Paths of Learning

SUMMER 2001

Options for Families&Communities

Standards, Accountability, and Learning

Education After the Holocaust

Charter Schools and Mainstream Education

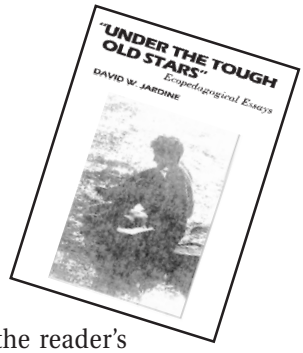
USA $5.95 CANADA $8.25
03
0 25274 81682 9
Paths of Learning 9

Dig into the roots of ecological education

with these provocative new books from the Foundations of Holistic Education series

Unfolding Bodymind: Exploring Possibility Through Education
Edited by Brent Hocking, Johnna Haskell and Warren Linds, University of British Columbia

A diverse group of educators and scholars met in Vancouver in May, 1999, to explore an ecological worldview that revises Western philosophy's separation of mind from the physical world. They proposed that knowing is not simply a "cognitive" process but an engagement of the integrated "bodymind" with the environment. In their presentations, carefully edited for this volume, the authors argue that the task of education is to "rekindle our senses"—learning should not be a dry acquisition of information but a reaching out to the world with a sense of wonder to explore new possibilities. This book challenges the reader to step out of the linear, overly rational discourse that has conditioned our worldview and introduces us to bold, fresh perspectives. $23.00 (U.S.) $29.95 (Can)
plus GST & shipping



"Under the Tough Old Stars"
Ecopedagogical Essays
by David Jardine, University of Calgary

David Jardine's distinctive writings open the reader's mind and spirit to deeper, richer ways of understanding the purpose of education. His ecological orientation to experience portrays the world as a marvelously interconnected living community. By pausing to consider our place within this nexus of relations, he shows us that most of our accepted pedagogical goals and practices are shallow and essentially meaningless, allowing modern people only "to live consumptively." Ecopedagogy, or an education rooted in ecological awareness, cultivates qualities of learning that go beyond mastery and manipulation—"Attention, devotion, care, worthiness, cherishing, fostering, renewal, hope: these are not just any words. They echo a deep sense of place, of remaining, of dwelling, of settling." "Under the Tough Old Stars" takes the reader on a poignant journey of exploration, discovery and interpretation that immerses one in relationship to the natural world. $17.95 (U.S.) $24.95 (Can)
plus GST & shipping

The Foundation for Educational Renewal

P.O. Box 328, Brandon, Vermont 05733 • (800) 639-4122
Publisher of the quarterly magazine **Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities.**
Send for a free sample copy.
See our free online database and guide to our publications: **www.PathsOfLearning.net**
In Canada, order from Natural Life Books, (800)215-9574, RR 1, St. George, Ontario N0E 1N0 - www.life.ca/books/

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.

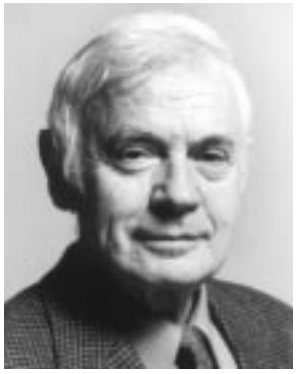
Printed on 100% post-consumer waste fiber with soy-based ink. *Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities* is the successor to *SKOLE: The Journal of Alternative Education,* which was founded in 1985 to serve the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools and published until early 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 9 Summer 2001

Table of Contents



EDITORIAL

Everyday Kindness

"The feeling of compassion is important whether you are a believer or a non-believer, for everyone shares or feels the value of love."

(The Dalai Lama 1988)

This issue of *Paths* features, among other pieces, a cluster of interviews that we did with two Holocaust survivors and one Holocaust rescuer, all of whom were asked to address the question of education in a post-Holocaust world. After conducting the interview with Irene Opdyke, the Holocaust rescuer, my wife, son, and I were discussing how impressed we were with Irene's humbleness and how struck we were by her continuing gifts and acts of love, which she offers, for example, to the students who hear her speak, whom she encourages to bring forth their own innate generosity and love. We were so deeply moved by her. Love and compassion flowed from her so easily, so naturally, so warmly. Like many others who have met her or heard her speak, we felt drawn to her and drawn into the feelings of inter-connectedness and understanding that she models and exudes. "She practices everyday kindness," my son remarked. "Yes, that's it," I said. "That's exactly what she does."

Everyday kindness. Mother Teresa once remarked something to the effect that we cannot do great things; rather, she suggested, we can only do small things with great love. To be sure, Irene's heroism during the Holocaust was extraordinary. But she also displays many simple acts of everyday kindness. A visitor to her home, for example, might learn that a mouse is a frequent visitor to her patio because Irene continues to leave it food. Interestingly, Irene explains that, this way, the mouse won't enter her home. But one notices a touch of affection in Irene's voice when she talks about this mouse. Besides, she leaves it food rather than leaving it poison or setting a trap for it.

Irene teaches us, among other things, that caring behavior is not confined to heroic rescue missions — that, in fact, we can, we must, practice such behavior in small ways every day. Indeed, one sees caring behavior in various acts of everyday kindness discussed by the authors who contributed articles for this issue of our magazine. At the Bridge School, for example, a learning environment that is the subject of Catherine Sementelli's profile article for this issue, one sees compassion and kindness manifest in the intentions and actions of highly dedicated teachers and staff, whose goal is to help children with severe communication problems become self-reliant, confident learners and citizens. In the other two interviews that we present, one learns from Holocaust survivors Mel Mermelstein and Sam Oliner how we ourselves can practice simple acts of respect and kindness. In Susan L. Flynn and Lourdes Arguelles' article on the unfortunate

closing of a promising charter school, one senses that much of this short-lived school's success had derived from the teachers' and staff's sincere attempts to help students become confident, enfranchised learners.

In "Today, I'd Probably Just Drop Out," Mark Kennedy also deals with the problem of student disenfranchisement. Discussing the frustrations felt by students who don't fit a prescribed mold that is set and determined by an impersonal educational bureaucracy, Kennedy intimates, I think, that any attempt to rectify this situation must involve our generosity of spirit towards and commitment to understand the needs of individual learners. This generosity of spirit is itself an act of kindness; and both generosity and kindness derive from our deep understanding of our uniqueness and commonality, as individuals, as communities, as peoples. Respecting our individual differences, we also must strive to celebrate our common ground. In his insightful article on so-called "character education," Don Jacobs strongly makes such points, all the while gracefully demonstrating his own deep understanding of our interdependent lives.

In blatant and subtle ways, then, the articles in this issue of *Paths* highlight acts of kindness, demonstrations of understanding, models of humanity — often in the context of helping us to understand the nature of individuals' suffering. When I read such articles, I am reminded of the provocative idea put forward by the Hasidic Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, who writes: "When I am called to the afterworld I would prefer Hell over Heaven, because those who suffer are found there" (Raz 1997, 146). Rabbi Leib's words underscore the work of the *bodhisattva*, an enlightened being who, according to Buddhist teachings, is here to help lead us to the shores of liberation. This is the work, too, of the thirty-six *tzaddikim*, who, according to Jewish tradition, perform quiet, hidden good deeds and thereby act as pillars and foundations supporting the world (see Telushkin 1991, 517). In terms of our performing our own good deeds, the Apostle Paul puts the matter thus in Ephesians 4:32: "…be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.…" All of these teachings point to our need to lead, or at least to our yearning to lead, a fulfilled and engaged life of mindfulness. And thus the work of the *bodhisattva*, the work of the *tzaddik*, is our work, too. And we must be sure to undertake it. For, as Zen Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh (1992, 91) explains, "Mindfulness must be engaged. Once there is seeing, there must be acting. Otherwise, what is the use of seeing?"

So let us practice well. Let us look deeply so that we can see and understand. And then let us act. Our engagements need not be grand to be transformative. But they must be kind. And they must be rooted in generosity. And they must be genuine. We have a chance to practice such acts every day, in the ways that we interact with the cashier at the grocery store; in the ways that we help children lead meaningful lives; in the ways that we drive our cars; in the ways that we offer ourselves and others love. For the sake of the children, ourselves, all beings, and the planet as a whole, let us take advantage of the many opportunities for practicing kindness that present themselves to us each day. Our commitment to a path of mindful, meaningful living demands no less of us. In joy, let us meet the challenge and thereby strive to achieve our full humanity.

— Richard J. Prystowsky

References

H.H. The Dalai Lama. Altruism and the Six Perfections. 1988. In *Kindness, clarity, and insight*, translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins; co-edited by Elizabeth Napper. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion. (Originally published 1984)

Hanh, Thich Nhat. 1992. *Peace is every step: The path of mindfulness in everyday life*. Edited by Arnold Kotler. New York: Bantam. (Originally published 1991)

Raz, Simcha. 1997. *Hasidic wisdom: Sayings from the Jewish sages*. Translated by Dov Peretz Elkins and Jonathan Elkins. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. (Originally published 1981)

Telushkin, Rabbi Joseph. 1991. *Jewish literacy: The most important things to know about the Jewish religion, its people, and its history*. New York: Morrow.

Today, I'd Probably Just Drop Out

by Mark Kennedy

Mark Kennedy is an alternative education teacher at San Bernardino (CA) County's West End Community School. He has served as an acting principal, lead teacher, mentor teacher, interdisciplinary team leader, and self-study focus group chair, as well as a part-time faculty member with Chapman University. Mark has written a dozen articles for publication, and his book *Lessons from the Hawk* has just been released by Holistic Education Press. He would love to hear from you at <mark_kennedy@sbcss.k12.ca.us>

"I'm afraid I won't pass the high school competency exam," my alternative ed. public high schoolers have often lamented. "Some of my friends at regular high schools still haven't passed it." And imagine the horror of today's whole crop of 9th graders, who will be the first California graduating class (2004) required to pass the even more stringent high school exit exam in order to receive a diploma. "I'm really nervous," one 13-year-old inner city youth told a reporter. "Teachers say it's going to be really difficult and if you don't pass, you don't graduate." With all the pressure of high stakes testing today, if I were an at-risk student, *I'd probably just drop out.*

Why? Because who better than those who have already borne the harshness of the system to know that there will be no leniency shown nor qualifiers allowed on test day; that poor results in any section of this multi-part test can spell failure of the whole exam — and nullify the last 13 years of a student's life. These kids know from experience that the system will not hesitate to sort them into categories of "success" and "failure;" into categories of those who will go forward with society's imprimatur, and those thrown onto the slag heap for disposal. As with all pass/fail tests, there will be no mercy, no middle ground, with this exit exam; it will be cold and impersonal, imposed from above by people whom the test takers will never meet. Yet successfully surviving this experience will be students' only hope for entering adulthood with attractive options available to them.

In order to see just how much a disservice a one-sitting exam can be for kids, especially those already at risk of failure, consider the following two examples of doing poorly on timed writing exams — my own Achilles heel — from my own experience. Please humor me by allowing me to use my life for illustration. The high-stakes testing issue is certainly not about me. But it's stunning to consider that, as an educated professional, an educational "insider", and with years of focused preparation, I could summarily fail tests whose structure was so similar to the high school competency and exit exams. How must our at-risk kids view such instruments? As we saw in the opening quotations, students are frightened. It seems probable that many will respond with resentment toward an establishment which is paid — and paid only — to look after these very students' welfare for the K-12 years, only then to hold the prospect of a giant "gotcha" over their heads at the end. At any rate, here's my story.

As I was preparing to begin teaching in the 1980s, the California Basic Educational Skills Test (C-BEST) became a prerequisite for all prospective teachers in the state. At that time I was still relatively young and naive, and had no fear of this exam. In fact, after four years in the Viet Nam era military, then supporting a family while earning a college degree, a fifth-year teaching credential, and a master's degree, I came to believe myself pretty test-savvy. How wrong I was! While sailing through the objective portion of the C-BEST (90%), I came within one point of failing the writing section (51%). I scored well enough to pass, but the close call was stunning, since a failure would have kept me from becoming an educator.

It turns out that the C-BEST episode was not a fluke. A few years afterward, I began to prepare for the Language Development Specialist (LDS) exam. To make a long story short, several years of preparation led up to those three hours of testing, and as the morning of the event arrived, I was extremely confident. This time, however, I did fail. Still, the results paralleled those of the C-BEST. High marks on the objective portions of the several-hours-long test were offset by a low score (this time, a failing score) on the subjectively-graded short essay segment. I began to wonder in the wake of this experience, "Is it just me, or is there more to it?" Was I way off the mark in estimating my preparedness and level of skill, or were

the assessment instruments and their grading criteria flawed, rendering the scoring outcome after my years of preparation a shocking display of impersonal bureaucracy? Which answer we choose has deep implications for students at-risk.

Was the failure just me, or was there more to it?

Of course, the obvious answer to why I consistently do poorly on timed writing exams is that I'm a terrible writer. What could be more simple? But perhaps this explanation is merely simplistic. In the post-Enlightenment western world, we have a predilection for treating two events which are in close proximity as cause and effect, when their true relationship might be merely correlational — they have some relationship because they are in the same vicinity at the same time, but it might not be an *if … then*, causal relationship. It has long seemed to me that the power brokers who contribute to educational policymaking, such as some in the news media or politics, make a living off of such erroneous thinking. But now as I sit here, having made this charge, I'm wondering if it can be demonstrated. If you will allow me, I'd like to test my assertion by looking for two examples, using only what's close at hand to my desk. I promise to record the results honestly, and if my belief is unfounded, to stop writing the rest of this article.

As with all pass/fail tests, there will be no mercy, no middle ground, with this exit exam; it will be cold and impersonal….

