. It is not "wrong" to help low achieving students improve in reading and math abilities. But it is not defensible to have everyone use the same textbook and be on the same page based on "grade level." One reading and one math program, though both perhaps good for some, is not the appropriate approach for *all* students. Not everyone learns the same way or at the same pace. Placing all gifted 4th graders in an "advanced reader" and requiring the group to proceed on the same page at the same time is again indefensible. Some should be in one chapter, some in another chapter, some in different places in other readers, and some should be in entirely different programs. Visual learners do not do as well with auditory presentations, yet most classes are still taught with the teacher standing in front of the room talking at the group. Further, modern brain-based research is usually ignored, though it exposes this approach as wrong for the majority. The brain is a pattern-making organ, not a pattern-receiving entity.

Four hours a day on language and math may be necessary in some districts for many youth, but not for *all*. The district is ignoring child growth and development research. Some students at a given moment in time need instructional physical education more than reading; others need more art than math. Some learn reading and math best through their interests in science, home economics, or industrial technology. Stir, blend, mix, tablespoonful, 1/2 cup make great reading and math approaches. Most districts nationally have virtually eliminated meaningful time for elementary art, music, physical education, shop, technology, home economics, nature study, gardening, Spanish, and other often "fun" subjects that are considered non-essential. This is a great detriment to large numbers of students, for they are often motivated through these fields. Numerous districts have even unethically hired preparation period teachers to cover, as illustration, perhaps 30 minutes of music and 30 minutes of physical activity, even though the instructors have no training or credentialing in either subject. This practice enables the classroom teacher to have an hour free in isolation (prep period), while ignoring state mandated minutes per subject per week codes. Research and educator knowledge regarding the value of these subjects for many youth offer further evidence of the errors in the current school reform movement.

Teacher Focus

Teachers need to join as team members to maximize their strengths, minimize their weaknesses, provide multiple personalities for students, and exchange perceptions of student potential. This approach is especially valid with the many new and inexperienced teachers. Working together in nongraded teams housed in suites, if properly conceived and implemented, normally results in better learning environments for youth. The one person in "my room with my class" grade level mentality contributes to the lack of improvement—especially when the weak or inexperienced teacher is expected to carry the same load as the "good veteran." This dilemma becomes even more important with teachers needing to address the many diversified cultures represented in so many schools.

Class size reduction (CSR) to 1-20 in the primary in several states has not helped, except to make life easier for the teachers, but it has created facility shortages and forced the hiring of more untrained staff. A 1999 study at the University of California, Riverside, educational research center, found no significant improvement, for teachers were still using the same methods as in previous larger classes. The summary concluded that spending money on other factors such as improving staff development and better curriculum materials would probably be more beneficial. The irony is that more money should be spent on the K-2 years than on any other three-year combination in the district, yet the high schools still receive greater amounts than K-2.

If there is to be truly significant improvement in low achieving schools, the ratio should be 1-10 with aides to assist. It is easier to instruct 1-30 gifted students than it is 1-10 difficult or non-English speaking youth. An across the board 1-20 ratio may be the political

> There is no escape from "schooling," as everyone receives the same sentence.

decision, but it is not the best solution. Full day kindergarten should be an option; students should be able to enter the day they turn four or five into a nongraded Beginning Life Center—a special area environment with well-prepared staff designed for children in the traditional grades K-2 or 3 range. These youngsters may be four to eight in chronological years, but in developmental years, they are on a continuum from at least three to ten or eleven year olds.

Student Focus

For all youth, but especially the ones with difficult personal lives, the affective domain (good self-image, caring, happy) and the psychomotor domain (run, kick, measure, jump, throw) are more important than the cognitive (read, write). Confluence of the three is the goal, but students who "hate the world," who have not had good nourishment, and who believe no one likes them will not learn the mandated math. They can be scolded, coached, put in remedial classes, or held back from promotion, but they will not succeed in the school required cognitive areas.