First, I will pick up today's local newspaper. Here on page A6, I see that the journalist makes this statement about an elementary school in the area: "One-fourth of the teachers are on emergency credentials … (and) the school received a 3" (in statewide standardized testing rankings, which are on a scale of 1-10). The writer seems to imply that the emergency credentialed teachers are a cause of the low test scores — perhaps *the* cause. But she presents no evidence that the former caused the latter; instead, she merely capitalizes on a popular opinion. In the obverse, we are led to conclude that if all teachers at the site were fully credentialed, test scores would go up. But in fact, this is counter-intuitive to the experience of many educators, including myself. Such experience suggests there have been more than a few fully credentialed, entrenched veterans of whom one could not help but think, "It's not so much that they've taught 20 years, as that they've taught one year, 20 times." At the same time, more than a few first and second year teachers on emergency credentials have demonstrated remarkable teaching ability (Kennedy 2001).

To look for a second example of my belief about the media/political error, I see that a monthly educational periodical arrived in today's mail. In glancing through it, I find that this statement jumps out: "The [current] administration's class size initiative has centered around the hiring of 100,000 new teachers.… [One] plan aims to build on this success.… " But, I wonder, what success? As laudable as is the effort to lower class size, there is no reason to infer that doing so is tied to student success, and certainly no justification in this news piece for such a conclusion. "Well, it's just common sense," someone might respond. But I submit that what we call common sense is really just a commonly held set of presuppositions about life; in short, a belief system. The effort to hire more teachers/reduce class size is an admirable goal and may

Indeed, don't we preach to our students the importance of their continually revising their own writing?

prove to be a cause of student success. But within the context of this article, the two are at best correlative; one is not shown to cause the other.

So while perhaps the answer to why writing exams often result in poor scores for me is that I just can't write (cause and effect), on the other hand maybe it's not that simple. Consider that, in the years since the episodes chronicled, I have had the good fortune to have a dozen professional articles in various stages of publication, a book in print, and a firm grasp on a second book. Of course, this is pretty thin when compared to the work of many authors, but it's probably enough to suggest that I'm not *that* terrible a writer — not so much so, anyway, that I would fail a simple writing skills test.

More to the point, however, is this consideration: If the unseen, unknown examiners could judge me so wrongly, how many of the students who are served by this journal's readers will be misjudged by a one-sitting, one-size-fits-all exit exam, with tragic results? As an adult and an educator myself, I was able to see that being summarily failed was probably the result of a flawed system — to see that it might be the test, and not me. But what of the 12- to 18-year-old children many of us serve? Already burdened with regrets, already veterans at failure, already seasoned in distrust for the educational system, how many will assume from their pasts that they can't meet the final requirements necessary to succeed under this system? Again, since my experience seems to offer clues to the structural and conceptual weaknesses inherent in the current high-stakes testing instruments, please bear with me in looking at a four-pointed diagnosis of my failures. I hope that this approach proves enlightening by allowing us to highlight several areas in which mandated high-stakes testing is unfair for students, and that this discussion encourages you to make connections from your own teaching and learning experiences.

Diagnosing the failure

First, and a factor which can be easily underestimated, is that my handwriting is hideous. This is not a trivial thing when I am taking a timed writing exam, especially since the more I hurry, the worse the script. It is both interesting and alarming to me that the new California language arts standards call for the teaching and assessment of penmanship. This is interesting because it is so obviously a part of the back-to-basics current of the educational reform movement. This segment of reformers reminds me of the aphorism, *when you*

don't know what to do, do more of what you know. In this "dot-com" age of email, ecommerce, personal web pages and newsletters, and customized information searches and subscriptions, why else would this industrial-age skill merit such attention?

This confusion over whether the focus of reform is to be backward or forward, further leads me to be alarmed about the validity of the penmanship standard, as illuminated by the following example. One California district recently received a grant for students in two fourth grade classes to receive laptop computers which go everywhere with them. What an exciting opportunity for those children, their families, and their teachers. But remember, the California language arts standards call for teaching and testing of penmanship. Were each of these students required to qualify with superior penmanship before getting their computer? If so, why? How are penmanship and computer literacy related? If students were not required to qualify with penmanship, however, then aren't the school and teachers setting kids up to fail by not teaching to the standards? Do we want kids at-risk, who are usually behind in school already, to spend what little time they have practicing penmanship? Yet, if they don't so practice, they may be in danger of failing timed writing exams on this criterion alone.

> *[T]he first thing he or she writes down will accurately represent what he or she knows, can do, and wishes to say — which is the assumption of timed writing exams.*

Second, as a primarily reflective thinker, I need time to think through an answer, although once I give the answer, I will rarely feel the need to modify it later. This way of operating is in contrast to that employed by impulsive thinkers, whose strength lies in their ability to deliver the quick answer. For these people, if the first response is not always correct, another will arrive fast on its heels. This kind of thinking seems almost a personal form of brainstorming, sometimes called mindstorming. In another article, I suggested that chess can be a good curricular and extra-curricular activity for building "mental muscle" (Kennedy 1998). But I would withdraw this suggestion if every game were turned into speed chess. I for one would no longer play, since reflective thinkers would be severely disadvantaged; put at risk, if you will.

> *… Arabic and Spanish language patterns can be seen to place people first, while English more strongly values the accomplishment of the task.*

Both reflective and impulsive types of thinking have strengths and weaknesses. I believe the evidence shows that neither is better or worse, both being inherent traits instead of learned skills (Dunn 1996). If this is true, then favoring one type over the other is nothing more than indefensible discrimination. Requiring a closely-timed response, then, is merely an expression of such discrimination: In favor of the impulsive thinker and against the reflective thinker. How will such discrimination harm those students who are reflective in their thinking processes? And what should high-stakes, timed exams test for: Inherent thinking type, or acquired knowledge? Finally, given the probable damage to kids by the fast-paced nature of the culture at large, are we doing further harm by privileging speed over depth in thinking?

> *A test which judges too narrowly, too rigidly, for just one "correct" style of writing is probably prejudicial against many students.*

Third, Steven Krashen (1990) seems to speak for many of us in the article, "How reading and writing make you smarter, or, how smart people read and write." His essential point is that when we write, we get more ideas, which leads to revision, which leads to more ideas, then more revision, and so on. A "final" draft then is merely the product as it stands whenever the writer calls a halt to the process. I myself will often rewrite a piece twenty or thirty times before calling it "finished" and showing it to anyone else. Indeed, don't we preach to our students the importance of their continually revising their own writing? How often have we wished our students to understand the value of a process-oriented approach to writing rather than one concentrating merely on the final product? One particularly odious result of this product orientation is the idealized concept of the *first* version as an adequate representation of someone's writing skill and knowledge — that the first thing he or she writes down will accurately represent what she or he knows, can do, and wishes to say — which is the assumption of timed writing exams. This privileging of product over process has been roundly criticized by many composition theorists and teachers for the past two decades. What do timed exams, focusing purely on product, really tell us about students if reading and writing make you smarter?

Fourth, my life experience has included a fair amount of exposure to other cultures. This exposure has come through such venues as formal language study; traveling and working with people from many ethnicities and nationalities while I was serving in the Navy; working with people in business who had emigrated from all over the world; and finally, teaching the children of those immigrants. All of this has taught me that, while American English has its own style and conventions in writing, the other cultures and languages in which many of our at-risk students were cradled can present very different characteristics, some of which have rubbed off on me; as a result, my writing is sometimes less linear than that which exam scorers seem to privilege.

To see an example of these differences, let's consider a comparison of Arabic, Spanish, and English language patterns (which I first understood in that aborted LDS training). We might think of the Arabic language as following a somewhat circular course. Envision for a moment a meeting between two native-Arabic speakers. It is easy to imagine the conversation beginning with pleasantries and compliments, perhaps at some point briefly touching on the purpose of the exchange,

then proceeding in a general manner, and finally reaching the point. In Arabic, getting right to the point is not considered admirable, but rude.

In a similar vein, I think of Spanish as somewhat courtly, proceeding in a polite, people-oriented manner. In observing/holding a conversation in Spanish, one might perceive/follow a somewhat spiral pattern which could begin with talk of family, mutual friends and cultural events, and then slowly narrow to the point. My exposure to Spanish-language cultures has seemed to suggest that the time taken for personal and interpersonal items is a critical aspect of communication (perhaps Arabic and Spanish are similar in this regard in part because of the substantial Arabic influence in Spain during the later Middle Ages).

If I were an at-risk student in California today, I would be mistrustful of a system which may have already failed me in many ways.

In contrast to Arabic and Spanish, however, in the English language we value a linear, analytic approach: Thesis statement, proof, conclusion. We want to get right to the point, and so in our writing exams we test for this quality. In our culture, circular or intuitive thinking is considered problematic. For non-native speakers of English, when such thinking is exhibited in their writing, it is often evaluated as being an instance of a "second language interference problem."

It is interesting that if we consider the overall approach of these languages, Arabic and Spanish language patterns can be seen to place people first, while English more strongly values the accomplishment of the task. I believe that my exposure to other cultures and languages has caused my writing to move away from a strictly to-the-point style of communication and so brought me to a place of understanding the predicament of students learning English as a second language (ESL). A test which judges too narrowly, too rigidly, for just one "correct" style of writing is probably prejudiced against many students, and thus in my opinion is invalid. It would seem that the broader one's exposure to other cultures, the more unfair are traditional, one-sitting, English-based writing tests. Do we want students to have a broad cultural exposure, or a narrow one? Do we want to honor a wide range of learning manifestations or a severely limited one?

To avoid the "gotcha," I'd probably just drop out.

With all my test-taking preparation and life experience, if the educational power brokers had no qualms about summarily failing me, why would we expect at-risk students to fare better? As we've seen, my own trouble with writing tests has probably resulted because of the barrier created by my poor handwriting; my inability to shorten a reflective thinking process; the undesirability for me of settling for the very first draft of a written work; and my unwillingness to communicate in a rigidly task-oriented form.

Still, these factors are merely illustrative: While for me the problem with traditional expectations and exams has been in the area of writing, others may have problems with traditional approaches to other subject areas, such as math, science, history, or even physical education. But whatever the final list of specific concerns, the problems we've examined in this article are evidence that educational policymakers in California (where I teach) and elsewhere have not adequately ensured for assessment vehicles which give everyone a fair shot at success. We must wonder, "Will the upcoming exit exam truly test the learning of kids, or just impose on them — and all of us — the belief systems of some adults, who at present seem too ready to perpetuate simplistic cause/effect solutions to complex problems?" If I were an at-risk student in California today, I would be mistrustful of a system which may have already failed me in many ways. Rather than invest more years of my life in something that might well end with a giant "gothca", I'd probably just drop out.

References

Dunn, R. (1996). *How to Implement and Supervise a Learning Style Program*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Kennedy, M. (1998). More than a game: Eight transition lessons chess teaches. *Reaching Today's Youth: The Community Circle of Caring Journal*, 2 (4), 17-19.

Kennedy, M. (2001). *Lessons from the Hawk*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.

Krashen, S. (1990). How reading and writing make you smarter, or, how smart people read and write. *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Suggested Readings

Ron Miller's book, *What are Schools for? Holistic Education in America* (Holistic Education Press, 1995), provides an excellent background reading for how the standards/assessment/accountability movement came about (The Great Debate).

www.achieve.org is the web site for a bipartisan, pro-standards group which offers states 'guidance' on this issue.

www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/index.html is the California Department of Education home page for standards and assessment. It contains a wealth of links.

Linda McNeil's book, *Contradictions of School Reform*: *Educational Costs of Standardized Testing* (Routledge, 2000), details the high cost of standards to children and educators.

Mark Kennedy's book, *Lessons from the Hawk* (Holistic Education Press, 2001), offers practical ways for educators to reach all students in this era of standardization.

Quality Counts 2001. (January 2001). A thematic issue of *Education Week XX* (17), devoted to the standards/ accountability issue, with a summary and "report card" on each of the states.

The Bridge School: A Profile

by Catherine Sementelli

Catherine Sementelli is a speech-language pathologist and the Executive Director of The Bridge School. Catherine has worked in the field of augmentative and alternative communication for 12 years in the capacity of both a direct service provider and an administrator.

Editor's Introduction: *For this issue of* Paths, *we are pleased and honored to profile a very special school that meets the needs of very special children. Often in our discussions concerning meaningful educational paths, many of us take for granted the gift of our ability to communicate easily. But some children face struggles—sometimes quite difficult struggles—in this area of their lives. For these children, "meaningful educational paths" involve first and foremost the children's having the facility to communicate as equals. At The Bridge School, teachers, staff, parents, and students alike make the dream of this facility a reality. In gratitude to all involved at this school for the exceptional, groundbreaking work that they accomplish, we present to you, our readers, the following profile article describing the sum and substance of this unique, outstanding, highly successful place of learning and growing.*

Short Summary

The Bridge School serves individuals with severe speech and physical disabilities by providing a unique combination of educational, outreach, and research programs. Our vision is full inclusion in society for all people who require assistance to communicate. Our goals are to enhance the quality of life for those individuals and to advance the field of augmentative communication.

History

The Bridge School exists to unlock the creative power of communication in children who have severe physical impairments and who cannot speak. Through the use of assistive technology we teach our students to "find their voice" and share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas so they may become fully participating members in their communities.

The Bridge School was founded in 1986 as an educational program for children who could benefit from the newly emerging field of augmentative and alternative communication. Augmentative and alternative communication (abbreviated as AAC) is the use of other means to communicate in support of, or as an alternative to, speech. The field of AAC experienced its pioneer days in the 1950s, when people began to formally explore symbol systems and manual communication boards or displays as a way for people to communicate. The changes in the microcomputer industry in the late 1970s and early 1980s introduced the possibilities of message storing and speech output to the development and manufacturing of portable communication devices. It was at this time that a founding group of two parents (Pegi Young and James Forderer) and one speech-language pathologist with expertise in the field of AAC (Dr. Marilyn Buzolich) developed a vision. That vision became The Bridge School, an educational program that brought together an interdisciplinary field of specialists, newly emerging technologies, and children just beginning their educational experience to discover and to learn what works and why.

Importance

The need for augmentative and alternative communication is great. Our best demographic data suggests that 8-12 individuals per 1,000 in the general population (0.8%-1.2%) experience severe communication impairments that require AAC — a wide spectrum of individuals — with disabilities that are both present at birth (such as cerebral palsy) and acquired later in life (such as traumatic brain injury or stroke). These individuals may have primarily a physical disability,

which impacts the ability to speak, or may have a myriad of other challenges which must also be addressed (e.g., vision loss, developmental delays, learning disabilities).

Augmented communicators as a group have a common need to bridge the gap between what they understand and what they can communicate. AAC strategies, techniques, and tools bridge this gap.

"Just because people don't talk doesn't mean they don't think. We've gotten too used to thinking that the potential of those who cannot communicate with us verbally is limited, when in fact, it is quite unlimited".
(Pegi Young, Bridge School co-founder and parent)

In addition to the communication needs of the students who attend the Bridge School, we also address the broader scope of access to technology. Today, assistive technology tools allow individuals with disabilities access to global technologies that will enable them to re-define their potential. We work to identify individual challenges or barriers and employ technology solutions that provide individuals with opportunities to learn, to read/write, to socialize, to control the environment, to gain mobility, to work, to earn a living, and to live independently.

Education

"Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men." *– Confucius*

The Bridge School augmentative communication and assistive technology focused program allows people to be creative, collaborative, and experimental in finding ways to overcome challenges and barriers to communication and independence. We believe that providing opportunities for personal, social, and educational development to all children contributes to self-confidence and self-esteem. Thus, at The Bridge School, we design programs that will give individuals opportunities to develop to their greatest positive potential through communication, recreation, academics, community involvement, self-reliance, independence, and lifelong learning.

Each child is an adventure into a better life – an opportunity to change the old pattern and make it new." *– Hubert H. Humphrey*

Our organization was founded and its mission established on the beliefs that:

- ▲ Everyone should have the opportunity to achieve his or her maximal potential.
- ▲ Everyone should have the opportunity to share knowledge, express feelings, and be heard.
- ▲ Everyone should actively participate in his or her own learning.
- ▲ All children should have access to a quality education that encompasses a broad base of knowledge and experiences.
- ▲ Technology is a tool that provides access to communication and learning.
- ▲ Children, families, and educators must work in partnership to effectively support learning.
- ▲ "Communication is the essence of human life." (Daniel Webster)

"The secret in education lies in respecting the student."
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Keeping these beliefs in mind, The Bridge School is a place where students, educators, and families collaborate on developing the most positive educational experience possible. Our Educational Program serves 14 students (kindergarten – 8th grade) each year. The school is located on a shared public school site – North Elementary School, a Hillsborough City School District campus in Northern California.

"A child miseducated is a child lost."
– John F. Kennedy

Professional staff work together to teach a communication-based curriculum, which includes art, communication skill development, community trips and field experiences, computer literacy, expressive language and written communication, language arts and reading, mathematics, dance and movement, science, sensory integration, social studies and history.

Using The Bridge School model, children begin to learn about the power of communication. Children receive intensive communication-focused experiences like adaptive keyboards which allow them access to writing on the computer. Children receive the time and support necessary to begin the process of becoming a competent communicator and an active participant in their own education.

"If help and salvation are to come, they will only come from the children, for the children are the makers of men." *– Maria Montessori*

Central to the design of The Bridge School education program is the goal to return students to their home school district once they have achieved competence with AAC and technology for learning. Through our Transition Program, we continue to provide support to these students in their new educational settings. Staff at The Bridge School have the knowledge and expertise needed to set the course and provide the guidance to children so that they can return to their home school districts with the self-knowledge that they:

- ▲ are capable of communicating what they think.
- ▲ have a mechanism by which they are able to communicate.
- ▲ have a voice to contribute to their classes, their schools, and their communities.
- ▲ are unique, valued, and important individuals who have many qualities and talents to share.

Through classroom visits, meetings with educational team members, training and curriculum development, and set-up and adaptation of assistive technology, The Bridge School provides families and receiving school districts long-term support and follow-up to ensure that the transition from our environment to the child's home school is successful.

"To teach is to learn twice."
— Joseph Joubert

Outreach

Most teachers, therapists, and parents who work with children with severe speech or physical impairments struggle to meet the needs of their children and do not have the benefit of our collaborative relationships, nor do they have access to the resources that we have available. One important contribution we strive for, in the development of programs and the use of information technologies, is to impart what we have learned and developed to those who could have an impact on the educational outcomes of similar children everywhere.

Our Outreach Program, established five years after we opened our doors, fulfills The Bridge School's mission to disseminate and share information and technology to parents, professionals, and users of augmentative communication and assistive technology across the nation and the world. Although we teach families and professionals about the available hardware and software and the customization of applications, many of The Bridge School's outreach endeavors are designed to keep the broader community informed and educated about our work. For example, our Open Labs enable families and professionals in the greater San Francisco Bay Area to learn about state-of-the-art AAC technologies that they may not have otherwise experienced. Similarly, we communicate with professionals all that we have learned and developed in order to impact the greatest number of individuals possible. Sharing with the broader community innovative educational concepts (like using movement and dance in place of traditional Physical Education) and strategies (such as the use of musical notes and scales to teach sound sequencing of words sounds to children with visual impairments), as well as technological solutions, is key to our mission. We also maintain relationships with assistive technology manufacturers and researchers to aid in the development of new technologies for communication and independence. Finally, our Teacher-in-Residence program trains professionals from emerging countries to extend The Bridge School's educational practices to distant parts of the world.

There is an undeniable relationship between the ability to communicate effectively and personal independence, productivity, and inclusion. Communication is the core of human life and everyone has the right to fulfill this very basic need. Our vision is the full inclusion in society for all people who require assistance to communicate. We work towards raising expectations so that every individual has an opportunity to compete and thrive at whatever he/she chooses to undertake.

Benefits

The benefits of our programs have far exceeded our dreams and original vision. We have reached thousands of students, teachers, parents, and global community members by providing an innovative and high-quality, technology-rich educational program tailored to the individual needs of each student; a diverse, dynamic, and far reaching outreach program; and a focused research agenda dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

Students and families have benefited

By providing a state-of-the-art educational program, The Bridge School minimizes challenges and barriers arising from severe speech and physical impairments, thereby enhancing the quality of life for students and their families. Our students, who enjoy a strong partnership between educators and parents, have demonstrated not only that they can become active learners, but also that they can in fact re-define the potential for individuals with similar disabilities.

The educational outcomes for children who have attended The Bridge School have been unquestionably altered. Students who previously lacked a systematic means of communication, opportunity to participate in classroom based learning activities, or access to high technology tools, have left The Bridge School program to return to general education classrooms in their home school districts as competent, confident learners. Without the technology-based learning strate-

gies and tools which they developed while at The Bridge School, these students would not be able to benefit as greatly from a general education environment.

In addition, our students change the way they view themselves after having the opportunity to learn with, speak to, and share experiences with other children who use technology for communication, learning, and mobility. They perceive themselves as valuable, competent, and equal members of their classrooms. They are confident learners and embrace learning opportunities.

Through our Transition services, we ensure that Bridge School students continue to excel and benefit from their educational experiences once they leave our program. At The Bridge School, students begin to learn about the power of communication, benefiting from the services and support given to them as they continue the process of becoming competent communicators and active participants in their own education.

Teachers and other professionals have benefited

Special education teachers, speech pathologists, assistive technologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, school administrators, instructional assistants, and other school professionals benefit from our many outreach training opportunities. Many of these professionals have acquired additional skills which enable them to support students who require specialized technology for learning and communication. The Bridge School serves as a resource for professionals seeking information about and advice regarding the application of technology, both common and specialized, for the students they serve.

We offer a summer training institute program to help increase participants' understanding and competence in communication and literacy instruction, allowing them to incorporate their newly acquired knowledge into their instructional frameworks so that classroom activities can engage students in actively constructing their own knowledge. Special education teachers and others are able to use information technologies to create accessible materials and curriculum content that helps "level the playing field" for students with disabilities. In addition, participants benefit from participating in online collaboration and sharing information with others around the nation and the world.

Professionals who have received training from and support by The Bridge School serve their non-speaking students in a different way by seeing potential where they may not have seen it before. Many professionals report that they feel they are better equipped to evaluate, identify, and implement appropriate technology solutions for their students. Perhaps most important, along with their increased knowledge, these professionals enjoy changed attitudes regarding the benefits of technology use for student with severe disabilities.

The community has benefited

The work of The Bridge School has facilitated systemic change in local school districts. When The Bridge School began, few school programs focused on the use of technology for children with disabilities. We are proud to have served as a model for such programs that are being implemented in communities throughout the country.

We believe that the community benefits from the many activities of The Bridge School by enjoying an increased awareness of the needs of individuals with severe speech and physical impairments. Through various outreach and public information activities, we help community members become aware of the advantages and potential of technology used by students with severe disabilities. Furthermore, increasing public awareness not only benefits those students who have attended The Bridge School, but also creates a more accepting and supportive environment for all students with disabilities.

Success

Through our educational and outreach programs, The Bridge School has directly impacted the lives of over 300 severely disabled, non-speaking children. Indirectly, through our training of school professionals, the impact can be extrapolated to be in the thousands. Globally, through our website, tens of thousands of individuals have visited www.bridgeschool.org to learn about the use of augmentative communication and assistive technology. We have far exceeded our expectations, but not our aspirations!

Because we actively follow our students through a transition program, we have been able to document the success of our educational program. Although only 15% of our students

came to Bridge School from a regular education setting and 85% from special educational classrooms, 70% of our students have successfully returned to and maintained their status in regular classrooms. All of our students retained their competent use of the originally prescribed augmentative communication device although in the field of AAC in general, abandonment of high-technology systems is high. Many of our students have grown into using more sophisticated levels of technology.

One of the greatest indicators of success is the replication of The Bridge School model in a public school setting. The Oakland Unified School District worked hand-in-hand with The Bridge School to develop and implement the TACLE (Technology and Augmentative Communication for Learning Enhancement) classroom at Redwood Heights Elementary in Oakland, CA. A Bridge School staff member worked side-by-side with Ms. Stephanie Taymuree, teacher of the TACLE class, for an entire school year. During that time, teachers shared elements of The Bridge School educational model, essential teaching technologies, curriculum, materials, and implementation strategies. Consultation, collaboration, and teamwork were used to develop the TACLE classroom structure and curriculum to serve the needs of children, grades K—2, within Oakland Unified School District who could benefit from augmentative communication and assistive technology. Building on the success of this classroom, Oakland Unified has taken the TACLE model and expanded their ability to serve these students by developing TACLE II, TACLE III, and TACLE IV classrooms. The district is now able to address the needs of augmentative communication and assistive technology students in kindergarten through high school and serves as a model for other public school districts. These changes within the Oakland Unified School District were facilitated by this joint project. It is a success of which we are very proud.

Through interactive, web-based applications, we have established a Collaborative Classrooms Network of teachers and classrooms serving children who use assistive technology and augmentative communication strategies. We share curriculum modifications, lesson plans, student authored work, and adaptations of general education materials with these colleagues from around the country. Six teachers and 33 students participated in this collaborative effort this past year.

We have published two issues of our Classroom Strategies publication, a subscription newsletter addressing topics relevant to the implementation of augmentative communication and assistive technology tools and techniques in an educational setting.

We have been successful in making a global impact in the area of augmentative communication through our Teacher-In-Residence program. This project, in collaboration with the International Society for Augmentative/Alternative Communication (ISAAC), successfully supported two professionals from countries with emerging technology innovation, by providing a year-long paid internship at The Bridge School. During the 1998-99 school year we hosted our first international Teacher-in-Residence, Ms. Usha Dalvi from Bombay, India. During the 2000-2001 school year, we are hosting Ms. Ala Smyczek, from Krakow, Poland. Through e-mail, we have been able to develop an international network to support these individuals with additional information and answers to questions on areas of particular need in their countries. As part of the program, the Teacher-in-Residence will visit several programs and individuals across the country to experience different models currently implemented in the United States. We hope that by sharing the experiences of the broader AAC community, each Teacher-in-Residence will return to his/her home country with not only the resources of Bridge School, but also the resources of all that came to know her through our site.

Our Building Bridges Camp program has been an ongoing success since its inception in the summer of 1994. This unique one-week overnight camp experience brings young AAC users from around the country (and the world!) together to learn more and do more with their communication systems. In addition, professionals and paraprofessionals attend our Training Institute, alongside the children they work with over the course of the school year, in order to gain valuable experience in implementing the wide-range of technology applications available to these children.

Research

Recently, with the addition of our research program, the philosophies and activities of The Bridge School have expanded in another highly related, yet divergent, direction. This reflects a significant addition to our mission and goals, as well as a change in our view of ourselves. This is our greatest endeavor, and our biggest challenge.

Traditionally, The Bridge School's primary focus has been to provide clinical and educational services. With a solid history of applying state-of-the-art knowledge to inform instructional decisions, the primary goal of Bridge School's educational staff is to improve the quality of life of the individuals they serve. In this pursuit, the staff uses scientific reasoning and research findings as they apply knowledge to inform their decisions of intervention. If they understand the mechanisms by which their interventions work, or use interventions that are clearly proven to be effective, so much the better, but that is not their primary focus.