Further, if students have environmental illness (severe allergies or intolerances to things such as milk, wheat, molds, trees, forced air heat duct residue, paints, perfumes, carpets, formaldehyde, cheese, petrochemicals, sugar, dyes, solvents, and, and), they cannot succeed to their potential. Many borderline special education or disruptive youth suffer from environmental illness and cannot perform well, but school teachers and administrators who do not understand blame the child and parent when it is the school that should provide accommodation. Often "school people" have insisted on children being on Ritalin for Attention Deficit Disorder, when that drug probably should either not be used, or used only for temporary control while the causes are being addressed. Schools have a tendency to want the parent to call a psychiatrist, when the staff does not know or does not take time to learn, how to accommodate a "different" child.

Healthy food, caring, clean clothes, personal attention, 1-10 class size, love, and understanding are the essentials for many "problem students"—far more important than reading scores. Not all "first graders" should be reading, and especially not out of the same book. Language immersion may be a priority for many. Person Centers—temporary placement programs staffed by sympathetic teachers augmented by part-time or on-call sociologists, psychologists, police officers, recreation specialists, and physicians—are needed for youth with perceived personal adjustment factors, and/or for difficult "discipline problem" students. Most "troubled youth" cannot be adequately assisted by the "regular" classroom teacher in a traditional structure. However, all of them do not belong in an "alternative school" either, though most of these specialized programs are better than the comprehensive sites. Unfortunately, students often must be labeled "bad" before they can be admitted to an alternative settings. The focus in each of the possible varieties of Person Centers—health, self-concept, delinquency must be on the *affective*, not the *cognitive* domain.

Public districts declare that they already have choices which meet the needs of ALL youth. If one follows the Marine Corps model, perhaps they are correct. Shape up to standards, attend special training, go to the brig, or be discharged. But schools do not exist to prepare for the military, nor are they there to help our country compete economically with Japan, which, incidentally, had in the post-war recovery period, the highest student suicide rate in the world. The internationally recognized schools in pre-war Germany produced graduates who tried to exterminate a nation of people. The designers of the gas chambers had Ph.D. degrees in chemistry, biology, and engineering.

The greatest problems in the world arguably are being caused by college graduates, not by the five percent "criminal element." The Love Canal in New York was created by chemists from the MIT caliber universities, and boards of directors were from the Harvard caliber institutions. The unsafe Pinto car was designed by the graduates from the Cal Tech equivalent colleges, and defended in court by lawyers who graduated from Stanford level universities. Pollution, poverty, and underemployment problems are often caused by corporate giants and the Wall Street mentality. Most of the executives have been to college. More math is not the answer to environmental decay. Hungry people could be fed by a ten percent reduction in the world arms race, but leaders who have been to college are not considering reducing the munitions profits. The Firestone/Ford Explorer tire fiasco was know for several years, but not corrected by higher education graduates until the problem was exposed.

False Flexibility

School districts nationally now pride themselves on having "open enrollment," but it only works if there is space available, parents have transportation, and there is true diversity among the choices of programs offered to families. "Magnet schools" are not well advertised, or have waiting lists and lotteries. How can anyone defend waiting lists for learning? If it is that popular, it should be replicated and made available to all who could benefit.

Programs offered should be available to every student, regardless of residence boundaries. In one specific district, as illustration, there are several year-round elementary schools, but they are not located geographically to be available to *all* who *would* volunteer. The district does not understand the philosophy of continuous learning. Transportation often makes enrollment impossible, even for die-hard YRE (year-round education) supporters. Most all low-achieving schools should be year-round. Summer learning loss for many students is a reality documented by, among others, Dr. Harris Cooper, Psychology Department, University of Missouri. There are no junior or senior highs on year-round, a real travesty of philosophy and choice. This lack of secondary programs further indicates the arbitrary dictatorship of most school administrations. In a middle school of 1500, 500 *volunteers* could easily be in YRE, while 1000 could continue on the agrarian calendar. High school overcrowding could be alleviated by multiple tracking of the enrollment. Air conditioning, until installed, could be accommodated by altering the school starting

> Education has become politics....

and closing times. In the summer, the hours might be in 7 - 12:30. In the winter the hours could be 9 - 3:00. People forget that prior to World War II, schools were not air conditioned, yet students "learned." Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, was mandated K-12 year-round from 1928 to 1938, with no air conditioning; Bluffton, Indiana began year-round in 1904—with no climate control system.