The primary goal of The Bridge School's research program is to advance knowledge and understanding. By carrying out a focused research program, The Bridge School seeks to advance knowledge in the field of AAC in systematic ways. It is important for researchers to systematically investigate, prove or disprove any given hypothesis regarding assessment, intervention, and outcomes for our students. However, in contrast to the ongoing educational programs at The Bridge School, conducting research requires a different focus, a different timeline, and a different way of going about one's work. The ultimate divergence of educators and researchers may boil down to a fundamental philosophical need.

Difficulty

The blending together of these three distinct programs — our educational services, our outreach work, and our research — remains an ongoing challenge. As an organization, The Bridge School recognizes and values the unique, yet overlapping contributions of its educational, outreach, and research programs in the pursuit of our overall mission. Our greatest difficulty and most challenging task is to maintain a balanced approach to our work. Ensuring that the highest quality educational program continues to be offered, while developing and conducting outreach projects, and systematically engaging in research studies takes vigilant attention to detail and a clear understanding of the totality of the organization. Thus, we regularly evaluate the effectiveness of each program based on achieving of targeted objectives, meeting or exceeding established standards, and realizing desired outcomes. Establishing programmatic priorities and maintaining a clear focus and direction continue to be among our most important needs.

Along with balancing our various programs, gathering staff with all the skills necessary is a challenge. We attempt to recruit, train, and retain the highest quality staff, board, consultants, and volunteers — a difficult task. The shortage of special education teachers and school-based speech-language pathologists is nearing a crisis level, and yet enrollment in University special education and speech-language pathology programs is down as new college graduates pursue careers in more lucrative fields. Inasmuch as our ability to accomplish our mission is completely dependent upon the professionals we employ, The Bridge School nurtures and sustains a positive working environment through communication, cooperation, teamwork, recognition, and professional development. Recruitment and retention of highly skilled and effective staff members takes considerable time and effort. Although the investment is high, so are the payoffs!

Along with an outreach program coordinator, our AAC and assistive technology "experts" are the seven professionals who provide the educational program and support services to our students on a daily basis. Given the nature of the school environment and school day, time for activities external to teaching, planning, and teaming is extremely limited. Finding creative ways for these individuals to have the opportunities and energy to focus on conceptualizing the projects, compiling information, making progress on projects, responding to communications, and collaborating with other teachers outside of the program, remains challenging.

Originality

The Bridge School is a one-of-a-kind educational program serving a very unique population of students. Our breadth and depth of technology use within our classrooms is unmatched. More significantly, however, our organization has taken on the challenge of enhancing the life outcomes for individuals who use augmentative communication by implementing educational, outreach, and research programs within one setting. We are responsive to our local community, make significant contributions to the education of professionals on a national level, and globally inform and disseminate information about the application of common and special technology for all individuals who are non-speaking.

We have a one-of-a-kind web site focusing on the educational needs of children who use AAC and assistive technology. The web site supports a variety of outreach and dissemination activities. In addition to providing general resources for individuals seeking information on the topic, incorporated in the site are novel resources for downloads, avenues for exploring new models of distance training, and supervision and instruction in the use of new practices and technologies.

We have many future dreams to develop for our web site. We would like to develop a "Virtual AAC Device" which demonstrates how technology enables those with a variety of disabilities to communicate. We believe this could be a powerful learning tool for students across a variety of disability-related fields as well the public in general. In addition, we are beginning to compile a technology resources database, linking people to the variety of manufacturers and distributors of equipment, materials, and devices currently available. Finally, we hope to more fully explore the opportunities for distance training, culminating in an on-line institute that provides academic coursework in the area of augmentative communication and special education.

Editor's Note: *To complement Catherine Sementelli's excellent profile article, we include the following item from The Bridge School's website. Here, readers will have a chance to see what a typical day is like at this innovative school. Readers wishing to find this piece and to see links for other features on the school's website should go to http://www.bridgeschool.org/main.html.*

Appendix:

A Day In The Life Of Classroom 2

Here is a typical day in the life of Classroom 2, as written by Tina Spiller, one of our instructional assistants.

Classroom 2 has been known to stray every now and then from the schedule when an opportunity arises. In fact, just last week we dropped everything to dance salsa in celebration of Miss Aileen's birthday. We run out every time a big motor vehicle of any kind parks itself on the playground, we always stop to talk to guests, and take occasional breaks to tour the parking lot and open the electronic gate. However, order does reign in most circumstances and if the teachers get too off track, Jake is usually there to remind us to get back on the schedule. It's only mid-October, but the students have been very productive so far. Two new students in our class, Lueza and Danny, and a new teacher, Kelly Rinehart, have also added an upbeat dynamic to the class. What follows is a brief account of what life has been like in Classroom 2 since September, explained within the context of something we do every morning, the schedule.

"At eight thirty, the boys are going to do Language Arts with Miss Elisa and the girls are going to do Math with Miss Aileen."

This year's first unit in Language Arts, in conjunction with the North Hillsborough School curriculum, is Friendship. We've been adapting the stories onto the computer through a program called Intellipics® by Intellitools® which allows us to paste in digital/scanned photos and icons for illustration and play a synthesized/digitized voice for sound. The kids take turns reading the story using an overlay that turns the computer "page." Before even reading the story, students take a "Picture Walk." Everyone gets out of their chairs and, like an Easter egg hunt, scours the room for story pictures taped on lockers, tables, and other school-type paraphernalia. It's easily one of the most favored parts of studying a story due to the element of discovery and because the children, once having located a picture, get to ceremoniously rip it down and bring it back to the table to share their finds. The children then use the pictures to hypothesize about the story by asking questions on their talkers.

After reading the story a couple of times, the students complete a "Story Staircase" and a "Storyboard," both big cardboard structures that mimic a staircase and a filmstrip. The steps or film clips trace the events of the story with icon pictures. As an exercise in comprehension, the students are asked to choose from the icons to show what happened next, and then to find the appropriate words on their talkers. In addition to these staples of Language Arts, we have done all sorts of fun activities to support and explore story themes. So far, we have flown kites, drunk Kool-Aid, written book reports, played tricks, created secret boxes, and made friendship bracelets. Role-playing has put us in touch with the feelings of the characters.

Meanwhile, Lueza goes up to kindergarten at North School and on the other side of the room, Jackie and Nicole are exploring their environments by means of all five senses. They've played dress-up with bright pink feather boas, make-up, and jewelry. They are asked to make choices or identify their preference of two objects. For example, the teacher asks Nicole if she wants to listen to music or have some snack. Using her switch, her hand, or her voice, she communicates her preference. The children also continue to write in their journals about recent news. The computer set-up will scan through their choices, giving them verbal cues about when to hit their switch, and have the programmed piece of information relayed.

"At 9:45, you guys have recess and then at 10:00, snack."

Both Keith and Danny have power chairs now and they carry on like young boys do, playing tag, racing one another, or just turning in circles until they get really dizzy. For others, it's a chance to practice walking, try out the brand new red swings on the playground, or play soccer and basketball with their friends. Because we share the yard with North School, the kids also get to hang out with the friends they've met in integration.

Snack time is social time. Students share news about the night before, about books they've read or baseball teams they root for, family outings, therapy, what they had for dinner. They alternate between doing the actual sharing and choosing who they want to share next using eye gaze, responding to verbal cues or their talkers. It's basically free time to engage in conversation with each other, either by asking questions or commenting on what has just been said. Although largely unstructured, students are encouraged to explore new vocabulary and put to use familiar words and phrases.

"At 10:30, the girls will do Language Arts and the boys will go to Reading and Math."

We've all met Pat the Cat, in some form or fashion ("He is fat. He wears a top hat when he sits on his mat."). After reading the story, the boys and Miss Aileen pick out sight words and those they spell incorrectly are brought home for homework. To test their comprehension, the students are presented each sentence of the story with the words out of order. They are asked to arrange the words correctly and then put all the sentences back in order. A spelling test at the end completes the process. The second half of the session is Math time. Addition and place value were introduced in September. Both manipulatives and an Intellitools® program called Number Concepts 1: Pen and Gwen® are used to facilitate learning. Some students are also using Don Johnston's Big Calc®.

"We have lunch at 12:30."

What can I say about lunch? If snack time is social time then lunch is verbal mayhem. Everyone talks at once. We also

listen to music, tell jokes, share the same piece of news a dozen times. In other words, it's a typical elementary school lunchroom.

"And at 12:30 …"

Afternoons are a mix of things. Twice a week, Jake and Danny head up to grade two and grade four respectively. Recently Keith, who attends grade three in the afternoons, started going up to class by himself. Like proud parents, we watch him cruising through the playground towards the path that leads him up to his classroom. He pauses to watch the soccer game going on, lets out a shrill of excitement to the players, and eventually gets on his way again. Nicole goes up for a very rowdy music class (apparently they get to play air guitar); Jackie loves exploring colors and textures in her grade three Art class on Thursdays.

Those who are not "integrating," have been working on a school newsletter with Miss Kelly. Everyone chose someone to interview (Keith chose Danny and Danny chose Keith), came up with five questions using key words on their talkers (eg., "what play?" or "where go?") and wrote letters to these people asking for an interview. They have also tackled the playground with survey questions and have found out the latest about favorite movies and most common pets. In Art, the kids have been working on self-portraits. One fun self-portrait they completed used colors to express the way they felt about their faces, a different colored paper for nose, eyes, mouth, etc. When they shared their creative visions at the end, the kids had come up with very imaginative titles. Jackie called hers "This is me as a teenager with happy eyes."

California is the topic for Social Studies and the only time the students get to mix with the students in the other classroom. In the last half hour on Fridays, we luxuriate out on the mat and read a story. Speaking of luxuriating, Fridays generally take on this type of quality with Dance and Music in the mornings. Dance has been a combination of massage with balls and brushes and more physical activities like practicing rolls and sitting up. The emphasis our dance teacher, Sonia, takes is on following the natural movement impulses of the student. Although in the past Music has taken on a more therapeutic approach, Kelly has provided a welcomed change with her more music-as-an-art-form style. The students are learning about instruments and have gotten to experiment with their sounds through playing instruments and through acting out plays like Peter and the Wolf.

"At two-thirty, you guys go home."

Messages get recorded in talkers, Vanguards® get packed up, binders in bags, drinks filled, jackets on, parents filled in. It's a rush to get everyone out the door in one piece. October has shaped up to be a busy month with the concert coming up and integration schedules finalized, but the kids are such troopers and I speak for all the staff when I say that it's a joy to see their little smiling faces when they come through the door each day.

Supplement to Catherine Sementelli's Article about The Bridge School
A Resource List Compiled by Robin Martin

Special education is an area within education where I have neither experience, nor any substantial background knowledge. So, researching organizations and resources to go with this article was eye-opening. I learned more about just how "one of a kind" The Bridge Schools is, as well as how the whole field of augmentative and alternative communications (A.A.C.) is so new. Although my simple Internet sleuthing techniques led me to a number of related organizations and resource lists, I also had to make a few phone calls to learn more. From these calls, among other things I learned that there are only about eight or nine states that have created statewide associations to support the growing numbers of teachers and families of special needs children who require AAC.

Tour The Bridge School Web Site

First, I highly recommend that you take a tour of The Bridge School web site, starting at www.bridgeschool.org. This extensive web site will greet you with a colorful rainbow of options where you can learn more about the school, outreach, camp, resources, and events. Or, for more information about The Bridge School, you can also contact the school directly:

The Bridge School
545 Eucalyptus Avenue
Hillsborough, CA 94010
Phone: (650) 696-7295
Fax: (650) 342-7598

Other Schools and Programs for Special Needs Children

There are no other schools exactly like The Bridge School, which was especially designed to serve individuals with severe speech and physical disabilities. However, a list of various organizations with programs serving special needs children around the United States can be found online at: http://www.napsec.com/members.html

Resources for Families and Teachers

Through its outreach programs, The Bridge School offers several forms of teacher education. These include a "Teacher-in-Residence Program," as well as "Training and Mentoring" through resource labs offered one Saturday each month at the school. For more details about these as well as outreach programs for youth, visit: http://www.bridgeschool.org/outreach/outreach_train.html

In addition to The Bridge School, there are growing numbers of organizations and higher education programs that provide varying levels of support for teachers and parents in this field. Some of these include:

International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) — the umbrella international organization for AAC, with active international links. In addition to serving professionals, this organization also supports the users of the technology, and all have a voice in the organization. ISAAC, 49 The Donway West, Suite 308, Toronto, ON, M3C 3M9 Canada; Tel: (416) 385-0351; Fax: (416) 385-0352. E-mail: secretariat@isaac-online.org; Web site: http://www.isaac-online.org/

National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC)—1522 K Street, NW, Suite 1032, Washington, DC 20005; phone 202-408-3338; fax 202-408-3340. Web site http://www.napsec.com/

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)—a professional, scientific, and credentialing association. http://www.asha.org/

Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Resource Lis—http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/ieo/bibs/aug.html

California Association for Private Special Education Schools (CAPSES)—http://www.capses.com/html/home.html

Hattie B. Munroe Barkley Memorial's Augmentative and Alternative Communications Centers—developed by the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, http://aac.unl.edu/

Resource Page on Early Education for AAC—http://www.unl.edu/spedsev/webec.html

If you would like more descriptions about these organizations as well as links to AAC vendors along with some simple action ideas, 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 web sites as well. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about The Bridge School and AAC, just call 1-800-639-4122.

Two Poems, Two Sisters

Months The Wrong Way

by Lisa M. Herudek

April, August, December, May
or does it go a different way?
February, September, June …
Let us play a piano tune.
January, July and March …
Oh Dear now I put too much starch!
October, November …
Oh Dear I can't remember!

Lisa is twelve years old; she wrote this poem when she was eleven. She enjoys horseback riding, reading, writing, and drawing.