There are many uniform negatives in most school districts nationally. Conversely, on a positive note, much could be achieved

through offering alternatives at no extra expense by enrolling only *volunteers.* Adhering to state laws is possible while requesting waivers as desirable, and avoiding the potentially permissive, but extremely discouraging, Charter School legislation passed in many states. Accepting that politicians and ineffective state departments of schooling (not education) have established reforms headed in the wrong direction, and that most districts are administered by political expedience supported by city council lay persons (not educationally selected), communities can still change course and challenge assumptions and requirements. The many state school administrators organizations have been silent when politicians speak in accountability "educationese." The teachers associations have supported many negatives rather than challenge the establishment. Both have been motivated by the desire for increased budgets, salaries, and control over their conditions—not a true concern for students. Teachers seldom strike for the youth; they strike to have better lives for themselves. School board associations sometimes try to question legislation, but they are too split politically to achieve meaningful legislative change. Few leadership groups raise the priority issues related to what is desirable for each individual. Most address only the mandates for groups, such as all 8th graders must take algebra.

R&D Centers

Acknowledging these current realities, public education districts can still, if democratic, *easily* and *rapidly* create a series of Research and Development Centers (R&D) at no expense through a number of schools-within-schools. They can begin with already validated research currently not being implemented in the district. Following that, they can designate experimental programs to develop and study untested inventions. For illustration, initially a small elementary site could begin with two: Non-traditional and traditional choices. Middle schools might have three: Non-traditional, modified traditional, and traditional. High schools could start with at least five, ranging from very conventional to schools-without-walls programs. One or more sites could offer a choice of a K-12 nongraded mix of students at a former junior high facility. Another site could contain a K-8 individualized school, or perhaps a secondary learning style magnet program. Using a modified hospital model of differentiated staffing, these could be staffed and filled with volunteer pioneers—teachers, parents, students, community leaders, unpaid consultants, university student teachers and interns, doctoral and master thesis researchers and evaluators, and aides.

All that is required is for a district to change from a "one-size-fits-all mentality." In most communities, what few choices may exist are not available to the great majority, the result of location and transportation realities and the lack of real differences among the various programs. What is needed is the adoption of a win/win philosophy. The majority of districts now operate on a win/lose basis. If 51 percent vote against a year-round program and 49 percent vote yes, the former win and the latter lose. If the vote is 70-30, they really won! The 30 percent are obviously wrong. In a win/win district, if 51 percent want a traditional program and 49 percent want a flexible environment, both are offered—that is beautiful. Optional programs are available even to the 30 percent.

It is almost impossible to receive a majority vote when a community is attempting to change 100 years of public school tradition. Changes begin by allowing the minority options through R&D Centers. Nationally, most current school administrations are dictatorial and believe in win/lose, when a win/win environment would be easy to foster and maintain. The present mandated conventional schools and math and reading programs can be acceptable for those who want them—even the larger majority. But good citizens and taxpayers should not be forced to accept programs that are obsolete and negative for many students.

Research and Development centers would be open year-round for continuous learning and maximum use of facilities; like hospitals, schools ideally should never close, for learning should always be an option. The landmark 1994 report by the National Commission on Time and Learning, Prisoners of Time, stated: "Our schools and the people involved...are *prisoners of time*, captives of the school clock and calendar....our usage of time virtually assures the failure of many students...The key to liberating learning lies in unlocking time...for...the six-hour, 180 day school year should be relegated to museums, an exhibit from our education past." District officials nationally have not read this report—or certainly have not enacted the recommendations.