A Book's Secret

by Barbara S. Herudek

A book has a secret, of places and towns,
Of girls in fancy bonnets, and women in long gowns.
Of cold days by the fireplace,
Of meeting a familiar face.
Of fresh baked cookies and Christmas day.
And there is a way to know
The secret of a book.
For as you lift the covers, as you turn the pages,
The book's secret will be told.
For a book is a treasure of gold.

Now fifteen years old, Barbara wrote this poem when she was eleven. She enjoys reading and writing stories, doing arts and crafts, and sewing.

The Red Road
The Indigenous Worldview as a Prerequisite for Effective Character Education

Don Trent Jacobs

Don Jacobs has doctorates in both health psychology and in curriculum and instruction. He is the author of eleven books, including *Primal Awareness, The Bum's Rush: The Selling of Environmental Backlash, and Teaching Virtues: Building Character Across the Curriculum*. Don directs the teacher preparation programs at Oglala Lakota College, an NCA accredited four-year tribal college on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He is available for conducting workshops and can be reached at djacobs@olc.edu.

Curriculum development in the postmodern era must also include attention to the wisdom embedded in Native American spirituality, for it is in the very sacred land of the native people that American education now finds its home.

— Patrick Slattery
(*Curriculum Development in the Post Modern Era*)[1]

Traditional Native American child-rearing philosophies provide a powerful alternative in education. They challenge both the European cultural heritage of today's child pedagogy and the narrow perspectives of many current psychological theories.

— Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Steven Van Bockern
(*Reclaiming Youth at Risk*)[2]

PART I

Last night my neighbor, a Lakota man in his early thirties, stopped by my house to use the phone. He wanted to call the jailhouse to find out how much bail was for his brother.

"It's eighty-five dollars," he told me after hanging up. "They got him on a two-year old warrant for drunk driving. I think I can get the money in Gordon this weekend."

I asked him what he planned on doing in Gordon, the Nebraska border town about forty miles south of our homes.

"Oh, it is not what you might call ethical work. We find things like answering machines and old televisions that people on the rich side of town have thrown in the garbage dumpsters. Then we sell them at the pawnshop. Works pretty good though."

Such is life on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, located in Shannon County, South Dakota. The district's claim to fame is that it is the poorest in the United States. It is also the home of the Oglala Lakota, better known to the "outside" world as the Sioux Indians. This is the tribe of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, Black Elk, and others known for their courage, patience, honesty, fortitude, and spiritual wisdom.

"It is not really what you might call ethical work," my neighbor had said. I wondered why not. I compared taking old thrown-away televisions and reselling them to other ways of making a living. Although digging through garbage dumps has its obvious shortcomings, is it unethical? I think what my neighbor meant was that it is not what people in the dominant culture would expect from someone of "good character."

It might help to know my neighbor to understand where I am going with this anecdote. He, like his famous ancestors, has a sense of generosity, honesty, bravery, patience, fortitude, and humility rarely seen in the fast-paced economic world of the dominant culture. In spite of the harsh realities of reservation life, his spirituality generally sustains him. Like many who have learned that alcohol is not a good way to escape despair, he prizes his sobriety. His desire for money has not yet corrupted his spiritual convictions.

Still, my neighbor is beginning to define himself in terms of the white man's culture, where the measure of character seems

to be more about external appearances than inner peace. His concern that his work may not be thought of as ethical reveals a belief that character relates more to money than to concern for others. The quiet compassion of a caring waitress deserves less respect than the dispassionate success of a famous celebrity.

There are many people on the reservation like my neighbor. In spite of the tragic consequences of poverty, disease, and oppression that surround them, they still believe that children are sacred; that elders deserve respect; that air and water are meant to be clean; that all creatures should be honored; that there is joy in remembering the relatedness in life's diversity; and that a balanced life, referred to in Lakota as "The Red Road," is not likely unless it is guided by such core, universal virtues as courage and generosity.

My neighbor dropped out of school early and so did not gain his good character from school learning. This is no surprise. Most formal educational institutions (both on and off the reservation) do little to encourage the authentic development of character. Seeing a relationship between an absence of virtuous attitudes and actions and the rampant violence and apathy in society, many educators and politicians want this situation to change. They endorse "character education" as a legitimate endeavor. With few exceptions, however, the new character education programs do little for the moral development of youth. Most are built on foundations that continue to overemphasize competition, standardization, disconnected curriculum, individual gain, and materialism. Ultimately, the programs are more about compliant behaviors, religious or social indoctrination and classroom management than about the deep, experiential awareness needed for the common good of all.

•

In spite of the harsh realities of reservation life, his spirituality generally sustains him.

In his article "How Not to Teach Values: A Critical Look at Character Education" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, February, 1997),[3] Alfie Kohn offers an excellent critique of the current character education phenomenon by identifying a variety of problematic issues associated with it. In the following paragraphs, I paraphrase his assertions (*in italics*) and then briefly describe how the indigenous worldview may offer a remedy.[4] (To better contextualize Kohn's arguments and understand his rationale for them, the interested reader ought to read Kohn's entire article.)

1. *What goes by the name of character education nowadays is, for the most part, a collection of exhortations and extrinsic inducements designed to make children work harder and do what they're told.* (Kohn, p. 2)

Intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation is a hallmark of indigenous approaches to learning. Learning a new skill is seen as a way to help others and to honor the complex connections associated with the skill. This especially includes the personal traits involved in applying the skill. A good hunter is defined as much by his or her generosity in sharing food as by any expertise in stalking. Learning to paint well is as much about respect for the elements used in making the colors as it is about execution of the drawing. With this perspective, science would be as much about free inquiry and healthy ecology as it is about convenience or economic gain.

American Indian educators understand that when learning is motivated predominantly by rewards and punishments, a culture emerges that is dependent upon the approval of external authority figures. Such a culture focuses on the outer journey to the exclusion of the inner one.

In his award winning book, *Ishmael*, Daniel Quinn divides the world into "takers" and "leavers." Leavers are people with the indigenous worldview, "an endangered species most critical to the world" because they understand they are "in the hands of God" (142). The Takers, on the other hand, attempt to rule the world by establishing criteria for good and evil and for the rewards and punishments accorded to each category.[5]

The "takers" world depends upon mandates from human authorities to maintain order. This worldview opposes the traditional primal or "leavers" view, which says that only personal experience and intuitive insights can offer legitimate authority. Spirits may give guidance through a medicine person, but the individual is expected to make his or her own choices. The central purpose of indigenous teaching is to recognize the power in each student. Authority over others would therefore be contrary to good teaching.

2. *Character education generally tends to ignore systems in which more and more of the nation's wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.* (Kohn, p. 4)

It would be difficult to imagine traditional Lakota or Aboriginal educators teaching virtues outside of the social and ecological context. The very reason for teaching courage, generosity, fortitude, and humility is to assure respect for the many relationships that create a healthy community. Nor do typical indigenous economic and social systems condone significant discrepancies of wealth among people. For example, I know a Raramuri Indian whose talents and skills resulted in his owning many more oxen, horses, and goats than did his neighbors. When he learned that a man's family who lived several hundred miles away had only two goats, he had a great give-a-way party for the community. By the end of the day, he still had ample stock, but the disparity between his wealth and his neighbors had narrowed considerably.

Many tribal customs help assure that excessive material wealth is shared and that no one suffers economic misfortune while others are rich. Name-giving ceremonies, send-offs for young people going to school or into the military, and many other occasions all involve giving away gifts. Wealth, in essence, is determined by how much is shared rather than by how much is accumulated.

It is also important to note that the same systems that create poverty are also destroying ecosystems. In the indigenous worldview, character education is as much about creatures, rivers, rocks, and sky as it is about people. Considering the large-scale denial of such environmental problems as global warming, such a perspective may be vital to our very survival. (For a sense of how widespread and calculated the anti-environmental movement really is, see Don Trent Jacobs, *The Bum's Rush: The Selling of Environmental Backlash.*)

3. *The character education movement seems to be driven by a stunningly dark view of children—and of people in general.* (Kohn, p. 4)

The words for men, women, and children in American Indian languages include a syllable that means "sacred." In traditional native worldviews, babies enter the world as spiritual beings and they are born into a sacred relationship with the universe and its creatures. Given such an understanding, if character education attempts to "control" inherently bad children or "fix" their problems, then it is not relevant to true life. In indigenous traditions, the teaching of virtues through stories often offers warnings about "tricksters" who tempt good people away from "The Red Road," but are rarely about changing bad people into good people.

•

Still, my neighbor is beginning to define himself in terms of the white man's culture.

Larry Brendtro of Augustana College is considered to be one of the most respected researchers on education for the growing number of youths being failed by modern schools and culture. He believes that "Native American philosophies of child management represent what is perhaps the most effective system of positive discipline ever developed because they emerged from cultures where the central purpose of life was the education and empowerment of children.[6] Brendtro considers this view quite different from that which we have inherited from our European ancestors, whose motto "Children should be seen and not heard" still disturbingly rings in this author's ears.

4. *The question, "Whose values?" should not be dismissed.* (Kohn, p. 6)

With very few exceptions, there is little to no historical evidence that any of the hundreds of tribes living in North America prior to European colonization, ever attempted to impose their particular tribe's values onto another, nor murdered others for having different values.[7] Contemporary native peoples continue to respect all religious perspectives and tolerate a variety of values that do not violate or disrespect diversity. Considering the history of western civilizations, there is much to be said for such a worldview.

Contemporary character education generally distinguishes between "values" and "virtues." So do American Indians. They are very skeptical of what can happen when one person's or culture's preferred values are forced on another's. On the other hand, they believe that there are core universal virtues that are beacons for walking the Red Road. In fact, most cultures have identified courage, generosity, fortitude, patience, and humility as core universal virtues.[8] When combined with a spiritual understanding that "We are all related," these virtues help individuals become what most people in the world would consider to be persons possessing "good character."

5. *Most character education programs resort to exhortation and directed recitation.* (Kohn, p. 8)

Scholars like Patrick Slattery and Larry Brendtro (see opening quotes) point to American Indian pedagogy as exemplary for child development. This pedagogy is equally ideal for character education. Recalling the native approach to authority, it would be unnatural to expect that exhortation would be of much value in this worldview. In an unpublished survey I conducted for my doctoral research at Boise State University, I combined several lists of ways that American Indian students learn best and mixed them with lists of typical pedagogical approaches used in most schools. I asked graduate students, white-collar workers, and blue-collar workers to choose the ones they thought would best lead to meaningful learning. More than 80 percent of the respondents selected more than 70 percent of the "Indian" learning strategies. In other words, the worldview that tends to define Indian learning also happens to be the best way for most people to learn, yet it contradicts the dominant culture's assumptions about teaching and learning.

Another study at BSU, conducted by Karen Swisher, showed that contemporary American Indian learners are influenced significantly more than non-Indian learners by the degrees to which group harmony and holistic approaches to health and spirituality exist in the learning environment.[9] This tendency reflected a worldview different from that which underlies most western schooling, one taught to them by relatives. If embraced by all educators, such a holistic perspective would eventually become policy, preventing the kind of deleterious pedagogy currently used in many character education programs.

6. *Most leading proponents of character education approach their subject from a highly religious foundation. William Bennett, for example, has flatly asserted that the difference between right and wrong cannot be taught without reference to religion, and almost all of the leading proponents of character education are devout Catholics.* (Kohn, p. 10)

This last observation of Kohn's opens a discussion about a significant problem for contemporary character education and provides an interesting arena in which to contrast indigenous and western paradigms as they relate to teaching virtues. Without doubt, this territory is full of mines, and it will take courage for most readers to read what follows with a loving heart and an open mind. The sensitivity surrounding critical awareness about the distinctions between character education and religion is high. For example, consider the letter recently sent to me by the publisher of a mainstream educational journal. It was an honest and respectful note in response to my having sent an article questioning mandatory postings of The Ten Commandments in public schools as a way to teach virtues. It states,

"Dear Don,

Your article is logical, well-written and thought provoking, but it is too controversial for our audience."

Critical pedagogy is an important aspect of effective character education. This kind of response is just one example of how far we have to go before educators take critical pedagogy seriously. We only learn virtues when we carefully reflect on what

is true about situations in which we apply virtues. I think of truth as Parker Palmer describes it in his book *The Courage to Teach:* "Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline (104)."[10] With this definition in mind, I will continue to address Kohn's sixth critique as it relates to this "controversial" subject of religion and its role in character education.

Part II

The American Indian worldview sees all religious beliefs as divine metaphors for a common truth that allows different people to concentrate on spiritual matters in different ways. The various tribes have their own creation stories and specific religious ceremonies. Their spirituality generally reflects a concern for the great questions about how best to live respectfully as a part of God's world. It honors the diverse ways to pray or to comprehend God and the universe. It is, in a way, more about the great mysteries than about man's ability to offer great answers. Sacredness and mystery are inseparable in this view.