> Public school educators have themselves to blame for the rise of the charter school movement... the education community is fantastically insensitive to the negative judgment of educators by the public.
>
> —Seymour Sarason

The R&D Centers could start with nongraded age environments, and without A-F report cards. Learning would be personalized and individualized. Curriculum might be integrated around themes of urgent studies, human potential, interdependent competencies, and interrelated interests. Food service would be continuously available (some "7th graders" grow 7 inches a year). Daily flexible and non-scheduled schedules, teams of teachers in suites—rather than in isolated rooms or departments—and school-in-the-communities and communities-in-the-school would be characteristics of such R&D Centers. Flexible attendance, neighborhood centers and evening programs, no single textbook adoptions, more art, music, physical education, shop, technology, home economics, gardening—all interrelated—reading when ready, no busywork sent home, and many other important similar configurations would begin the transition away from schooling toward learning.

Further, experimental designs could be created and implemented by education innovators. They might use as a catalyst for their ideas such proposals as the plans for the Minnesota Experimental City (MXC), a community proposed for 250,000 people—with no schools. Enrollment in the R&D Centers would be a cross-section of students of all cultures, abilities, and backgrounds. Most of all, R&D Centers would give current citizens a choice of learning environments looking toward the future. The factory model of schooling would be replaced by an individually tailored learning system. Such ideas have already been field tested in such famous laboratory schools as those of the University of Chicago (circa 1900-1910), Ohio State University (circa 1930-1940), and Minnesota State University (circa 1968-1978).

Getting Started

Most states and the local public districts have nothing to lose and much to gain by involving volunteers in multiple efforts to find solutions for improving and broadening opportunities for students. In spite of minor test score gains, the traditional system cannot meet the needs of the diverse populations in 2004 by relying on band-aids to a system begun in 1847, expanded in the 1920s, and politically mandated during the 1980s "back to basics" platforms. It is the 21st Century. There is not one shred of research—not tradition, opinion, or preference, but valid research—to support the existing convention-

al structures as in grade level single teacher classrooms, report cards, group-paced requirements, period 1-2-3 schedules, September to June calendars, and single series textbooks. In fact, what research is available supports the non-traditional alternatives.Unfortunately, as John Holt wrote—with piercing honesty—regarding his views of required conventional schools: "Education—compulsory schooling, compulsory learning—is a tyranny and a crime against the human mind and spirit. Let all those escape it who can, any way they can." As sad as that sounds, there is hope. Caring, humane, innovative all-year continuous learning educators and philosophers can be the catalysts to erase the perception and truth described by Holt—perception and truth that remain tragically accurate.

John Holt and the author were not the only ones with different views of "education reform." At the recent turn of the century, Seymour Sarason, noted Yale professor, stated: "Public school educators have themselves to blame for the rise of the charter school movement...the education community is fantastically insensitive to the negative judgment of educators by the public." Pauline Gough, editor of the *Kappan*, stated: "To mandate academic achievement is simple. It is also simple minded." Ronald Brandt, former editor of *Educational Leadership*, stated: "State testing pushes mediocrity, rather than excellence in schools...If some parents want traditional schooling for their children, they should have it. But it is unforgivable that an outmoded version of education is being forced on every public school student. We need experimentation, variety, and choice in schools, not mandated uniformity."

Paul Houston, executive director of the National School Administrators Association, reminded all that "the way to the brain is through the heart...and that diversity is not a mandate, but having it is the only way to ensure lasting strength." Years ago, Mark Twain made it clear that educators needed to change their stance when he noted that youth should "never let school interfere with their education."

Even in England, turn of the century scholars were re-thinking reform. Sir Christopher Ball, chancellor of the University of Derby, wrote, "The nation seems intent on reinforcing a failing system... It is no use tinkering with our 19th century model of education; it needs to be completely rethought and restructured...Gradual reform is unlikely to succeed. RADICAL CHANGE is what is required." Roland Meighan, Director of *Education Now* in Nottingham is providing this leadership in the United Kingdom. The *Education Now Journal* and the Education Heretics Press publications offer clear visions of better, "common sense" learning systems. The effort is being duplicated in the United States through the journal *Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities* and by Ron Miller, through the Foundation for Educational Renewal, in Charlotte, Vermont.