Many western religions, especially Christian ones, appear to be more about answers, rules, and consequences than about questions and mystery. When moved into arenas of education, power, and politics, organized religion has led to some of the greatest tragedies of our past. It has not made and is not likely to make a positive contribution to genuine moral development. For example, most organized religions tend to emphasize extrinsic motivation for virtuous conduct, despite the fact that brain research shows that this is not the best way to learn.[11]

Besides American Indian leaders, many great western educators, philosophers, and political leaders have recognized the potential dangers of organized religion when it goes beyond the boundaries of personal faith. For example, Alfred North Whitehead wrote that "Christian theology is one of the greatest disasters of the human race." (82)[12] Thomas Paine said, " As an engine of power, Christianity serves the purposes of despotism, and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests, but so far as respects the good of man it has no great benefit." (26)[13] Arthur Schlesinger said, "Religion enshrined hierarchy, authority and inequality." (44)[14] Thomas Jefferson, who said we have much to learn from the American Indians, also said, "I do not find in our particular superstition one redeeming feature." (122)[15] Bertrand Russell wrote, "The Christian religion, as organized, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world." (94)[16]

One might think the potential problems of religion in education have been handled by the establishment clause of the First Amendment. However, recent federal and state legislation seems to have ignored separation of church and state in the name of character education, as when the U. S. Government contracted with missionaries to force Christianity on American Indian students. In 1999, for instance, The U.S. House of Representatives voted 248 to 180 to allow states to post the Ten Commandments in public schools. This rider was attached to a juvenile justice crime bill. Its author convinced the legislators that only an improvement in the morality of youth could prevent the violent crimes these youth are perpetrating, and that biblical laws are the best source for such a task. It is interesting to note that in February of the year 1999, Pope John Paul II concurred, saying that "The Ten Commandments provide the only true basis for the lives of individuals, societies, and nations" (the Pope made his speech in St. Louis; cf. the CNN online news article located at www.christusrex.org/www1/pope/pope1-27-99.html).

To date, fourteen states have passed laws either allowing or mandating that schools post the ten biblical mandates in all public school classrooms. For example, the Colorado government passed Senate Bill 114, which states: "Each school district shall post in every public school classroom and in the main entryway in every public school a durable and permanent copy of the Ten Commandments as specified in paragraph (b) of this subsection." Similarly, Georgia's House Bill 1207 amends Georgia's Quality Basic Education Act to require local school systems to ensure that the Ten Commandments are displayed in every classroom within the school district, "as a condition for receiving state funds."

> Intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation is a hallmark of indigenous approaches to learning.

As character educators, we must consider carefully the possible repercussions of this growing public policy that endorses the Ten Commandments as "the only true basis" for our children's lives. A good place to start is with honest questions. Will the practice of posting (and presumably explaining) the Ten Commandments enhance or confuse moral development? If we are ordered to post them in our classrooms, how can we best study them so as to help our students grow into people with good character? What kind of worldview do the Ten Commandments give us in support of character education?

The following questions are from a chapter in my book *Teaching Virtues: Building Character Across the Curriculum.*[17] They are offered to teachers and students as a way to help them critically and respectfully address the role of the Ten Commandments in moral education. I ask two questions about each commandment. I intend the first question to be critical. The second is meant to help us look for the commandment's possible positive contribution to the student's learning virtues. After posing the questions, I offer a different set of guidelines for life, from an indigenous perspective, to give the reader an opportunity to consider the different worldviews that are reflected in each question. [Note: A slightly different format to the one offered below published in *Teaching Virtues*.]

The First Commandment: *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*.

1. Does the first commandment, which demands that only the Hebrew God be worshipped, convey respect for diversity and multicultural perspectives?

2. Could we interpret this commandment to mean that we should believe in one divine creator and not worship such false gods as money or fame?

The Second Commandment: *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not serve them for I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations.*

1. Might a mandate against any object of worship create confusion or unnecessary guilt in children who themselves or whose parents create or otherwise use sacred symbols, such as the American Indian pipe? And, in light of moral development, is it helpful and healing to talk about jealousy and threats of punishment, including punishment of future generations for the "sins" committed by their ancestors?
2. Could this commandment mean that worship should only be for the great mysterious Spirit and that we should never be so arrogant as to think we can reduce this Spirit to an image?

•

Wealth, in essence, is determined by how much is shared rather than by how much is accumulated.

The Third Commandment: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.*

1. The original interpretation of this commandment related to breaking contracts that were sworn on God's name. More recently people have come to think that this commandment means not cursing with God's name. Whatever the interpretation, does this commandment truly reflect one of the ten most important rules to govern the development of good character?
2. Could this commandment just be telling us to be very truthful always, but especially if we invoke God's name?

The Fourth Commandment: *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.*

1. Since the Sabbath originally referred to Saturday, is a mandate not to work on Saturday going to contribute to the moral development of young people?
2. In our modern world, could we use this commandment as a reminder that we need to slow down and spend more time in spiritual pursuits and less in material ones?

The Fifth Commandment: *Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land.*

1. From a critical thinking standpoint, is it a violation of the mandate to honor one's father and mother if a child's father has abused, molested, and violated the child and continues to do so? If a young person has such a good reason not to honor a parent, is it healthy to expect that this person's life may be cut short by God if she or he does not therefore honor her/his parent? If we generally respect all people, is it wise to be more selective concerning which ones we honor?
2. Might this commandment simply be a reminder that we should remember all the good things our parents do and show respect for their good work and love?

The Sixth Commandment: *Thou shalt not kill.*

1. What is the difference between killing as in hunting and killing as in murder? Is it inconsistent if the same state that mandates the teaching or posting of this law also mandates capital punishment?
2. Could this commandment give us a way to discuss the various meanings of the word "kill" and to distinguish between such things as murder, capital punishment, war, animal slaughter, etc.? [Note: The English translation of the Hebrew wording is misleading. As Rabbi Joseph Telushkin notes in his book *Jewish Literacy*, the Hebrew words *Lo tirtzakh* do not mean "Thou shalt not kill." Rather, they mean, "You shall not murder," or, one might translate, "Don't murder." So, the Hebrew phrasing already accounts for the very distinction that I am asking us to consider but which English translations blur. See p. 56 in Telushkin's book. See, too, on pp. 56–57, Telushkin's comments on the translational and interpretive problems with the Third Commandment.]

The Seventh Commandment: *Thou shalt not steal.*

1. Can anyone name a situation in which stealing to survive may not be one of the top ten violations of good character? Since the original meaning of this commandment referred to stealing a person's slaves, would it be inappropriate for us to ignore this deplorable context?
2. Which of our core universal virtues would be violated if someone stole from another?

The Eighth Commandment: *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

1. What can we say about the character of the forty percent of U.S. adults who have violated this rule? Are there situations in which adultery might not rank as one of the top ten morality issues in the world?
2. With diseases like AIDS, would not this mandate now have life and death repercussions if not followed?

The Ninth Commandment: *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*

1. Is this reference to honesty complete enough? For example, is it just as bad to be dishonest with oneself or dishonest with those who are not "neighbors."
2. Could this commandment be telling us that the worst form of dishonesty occurs when we hurt another?

The Tenth Commandment: *Thou shalt not covet [thy neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything else of his].* [Note: since I find different endings for this commandment in different sources, I note in brackets the variously cited elements of possible covetousness.]

1. Are we breaking a serious code of moral conduct and good character if we wish for or desire (covet) someone else's possessions but take no actions?
2. Since our thoughts all too often manifest in our actions, could not this commandment motivate us to try to control our inappropriate desires as much as we try to control our often concomitantly inappropriate actions?

Part III

Contemplating such questions about a code too often blindly accepted and now beginning to increase its hold on educational policies, we might better understand the worldview that is the basis for our choices. By using both types of questions, one criticizing and one supporting the efficacy of the Ten Commandments, teachers, parents, administrators, and students can engage in a healthy dialogue regardless of their individual religious persuasions. Whatever personal conclusions participants in this dialogue might draw, they might all reach a better understanding of the truth.

•
However, recent federal and state legislation seems to have ignored separation of church and state in the name of character education.

Across from my office at Oglala Lakota College is a poster entitled, "The Ten Indian Commandments" (Joe Vlesti, 1989). None of us at the college know Mr. Vlesti, and we have not been able to find out who he is, but we think he accurately represents moral guidelines that reflect indigenous perspectives. Using these "rules" by following the pattern used in Part II of this article, ask similar "pro and con" questions of each of the following ten moral recommendations. Do this not as a way to see which "religion" or "culture" is better, but, rather, to understand which set of guidelines better identifies and articulates a worldview that supports diversity and a more ideal foundation for moral development.

The Ten Indian Commandments (Joe Vlesti Associates 1993):

1. Treat the Earth and all that dwell thereon with respect.
2. Remain close to the Great Spirit.
3. Show great respect for your fellow beings.
4. Work together for the benefit of all mankind.
5. Give assistance and kindness wherever needed.
6. Do what you know in your heart and mind to be right.
7. Look after the well being of mind and body.
8. Dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good.
9. Be truthful and honest at all times.
10. Take responsibility for your actions.

We feel that these "recommendations," or "suggestions," may also be subject to criticism, but that they make for a more sensible foundation for character education than do the Ten Commandments. Besides looking at such "commandments" or "suggestions," another way to study the different worldviews is to briefly look at what the indigenous perspective does NOT do:

- It does not see genuine democracy as being more about protecting the rights of property owners than it is about equal rights for all members of the democratic community.
- Its focus is not predominantly on competition and "winning."
- It is not more concerned with the accumulation of individual material gain or authoritarian power than it is with the common good of all or with life's intricate interconnections.
- It does not assume that young people, especially children, are inherently bad or relatively incompetent, nor does it create an unhealthy hierarchy of parents over children or of humans over the animals and the earth.
- It does not give absolute authority to individuals.
- It does not emphasize external rewards and punishments as the motivation for one to do good.
- It is not about humans only. The indigenous view gives equal respect to animals, insects, birds, rocks, trees, water, and spirit.
- It does not lead to a culture based on fear and its negative consequences.
- It does not lead to widespread personal and ecological disease or poor health.
- It does not adore celebrity status.
- It honors the mystery of spiritual matters.

Alfie Kohn concludes his critical evaluation of character education by saying that there is a "need to reevaluate the practices and premises of contemporary character education. To realize a humane and progressive vision for children's development, we may need to look elsewhere." (Kohn, p. 14). Indeed, it is unlikely that the current "character education" movement will significantly contribute to developing more virtuous people until we challenge and replace some basic assumptions that are driving it. I suggest that the "elsewhere" to which Kohn refers is in the traditional understanding of the First Americans, who are our neighbors throughout this land. Their view provides an alternative and more successful model for teaching virtues, one that has

existed for thousands of years, as it has in the world's other indigenous cultures as well.

With such a worldview we will not only provide a more successful foundation for character education, but also renew hope for American Indians. Although dormant amidst westernized reservation schools, the roots of this ancient worldview remain alive within the hearts and minds of our first nation's people. If we travel The Red Road together, respecting the diversity of each other's cultural and religious foundations, "character education" can make a significant difference in the lives of children and adults from all walks of life for generations to come.

Notes

[1]Slattery, *Patrick Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, New York: Garland, 1995, p. 79.

[2]Brendtro, Larry K; Martin Brokenleg; and Steve Van Bockern, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*. Bloomington, Ind.: National Educational Service, 1994, p. 33.

[3]Kohn, Alfie, "How Not To Teach Values: A Critical Look at Character Education," in *Phi Delta Kappan*, February, 1997. (http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/hnttv.htm).

[4]Many agree that there is a worldview common to indigenous people the world over. For more about this and for a more in-depth analysis as to whether or not the primal worldview offers a legitimate model for more harmonious paths toward learning, see my book *Primal Awareness: A True Story of Survival, Awakening and Transformation with the Raramuri Shamans of Mexico*, Rochester,VT: Inner Traditions International, 1998.

[5]Quinn, Daniel, *Ishmael*, New York: Bantam, 1992, p. 252.

[6]Brendtro, Larry K.; Martin Brokenleg; and Steve Van Bockern. *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*. Bloomington, Ind.: National Education Service, 1990, p. 34.

[7]Jacobs, Don Trent. *Primal Awareness*. See also R. Brian Fergusow, "Violence and War in Prehistory," in Debra L. Martin and David W. Frayer, eds., *Troubled Times: Violence and Warfare in the Past*, New York: Gordon and Breach, 1997.

[8]Jacobs, Don Trent and Jessica Jacobs-Spencer. *Teaching Virtues: Building Character Across the Curriculum*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2001.

[9]Swisher, K. "American Indian Learning Styles Survey: An Assessment of Teacher's Knowledge," in *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, Spring, 1994, p. 9.

[10]Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

[11]See Eric Jensen's, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1998, pp. 59-70.

[12]Haught, James, *2000 Years of Disbelief*. New York: Prometheus, 1997.

[13]Cardiff, Ira D. *What Great Men Think of Religion*. New York: Arno Press, 1972, p. 87.

[14]From a speech at the inaugeration of Vartan Gregorian as president of Brown University in 1989. See Haught.

[15]From a letter by Jefferson to a Dr. Woods published in Noyes, Rufus, K. *Views of Religion*. Boston: L.K. Washburn, 1906.

[16]Haught, James, *2000 Years of Disbelief*. New York: Prometheus, 1997. (Haught notes that the original source is from an article by Russell entitled, "Why I am Not A Christian," published in 1927.)

[17]Jacobs, Don Trent and Jessica Jacobs-Spencer, *Teaching Virtues*.

Supplement to "The Red Road"
by Don Trent Jacobs
A Resource List Compiled by Robin Martin

The issues and topics raised by Don Trent Jacobs brought forth many perplexing questions as I read. Who is this man that so captures my attention with his engaging writing? How can I begin to learn more about indigenous worldviews? Are there any character education programs worth knowing about? What other actions might I take to explore these topics further?

Jacobs and His Other Writings

Don Trent Jacobs holds doctorates in health psychology and education. He is the author of ten books and numerous articles on such diverse topics as wellness, management, persuasion, hypnosis, education, sports psychology, and indigenous psychology. He is of Scotch-Irish, French, Cherokee/Muskogee heritage, but he lives, works, and sundances with the Lakota on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where he heads the teacher preparation programs at Oglala Lakota College. His spiritual name is Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows).

Jacobs most recent book is *Teaching Virtues: Building Character Across the Curriculum*, co-authored with his daughter Jessica Jacobs-Spencer. Other well-known books by Jacobs that can be used in teaching are: *Primal Awareness: A True Story of Survival, Transformation, and Awakening with the Raramuri Shamans of Mexico* (published by Inner Traditions, phone 605-455-1408) and *THE BUM's RUSH: The Selling of Environmental Backlash* (Legendary Publishing, phone 605-455-1408).