Year-round education, as one example of the multiple possible "changes" required for optional public schools, dramatically needs new directions itself, though people still think of the concept as "new." Required now is radical reform, as even YRE is an outgrowth of early 20th Century traditions—the first program was implemented in 1904 in Bluffton, Indiana. It has served an exciting purpose for almost 100 years—to force an examination of and pilot efforts toward better use of time to enhance learning. However, another 100 years of what exists, but does not work cannot be justified. All such innovations must be continually re-examined. Education visionaries need to break the iron-cast system of tradition now!

If this appears madness, to attack a 100-year-old schooling establishment, then perhaps we might better understand the urgency and gravity of the mission before us by heeding the words of Don Quixote, words that, understood in the present context, might best express the need for a reforming of educational reform: "*When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies. To surrender dreams—this may be the madness—and the maddest of all, to see life as it is, and not as it should be.*" Unfortunately, the "windmills of education" continue to perpetuate a burdened past and present rather than helping to generate the energy that we need to help create a future of freedom, responsibility, and happiness.

Summary

It is time for educators and politicians to envision what could be, rather than to dwell on improving the past. Paraphrasing Willie Wonka, "we can make realities out of dreams and dreams out of realities; we can be the dreamers of the dreams for the youth of the country." Learning programs can be significantly better, but only if they are significantly different. The improvement should begin now with voluntary, immediate changes for those who are ready, while we envision for all citizens, new and better continuous learning systems for the future.

References

The views expressed in "Reversing Public School Reform" were partially based upon the opinions and research studies presented in the following publications:

Alexander, William. *Innovations in Secondary Education*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Alexander, William. *The Exemplary Middle School*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981.

Anderson, Robert. "Rediscovering Lost Chords," *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 2000.

Anderson, Robert and Barbara Pavan. *Nongradedness: Helping it to Happen*, Lancaster, PA, Technomics Press, 1992.

Cooper, Harris, et al. "Running Ahead: The effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review," *Review of Educational Research*, 66 (1996).

Dewey, John. *The School and Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1900.

Educational Policies Commission. *The Purpose of Education in an American Democracy*,Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1938.

Gatto, John. *The Underground History of American Education*, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 2000.

Glines, Don. *Creating Educational Futures: Continuous Mankato Wilson Alternatives*, San Diego: National Association for Year-Round Education, 1995.

Glines, Don. *Reflecting Year-Round Education: Traditions and Innovations*, San Diego: National Association for Year-Round Education, 2000.

Goodlad, John. *A Place Called School*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984.

Harman, Willis. *Global Mind Change: The Promise of the 21st Century*, 2nd Edition, San Francisco: Berrett Koehler, 1998.

Hart, Leslie. *Human Brain, Human Learning*, New York: Longview Press, 1983.

Henderson, Hazel. *Building a Win-Win World*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1996.

Jackson, Phillip, ed. *Contributing to Educational Change*, Berkeley: McCutchan, 1988.

Jennings, Wayne and Joe Nathan. "Startling/Disturbing Research on School Program Effectiveness," *Phi Delta Kappan*, March, 1977.

Kohn, Alfie. *The Schools Our Children Deserve*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Long, Kathleen. "Teacher Reflections on School Restructuring: A Study of Alternatives in Public Education," Unpublished Diss., College of Education, University of Oregon, 1992.

Meighan, Roland. *John Holt: Personalized Education*, Nottingham, UK: Education Heretics Press, 1995.

Meighan, Roland. *The Next Learning System*, Nottingham, UK: Education Heretics Press, 1997.

Michalko, Michael. *Cracking Creativity: Secrets of Creative Genius*, Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1998.

Miller, Ron, ed. *Creating Learning Communities: Models, Resources, and New Ways of Thinking About Teaching and Learning*, Brandon, VT, Coalition for Self-Learning—Foundation for Educational Renewal, 2000.
Mintz, Jerry. *The Education Revolution*, Roslyn Heights, NY: Alternative Education Resource Organization, 2000.
Moffett, James. *The Universal Schoolhouse*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1994.
Prisoners of Time. National Education Commission on Time and Learning, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994.
Raywid, Mary Anne. *The Case for Public Schools of Choice*, Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1989.
Ohanian, Susan. *One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational Standards*, Westport, CT: Heinemann, 1999.
Rogers, Everett, et al. Change Process in the Public Schools, Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration, University of Oregon, Eugene, 1965.
Sarason, Seymour. *How Schools Might be Governed and Why*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.
Schoolboys of Barbiana. *Letter to a Teacher*, New York: Random House, 1970.
The Eight-Year Study Revisited: Lessons from the Past, Columbus, OH: National Middle Schools Association, 1998.
Theobald, Robert. *Turning the Century*, Indianapolis: Knowledge Systems Publishers, 1995.
Tompkins, Ellsworth and Walter Gaumnitz. "Carnegie Unit: Its Origin, Status, and Trends," *Education and Welfare Bulletin No. 7*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954.
Trump, Lloyd. *A School for Everyone*, Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1977.
Van Til, William. *My Way of Looking at It*, San Francisco: Caddo Gap Press, 1996.
Vars, Gordon. *The Core Teacher*, Kent, Ohio: National Association for Core Curriculum, 2000.
Washburne, Carleton. "A Program of Individualization," *24th Annual Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Public School Publishing, Bloomington: IL, 1925.
Willis, Margaret. *Guinea Pigs: 20 Years Later*, Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1961.

PICK UP ad FROM PAGE 66 OF PATHS 7

Dear Paths/Dear Readers

We are happy to continue receiving positive feedback from you, our readers, concerning the work that we are doing at Paths *to try to help create meaningful changes for students, parents, teachers, and communities. The following are some representative samples of the kinds of messages that we are receiving:*

I want to thank you for putting out such a diverse, high-quality inspiration for those of us who are working to change the face of education.

Linda Garrett,
The Creative Learning Alliance
Devoted to creating diverse opportunities for lifelong learning.
simplylinda@uswest.net

Your organization is a true inspiration for many people. Thank you so much.

Hans Bongers
www.in-the-zone.org

I have recently subscribed to Paths of Learning *and am thoroughly enjoying it! I am a homeschooling parent and have not found much support in my community regarding this line of thinking. The written word is the next best thing!*

Lorrie Carlson (Durango, CO)

I am very impressed and was pleasantly surprised with the content of the magazine. I couldn't put it down last night. I am only sad that I didn't discover it before. I will be signing up for a subscription....

Amy Talley (Sioux Falls, SD)

Not surprisingly, Martine Archer and Herbert Kohl's exchange concerning homeschooling and public schooling, which we published in our previous issue (Winter 2001), has generated some insightful and thoughtful responses from our readers. We publish one such response below and plan to publish more responses in subsequent issues. Once again, we invite all of our readers to send us their views on the matters under consideration here.

*Both Herbert Kohl and Martine Archer make valid points in their conversation about the benefits and pitfalls of home education versus publicly funded education (*Paths of Learning #7*). However, this situation need not be construed as "either/or." While access to resources is vital for those of us involved in education, there are many ways that those resources can be found, developed, and shared. (This of course gets into power issues of who/what currently controls resources.) Part of the problem lies in our human desire to see big results as quickly as possible, and in certain social and educational environments, speed is indeed of the essence. People do need to work on the scale of government programs and bureaucracies, but those efforts can exist alongside small groups operating at the local level. We need to learn from one another.*

The optimum social unit for accomplishing a task is a small group in which the people can know each other and interact face-to-face. At the grass-roots level, enthusiasm and commitment are the strongest. I am a parent whose children have attended public and private school, and I have also home educated two of my children until they entered college. As a longtime facilitator of support groups and the founder of a thriving learning center for home educating families (36 families, 80+ children), I defend the existence of home education, while not claiming that this solution is the only way to go. More and more homeschoolers are gathering in grassroots cooperatives, which may someday serve as models for new and better ways to structure group learning in publicly supported ways. The particular support group and center in which I participate evolved in a rural area, and involves sharing of resources and mutual support in very practical ways. There is diversity in the center—philosophically and religiously as well as economically; one family had no indoor plumbing in their tiny dwelling, another paid for membership through donation of goods, and scholarships are available. Because families come to know and care about one another, there are built-in compassionate understandings—when a family is in trouble (lack of material resources, divorce, hunger, or other problems), the group can carry and support them.