For more information about these and other books, visit the delightful and informative web site www.TeachingVirtues.net, or call Scarecrow Education at 1-800-462-6420.

Exploring Indigenous Worldviews Online

Fire on the Prairie — website highlights ongoing struggles for human, civil, and treaty rights in Lakota country. Fire on the Prairie is located in Porcupine, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, in southwestern South Dakota, USA. http://www.fireonprairie.org/

NativeCulture.com — a comprehensive portal site for Native American resources on the Internet. Includes hundreds of Web links with expanded sections to Tribes and Nations; Arts and Expression (An Internet guide for exploring the richness of Native American artistic expression); Learning Teaching and Information Sharing. In addition, this site includes feature articles, with several by Don Trent Jacobs. http://www.nativeculture.com/home/

Also, for variations of the Ten Indian Commandments referenced by Jacobs, you can find a similar set of commandments attributed to Chief White Cloud, at: www.councilfire.com/historical/indten.htm (and you can even buy a poster of them at www.allwall.com).

Character Education

Despite the warnings of Jacobs, Kohn, and others about the behavioral-based approaches of many character education programs, there are a few web sites and programs that may be worth your time to investigate further.

Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character (CAEC, Boston University) : http://www.bu.edu/education/caec/

Character Education Partnership (CEP): http://www.character.org/

The Values Institute, connected with the University of San Diego's International Center for Character Education: http://ethics.acusd.edu/values/

Character Education Reading List: compiled on the New Horizons for Learning web site, lists many of the best books printed on this subject in the 20th century. http://www.newhorizons.org/restr_charread.html

Ideas for Taking Action

Here are a few ideas for further explorations to build your own meanings and understandings on indigenous approaches to teaching and learning.

Learn to integrate awareness and application of virtues into all subjects on a daily basis. Attend a workshop or presentation by Don Trent Jacobs. For more info, visit his web site, www.teachingvirtues.net/workshops.html

Explore the Reclaiming Youth Network, and the "Circle of Courage" philosophy, as described in the book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, by Augustana professors Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern. Reclaiming Youth web site: www.reclaiming.com

Begin your own local dialogue about the questions raised in "The Indigenous Worldview as a Prerequisite for Effective Character Education." For suggestions on how to get a study group started, please visit the NCACS Learning Circles web pages: www.PathsofLearning.net/circles-home.cfm

Bring *Ishmael* into your classroom. Classroom lesson plans and guides for exploring the deep questions about an alternative view of history and humanity's role in the universe as raised by Daniel Quinn's award-winning novel *Ishmael* can be found on Quinn's web site at: www.Ishmael.org/Origins/Ishmael/Companion/

If you would like more action ideas to supplement these reflections, 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 as finding many more. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about "The Red Road," just call 1-800-639-4122.

Education After the Holocaust

What Do We Teach Our Children Now?

In the editorial that I wrote for the Autumn 1999 issue of *Paths*, I remarked that "those of us who engage in alternative educational practices need to model the kind of altruistic behavior that we wish to see enacted by others." Further, I suggested, if we model such behavior, "we will put our ideals into practice by consciously and courageously working hard to create a better world, [one] that stands in marked contrast to the world of the Holocaust.…"

For many of us, this concern that we work hard to create a better world underlies our passionate commitment to helping students become or remain decent human beings. We know that we live in a world in which the designers of the "Auschwitz-style ovens" boldly placed the company's name on the oven doors. We know that we live in a world in which governments and corporations continue to profit from human suffering. Indeed, we know that we live in a world in which it remains sadly fair for us to ask the question, "So, what have we learned from the Holocaust about our need and ability to practice kindness and compassion?" As one Holocaust survivor remarked to me many years ago, although the survivors tried very hard to adjust to the world following their liberation, they painfully and quickly realized that "the world that had built Auschwitz was the same world to which [they] had returned." When we are aware, we know that he is right.

Our commitment, then, is quite simple, even quite cliché: In the face of such knowledge, we are obligated to change the world. We inherited this commitment, and now we must help both ourselves and the children successfully carry out the task.

In this regard, the question that titles this cluster of interviews is both specific and general. Specifically, in the interviews that follow, we seek to understand more deeply the lessons of the Holocaust for parents, educators, and others whose work involves their helping themselves and students be or become caring citizens of the world. More generally, these lessons serve as points of departure in our attempts to understand other pressing global concerns; in our attempts to prevent other tragedies, large and small; in our attempts to learn the ways of kindness and compassion in our everyday lives; in short, in our attempts to see precisely how far we have come and how far we have yet to go in learning to live together in peace with each other.

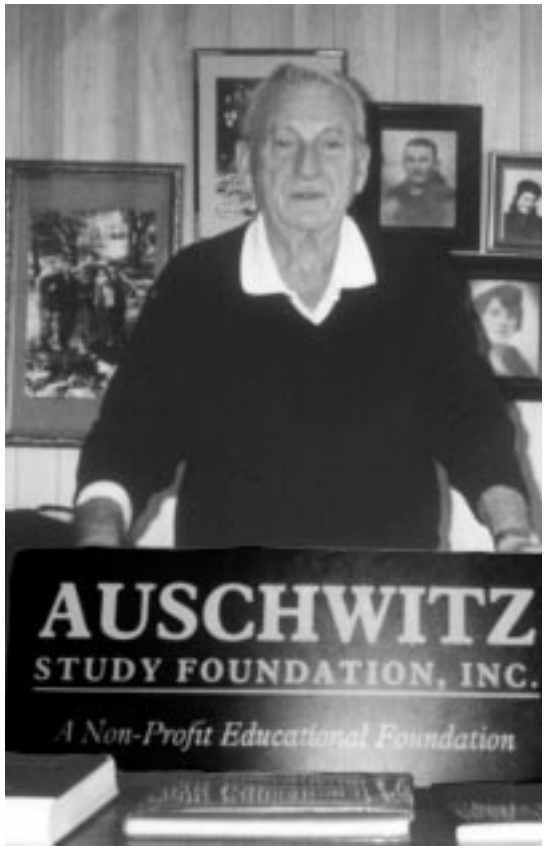
We need to build bridges between and among each other, to make connections, to see in each other our common humanity. We need to help each other find and nurture the kindness and compassion that reside in us all. How do we teach love and compassion in a post-Holocaust world, in which there remains so much hatred and unkindness, but in which, too, peace hath her renown no less than war, as John Milton would say? In the spirit of wrestling with this question and with similar ones, in the spirit of honoring and helping the children, we present the following three interviews. Each of the persons we interviewed — two Holocaust survivors and one Holocaust rescuer — has dedicated her or his life to helping others learn the often difficult lessons of what can happen when we humans water our seeds of hatred and violence, as well as the equally difficult, but always more joyous and hopeful lesson of what can happen when we water our seeds of love and kindness and thus become more fully human. We travel this journey, then, not in despair, but in hope and love.

—Richard Prystowsky

Teaching Life, Practicing Respect

An Interview with Mel Mermelstein

*Mel Mermelstein grew up in the "remote mountain region of Eastern Czechoslovakia best known as the Carpatho-Ukraine" (*By Bread Alone *p. 2). This region, located in the Carpathian Mountains, encompassed areas variously in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. As late as 1944, it was home to many Jews living in the last remaining large European Jewish community not yet deported to concentration or death camps. That situation changed drastically in the spring of 1944, though, when somewhere around three quarters of a million Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz, where approximately half a million were exterminated in fewer than three months. Mel was among these deported victims.*



Mel Mermelstein

The "feeling of being protected, secure in [their] isolation," proved indeed to be "an illusion" for these Jews (ibid.). Deported to Auschwitz with his parents, brother, two sisters, other relatives, and other members of the Jewish community, Mel endured unspeakable hardship prior to, during, and after the deportation, and continues, to this day, to endure many aftereffects of his Holocaust experiences, including severe pangs of guilt for being the sole survivor of his immediate family.

For decades, Mel has spoken to many groups about his Holocaust experiences, touching persons' hearts with his humanity as he tries to teach his listeners not only the extent to which humans are capable of inflicting devastating harm upon each other, but also the ways in which humans are capable of enacting the antidotes to such inhumane behavior: by acting towards each other with respect, love, compassion, kindness (once, in response to a question concerning why he does not hate, without hesitating Mel responded, "Because hate kills, and I want to live"). He has spoken to thousands of students of all ages, many of whom have visited and been profoundly moved by the private Holocaust exhibit that he constructed as part of the Auschwitz Study Foundation, a non-profit educational organization that he founded. The author of By Bread Alone, *his memoirs of his Holocaust experiences as well as a documentation of his legal struggles with and landmark victories over so-called "Holocaust denial" groups — his first legal victory, in the case Mel Mermelstein v. Institute for Historical Review, et al., was depicted in a Turner Broadcast television movie-of-the-week entitled* Never Forget, *starring Leonard Nimoy playing the role of Mel — Mel remains an inspirational force in the fight against hatred.*

In March 2001, Mel kindly granted me the honor of doing the following interview with him.

— Richard Prystowsky

Lessons from Home

Richard: What did you learn about human relations from your family that might have influenced your experiences during the Holocaust?

Mel: What influenced me was our togetherness, the family unity, and the emphasis on extended family. We benefited from that, and I learned a great deal not only from my brother, my two sisters, my father and my mother, but also from my aunts and uncles, my cousins, and my grandfather. All I had left was one dear grandfather and I learned a great deal from him.

R: What did you learn?

M: Unbelievable. To this day, I look back and I say, "What a human being!" He was a cobbler, a shoe repair guy, and he had a shop that was no bigger than five foot by five foot. I had room in there, and he had room to sit and patch all those shoes. When others had no money, he would patch their shoes for free. When he noticed anyone walking, in snow or sleet with cracked shoes, when the leather was tearing away from their toes or the bottom of their feet, he would go out of his way to fix that.

R: So what impression did that make on you? What did you learn from that?

M: I learned that you don't need to have riches, immense wealth, to be happy. I was always happy, knowing that I was cared for. I was loved. Also, that it is as important for a person to help others as to help oneself. Selfishness was not around. I did not know anything about that. The only selfish moment we may have had, as kids when we grew up had to do with once when we had a coin that was worth something like a half a dollar or a dollar. My brother would sometimes like to have it. He didn't have to take it from me; all he had to do was ask for it, and then I would give it to him.

R: How can we teach compassion and kindness in a world that has seen violence such as that in the Holocaust? How do you try to teach these lessons when you speak or write?

M: I believe very firmly that it is difficult to teach that. You almost have to have grown up with that. A child who has been abused, mistreated, in his neighborhood or at home, will have a very difficult time being a kind or even useful citizen. It works that way. I don't want to minimize that aspect. It has to come from the home, from the neighborhood, from your friends and relatives.

R: You do lots of speaking, to lots and lots of students. How do you try to help them understand the need for humans to get along?

M: First and foremost, we have to respect one another, each other's religious beliefs, for example. As long as the religious beliefs of others are not detrimental to others, we should respect them. You can't just say, "I am going to kill you in the name of God!"

I don't believe in collective guilt. You hear, even today, some who have been wrongly taught that the Jews are responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. To this day, something of that nature is wrong and that has to be reversed. The Pope tried to do it, is trying to do it now. And we definitely have not done a good job in the Middle East. These are the things that I bring up as good examples for youngsters of today to look into. I ask people to read about the historical past. When you see that something wrong came out of a teaching — none of this takes place over night — ask yourself, how did it all begin? That is the key.

R: How do you help students understand these things in terms of their own lives right now? How can they apply the lessons you are trying to teach them to their own lives?

M: If they are genuine in wanting to know, that can be brought about little by little. For example, I just came from a one-day lecture at a local middle school, with eighth and ninth graders. I had one session of about six to seven hundred kids, half in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. I can tell you that you could have dropped a pin onto the floor and hear the sound of it. That is how anxious they were, and they were quiet and listening as a result.

For them, I was a person who had lived through that barbaric event, and they did not know about that. Now, they were getting the information from the "horse's mouth." I know how to communicate, and not with hate. I try to guide them that [hate doesn't work].

In our case, six million Jews were done away with. I go into the details a little bit about what I mean by that, "done away," and they want to hear more. They want to know more from me. They want to see my tattoo number. I know one thing: It is not going to happen for that youngster overnight. Little by little, slowly, gradually. I have planted a seed and I let it grow. It may work that way, yes, but that seed by itself can die if it is not nurtured.

R: I want to pursue this point about your teaching against hating. Because I know in your talks and in your writing, you very clearly teach against hating. Given your experiences, it would be understandable that you would, that you could hate, and yet you don't and you try to teach your students not to hate. Why is that, and why do you stress that lesson so much?

M: Because it is destructive. Hate is destructive. You've got to let go of it. There's no other way; I can't see it any other way. Because to carry out all this revenge, "We've got to get even with them" and all this.… I say let's make every effort to humanize those people who do not want to be human. Let's not just go and kill them. There's no need for that.

For example, I express my great respect for the present German government. Why? Because [in Germany] anyone who goes out in the middle of the street shouting

that the Holocaust never happened ends up in jail. But they don't kill him. Which is good. If he ends up in jail, that's a sign to me that they want to do good. They want to humanize this character. They bring him before a court of law, and ask him how he pleads. And he will say "not guilty." "Well, just a minute, we'll try you, let's see how not-guilty you are." And he is found guilty — *for disturbing the peace*. That's what it's all about in Germany. But it's not like that here in this country.

R: How does the German government's trying and jailing this person constitute an act of humanizing him?

M: How? He gets the message. First and foremost, once he is in the hands of the authorities who will not kill him, he turns in his own mind, in a way saying, "Well, you know, maybe I'd better rethink all that." I'm sure there are reasons that can be identified why someone carries on like that. You follow?