Another local effort was started in a nearby small city by some people involved in Waldorf education who wanted to use Waldorf ideas with teens that the schools had given up on. To make it possible for these young people to attend their initiative, yet still retain control so that they could be innovative, these educators used the home education option, stretching the state's rules a bit. Many of the parents of these teens did not have the educational, material and emotional resources to homeschool, so the educators worked with them. This unusual school, in a new incarnation, is now publicly funded, and youngsters who previously faced a bleak future on the city's streets are benefiting. It never would have happened without the home education option.

The value of such intensive local efforts lies in their educational innovation and responsiveness, mutuality, and the creation of deep community. The possibility exists for replication of these initiatives and ideas, and I am delighted that Paths of Learning *offers a place for showcasing such innovative educational structures. Cross-fertilization between homeschooling initiatives and publicly funded education should happen more often. These efforts contain the seeds of new conceptions of what "public funding" could mean. The fact remains that such centers would not be coming into being in exactly this way today if certain families had not stepped outside the school system to try to find new and better ways of educating children. Efforts are needed on many fronts, and the more we can build upon the work of each other, the more families—and ultimately institutions—will benefit.*

Katharine Houk
Chatham, New York
Co-Founder, The Alternative Learning Center
Executive Director, Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education
Intern Minister (Unitarian-Universalist),Women's Interfaith Institute in the Berkshires
Author, *Creating a Cooperative Learning Center: An Idea-Book for Homeschooling Families*

SPECIAL ISSUE ANNOUNCEMENT

For our October 2001 issue of *Paths of Learning*, we are planning a special issue in which we highlight stories of students who have benefited in meaningful ways from their educational experiences. We want both to focus on those qualities of teaching approaches or learning environments that truly allow young people to thrive and to try to distinguish those qualities from conventional practices that all too often frustrate and alienate students. We thus invite all of our readers—young, old, and in between—to contribute stories. Though we especially want to hear from students, we also welcome stories from parents, teachers, friends, neighbors, and others who have worked with students to help them walk a path of deep living and learning.

If you wish to submit your story in hard copy, please send it c/o the editor, to the address listed on the title page of this magazine. If you wish to submit it as a Word attachment to an e-mail message, please send it to rjprys@ix.netcom.com.

All submissions received by May 15 will be considered for publication.

Submissions received after that date will be considered if space and time permit.

OOPS!

Two lines were inadvertently dropped at the end of the second full paragraph in the right column on p. 13 of Paths 7 *(January 2001). The full text of the paragraph from the interview with Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn should read as follows:*

> "We wound up cultivating what felt like a really wonderful feeling-state between the two of us around our parenting. We saw a lot of things the same way. It is its own blessing when two parents look at parenting, at the challenges and the children, with more or less the same values, more or less the same framework, more or less the same desire for their well-being, and a commitment to be as present as possible to everything, including the pain and suffering, and to use it in some way. For me, that is meditation practice, whether you are talking about Zen practice or Vipassana practice; this is the core of the practice."

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.spinninglobe.net

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.

Directory of Resources for Educational Alternatives

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 http://www.encompass-nlr.org

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
411 Waterman Building
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT 05405
(802) 656-1355
www.uvm.edu/~dewey/

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.

Living Routes - Ecovillage Education Consortium
72 Baker Rd. Shutesbury, MA 01072
(413) 259-0025
(888) 515-7333 (toll free)
http://www.LivingRoutes.org
info@LivingRoutes.org

Living Routes is a growing consortium of sustainable communities (known as "ecovillages") and universities working together to offer accredited experiential programs that empower participants to help build a sustainable future. Semester programs are currently offered at the Findhorn Foundation in northern Scotland and Auroville in southern India. A North American Summer Institute and a January term program at Crystal Waters, a permaculture community in Australia, are also available.

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
(888) 771-9171
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.

Directory of Resources for Educational Alternatives

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.

Partnership Education Consultants
Center for Partnership Studies
P. O. Box 30538
Tucson, AZ 85751
(502) 547-0176 www.partnershipway.org

A network of professional development/school reform consultants who help schools implement the principles of Partnership Education presented in Riane Eisler's book *Tomorrow's Children*. Partnership Education is a comprehensive approach to the content(curriculum), structure, and process of teaching, emphasizing values of caring., community, inclusiveness, and cooperation. Advanced studies in Partnership Education are being offered through Prescott College and California State University at Monterey Bay.

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.

Prescott College, Admissions Office
220 Grove Ave.
Prescott, AZ 86301
(800) 628-63642
admissions@prescott.edu www.prescott.edu

A private liberal arts institution offering BA and MA degrees. Emphasis is on self-directed, interdisciplinary, and experiential education in the fields of Adventure Education, Environmental Studies, Education, Humanities, Intergrative Studies, and Arts and Letters. Offers undergraduate program bases in Prescott as well as external undergraduate and graduate programs.

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.

Introducing EnCompass

A new home for human development and holistic education

EnCompass offers an integrated array of programs, services and publications that embody the principles of holism. We practice holism in every aspect of our organization: governance, philosophy, programs, education center, architecture and relationship to the land.

Our facilities include:

- 122 forested acres in the Sierra Nevada Foothills, including an eighty-acre forest preserve
- Conference Center complete with workshop space, kitchen and dining facilities.
- Outdoor education facilities including a Challenge Ropes Course
- Holistic Education Center, a school for children ages 6-13 (Opens in Fall 2001)
- Holistic Education Research Center

In addition, EnCompass features one of the world's largest earth architecture construction projects, featuring earth sensitive building techniques such as rammed earth and super adobe.

Conference Center Grand Opening

You're invited to our Grand Opening Event on April 8, 2001! Take a tour, join in the festivities!
For more information on the event, including times and directions, call Amber at 1-800-200-1107

The EnCompass Conference Center features:

- 5000 sq. feet of conference and workshop space
- Commercial kitchen and dining facilities for 80 people
- Overnight accommodations for 70 people
- Available for events compatible with EnCompass' mission
- Challenge Ropes Course with facilitation available for rental with Conference Center
- 1½ hour drive northeast of the Sacramento airport

For more information on EnCompass, view our website at www.encompass-nlr.org

EnCompass

11011 Tyler Foote Road, Nevada City, California 95959
Phone: 800-200-1107 • 530-292-1000 • Fax: 530- 292-1209
E-mail: connection@encompass-nlr.org

EnCompass Holistic Learning Center

Offering an integrated array of programs and services:

- Natural Learning Rhythms and Parenting Workshops
- Couples Intimacy and Rites of Passage Workshops
- Weekend and week-long family camps and river journeys
- Wilderness Challenge and Leadership Courses for youth
- Adventure journeys for 9-11 year olds
- Challenge Ropes Course Programs
- Individual Rites of Passage for Men and Women
- Conferences and Retreats
- Professional Training
- Holistic Education School for 6-13 year olds (Opening Fall of 2001)
- Holistic Education Teacher Development Program

EnCompass, located in the Sierra Foothills, is a whole family learning center where people of different ethnicities, ages and socio-economic backgrounds come together to grow in understanding of self, family and community. EnCompass' mission is to support the well being and wholeness of children and families through an array of integrated programs and facilities, and to engage in the development of Holistic Education in theory and practice. At the heart of our programs is an holistic understanding of human development known as Natural Learning Rhythms™, which describes the natural stages of childhood from conception to age twenty-three.

For more information on EnCompass, view our website at www.encompass-nlr.org

ENCOMPASS

11011 Tyler Foote Road, Nevada City, California 95959
Phone: 800-200-1107 • 530-292-1000 • Fax: 530- 292-1209
E-mail: connection@encompass-nlr.org