R: Right.

M: Yesterday, with the students, two times in a row they asked me, "Who are those who keep shouting and going around, on the internet and all over, saying that the Holocaust never happened?" Who are they? They're thugs; they're bullies. And by the way, I noted to the kids, "You do know bullies. You are familiar with bullies, aren't you?" And they all responded — you could hear them — you know, sort of an expression of, "Oh yeah!" And I said, "Bullies do not belong in schools." I said that yesterday, twice. And then to top it off, which is very important for them to understand, that even though [bullies] don't belong in schools, that there's no need to kill them. They're astray, probably.

R: When you work with students, is there a main lesson about the Holocaust that you want them to learn?

M: First and foremost, that the Holocaust, The Shoah, is about the systematic destruction of over six million European Jews by the Nazis before and during World War II, and that it has practically nothing to do with acts of war.

R: Why is it important for them to understand that this did not have to do with acts of war?

M: Because wars are acceptable.

Students Searching for Answers about the Dehumanization Process

R: What kinds of questions do students ask you about your experiences, and how do you answer?

M: It all depends on the age of the children. I had a number of children yesterday ask, "Did you ever see Hitler?" And I was in a class and I said, "Can I answer this with a question? I would like to ask you what motivates you to ask that question." And the child was stunned. He didn't have an answer. He didn't clarify it for me. He just said, "I don't know."

I don't know why they ask those kinds of questions, to this day. They always want to see my tattoo and ask if it hurt and I assure them that it did. I make sure to tell them, "It is not the same kind of tattoo that some of you boys and girls may have now" — they giggle a little here and there — "because this one was meant to cause the dehumanization of a human being. I was no longer a human being; I was part of a herd of cattle," I told them. "We were no longer referred to by name, but by number. We were so dehumanized that we even almost forgot our own name. We didn't even pay that much attention to it, because that is the way the dehumanization process works."

When you are brought to live, and not to think, but to exist as an animal, this is what happens to you.

R: After you have helped the students understand what the dehumanization process was like and what its effect was on you and others, how do you go about helping them understand how they themselves can avoid dehumanizing others?

M: Oh, yes, well, the bully aspect, of course. This is where kindness comes in, the teaching and the learning from the home how to care for another person. If you see someone in some sort of danger, you must not leave them there to die, to suffer. I know it is against the law, sometimes, to get involved, and that you might be accused of perpetrating something.… If you want my honest opinion, I think it has a great deal to do with the surroundings, where you live and how you are brought up.

Lessons for Teachers, Parents, and Others

R: Many of us in education are trying to make a difference in terms of teaching lessons of compassion and kindness, and so on. What do you recommend to those of us who teach to help our students learn and practice these lessons?

M: Get together. Sing together. Have joyous moments together. Enjoy a wedding; enjoy the birth of a human being, a son, a daughter, or a grandchild. All of that is crucial. That is what I used to know back home. My cousin's turning 13 was a big thing [editor's note: a Jewish boy is bar mitzvahed when he turns 13; this right of passage initiates the boy into the adult world of the Jewish community]. And you didn't have to receive a written invitation to come to a wedding. It was wide open; the whole community was welcome. They were there anyway, whether they were invited or not.

R: You are making a very interesting point. You are suggesting that we teach compassion and kindness through experiencing joy and by experiencing joy together.

M: Exactly. Yes. And respect at the same time. You can't abuse another person — a friend, or a parent or a son or a daughter. The very first thing that the children must know is, of course, that they love their parents, but that they never lose respect for them. That's the thing. Once you [lose respect for your parents], it is gone. [Maybe] there is something wrong with you, or something wrong with the parents, I don't know.

R: What you are saying here is reminding me that there is a lot of emphasis now on "teaching tolerance." What is your view of that?

M: I am not an advocate of that. What is it to tolerate? Why should I have only to tolerate a person? If he needs help, he should get help from others in the community. If he is poor, doesn't have enough food to go around at home, the community should know about that. I am not just going to tolerate another person because he is poor. It doesn't work like that. My heart is broken when I see someone who is homeless. My heart breaks.

R: In your comments about tolerance, it sounds to me as if what you are saying is that you don't want to be just tolerated; you want to be respected.

M: Exactly. That is correct. Yes. Why should a Jew have to tolerate a non-Jew? Or a non-Jew tolerate a Jew? What is that all about? Why not respect them? That's it. That's it! Respect instead of tolerance.

R: Can we teach compassion and kindness in an environment in which the students don't have the freedom to choose what they want to study?

M: You're thinking in a way of retribution, in other words immediately you say, "you're not going anywhere, because you haven't done your homework," okay? That makes sense. But if you're going to a "look, you haven't done your homework; therefore, I'm going to get even with you now," that doesn't work. It just does not work that way. No. It's in reverse. [The child] is duty-bound to educate himself, but if he is not pursuing it, if he does not want to, and if he goes off the track, then punishment is not going to get him back on track.

R: What will?

M: Understanding. Compassion. And I mean a lot of compassion. You need more compassion than the ordinary time. More and more. If you want to give up on a human being, you just don't give them any compassion at that stage and it's all over. And he's going to go from bad to worse. That's for sure.

R: That's interesting. As you know, better than most people, many of the Nazis who orchestrated so much of the destruction were very highly educated. Clearly, it wasn't their education itself that taught them how to behave. In other words, they had the education; what they lacked was compassion. So, I would ask you, when we teach students the importance of their educating themselves, how can we also teach them the importance of being compassionate human beings? How do you teach both of these lessons?

M: Well, you don't really teach them. I go back to the mid-seventies, when I was invited to a teachers conference and all these teachers, hundreds of them, wanted to know, "How do we teach the subject, the Holocaust? How?" I'm a teacher, but I can't teach the subject. As a matter of fact, the subject cannot be taught.

R: So how do you teach compassion? You're saying you can't?

M: Not like ABC or arithmetic, no, you don't. Compassion has to come from the inner being, you know, the kindness and goodness. You cannot inject kindness. Your mother and father can do that for you. Your brothers and sisters can have a hand in that as well. Your grandparents can have a hand in that. Your cousins and your friends can have a hand in that. I learned this from back home. These are compassionate people, and so I return compassion to them. It works that way. See, I don't know if I could do that sort of thing to anyone, it just doesn't work that way. I'm not going to be mean, vicious or whatever, but compassion finds compassion. Yes it does. Yes. First it recognizes it when it's genuine and it's there, and you know that you're going to get in return nothing other than compassion.

R: Yes, that's a good example.

I have just two more questions. First, after all that you've been through, why do you continue to work so hard at reaching as many students as you can?

M: Because it works both ways for me. Number one, I see that I make an impact on them. They learn from it a great deal. And second of all, I have never been mocked, I have never been abused, I have never been ridiculed in any smallest way for doing what I'm doing. And another thing is that I don't make a living off of it, either, you know. At the same time I don't have to give away all I have, so to speak, to be able to keep on going and feel safe and secure. But I do have enough to be able to share and give.

R: Okay, one final question, and pretty open ended. Do you have any final thoughts that you want to leave with our readers?

M: Yes, just that they should do two things. One is to learn, another is to lead and to keep leading but at the same time don't get lost, don't get so immersed that its going to total you out. You have to go little by little and learn step by step how and what man can do to his fellow man. And that's what it's all about. No more and no less. And I do that because that helps me as well. How should I say this — it helps me keep on going in fact. I don't want to lose faith in mankind altogether. Like we could have done a long time ago, and that's the easiest thing to do. And so I chose life. I chose a livable and pleasant life to see if I could project that to the youngsters in particular, yes, to young kids at school and to students at college. They can learn a great deal.

Ordinary Humanness, Living Compassion

An Interview with Irene Gut Opdyke

In late March 2001, Paths *Editorial Assistant Charlie Miles, Paths Youth Editor Jacob Miles-Prystowsky, and I had the honor of spending a morning with Irene Gut Opdyke, a Holocaust rescuer who saved the lives of thirteen Jews—twelve adults and one baby, the latter born to his parents in hiding (Irene still refers to him as "my baby"). After we had left her apartment, we all remarked that we felt touched, moved, enlightened. Indeed, people who meet Irene tend to be drawn to her. A non-assuming, humble woman, she exudes love, kindness, and compassion. In her very being, she exemplifies the lesson so often learned about those rescuers who acted from their hearts, that they enacted the compassion writ large in their souls.*

Irene Gut Opdyke

Irene was a young nursing student in Poland when the war began (sadly, she never finished her nursing training). She was alone, separated from her family. She found herself first at the mercy of abusive Russian soldiers and then at the mercy of a German major, in whose villa she hid her Jewish charges and to whom she was forced to give herself in order to keep the victims alive once the major had discovered that Irene had been hiding them. Her gripping story is captured in her books Into the Flames *and, more recently,* In My Hands *(which has been translated into a number of languages), as well as in numerous written accounts of rescuers (for example,* The Courage to Care, *edited by Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, and* Rescuers, *edited by Gay Block and Malka Drucker). Much in demand, she speaks around the world to students of all ages and to many other audiences, young and old. Many who meet or hear her feel inspired that, even amidst the darkness, there can be light—indeed, that we, too, can be the light.*

Of the millions of citizens in World-War-II Europe, only a small percentage were rescuers. At Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Memorial, a number of these rescuers have been officially recognized and honored. Irene is among this very special group of otherwise ordinary persons who, at great risk to their own (and sometimes to their families') lives, and for no personal gain or reward, saved or tried to save the lives of Holocaust victims. Awarded the Medal of Honor for her rescuing efforts, Irene is honored in Israel and elsewhere as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. In 1982, having been officially recognized for her acts of heroism, she planted an olive tree on the Path of the Righteous at Yad Vashem.

As we entered Irene's apartment, Irene hugged Jacob, saying that this hug was an extension of the hugs that she had given to the students in Toronto, where just the other day she had had a speaking engagement. As we began chatting, we realized that, with Irene, the teaching is always ongoing, and that we had thus better turn the tape recorder on right away. In my first comment, below, I am explaining to Irene that the purpose of this interview is for us to hear her views on post-Holocaust education.

—Richard Prystowsky

Values Learned at Home

Richard: The questions that I'll be asking you are all about what we teach after the Holocaust.

Irene: Yes, because it is so important that the parents really teach their children, and listen to them. I tell them, "Love your kids. Listen to your kids. It is up to you to help them understand that they are important, that they are the future leaders of nations."

R: I want to take you back and ask you, just generally, if you could talk about what you learned about human relations in your family that influenced your experiences during the Holocaust.

I: Well, my parents taught us the Ten Commandments and humanity to others. My mother used to say, "You are born not for yourself only. You are born to live with other people, and your help is needed." That was my mother's motto. She taught us to do everything — cook and clean — and she was the disciplinarian, but we got so much love. Together, as a family we would sing. My father played guitar and piano, and all five of us sang. My mother said, "You can marry a millionaire, but you have to learn to do what women have to do, clean, cook, and all of that."

Charlie: And you are from Poland?

Irene: Yes. I am from Poland.

R: More specifically, do you feel that what you learned in your family, growing up, influenced your becoming a rescuer?

I: By all means, yes. My mother took in Gypsies from the forest, and Gypsies had a very bad name. One was very sick, with pneumonia, and my mother took her to our home and called the doctor. The woman had no money. Also, as a family, we always made packages and brought them to people who needed help. On holidays like Christmas, or others, there were always one or two chairs, empty, by the table for someone poor to come and spend the time with us. That is how my parents raised us. I did not know about anti-Semitism; I did not even know the word. We had many, many friends, Jewish and others.

There is no question that how parents teach their children—if the children see beating, swearing, screaming—naturally they will not learn the finer feeling of love or compassion for others. There is no question. For what I did, I am grateful for my parents that they raised us like human beings.

Is that [answer] okay?

R: It is more than okay. Hearing you speak is always so moving. It is such an honor, a gift.

I: Well, I am telling the truth; it is simple. It is very important that you believe in God, or something higher. I was born to Catholicism, but we were taught that God is one for everybody, and no matter how you pray, or what language you pray in, there is only One.

R: When I have talked with you before, one thing that has struck me is that you do not have any complicated or fancy theories for doing what you did. You seem to feel that it was the right thing and the only thing to do. Is that right?

I: That is correct. What is courage? Courage is a whisper from above. And when you listen only with your head, the head will tell you, "Oh, no! no! no! There is danger!" You have to involve your heart. There must be coordination. With your heart, you can see people, you see the need that arises, and you cannot help but reach out.

It helped also that I was alone, without my family and without my sisters.

C: How is that?

I: Because I was at school, at home. But I don't know, to this day, if I am honest, if I would be able to do what I did if I knew that my sister were to be killed because of my actions. I was the oldest child, and I was responsible for them. But being by myself, far away from my family, and remembering what I was taught by my parents, I was willing to put my life.… When I saw the children to be killed, I was all shaken up. For a moment, for a time, I said, "God, I don't believe in you. You have been a figment of my imagination." I fell asleep, crying, and there was an answer, in my soul. I did not study the Bible, so I could not have an answer from there, but it said, "I give you free will to choose what road you take. Will you take the evil one?" I mean, it came so vivid to me. I didn't hear a voice, but in my soul, at that moment, I asked God for forgiveness, and I asked for help: "I am very young. I am alone. I do not know what to do. I am not that smart, but please help me to help, even if my life depends on it." I gave God my life. "Help me," I said. So I believed that He put me in the right place at the right time. And He was always overlooking.

That is simple. And today, I am an old woman, but when I am giving talks, the kids come from all sides — boys and girls — and all I want to do is to touch them and hug them and tell them, "You are important. Learn. Study. You are the future leaders of nations." See, I have been filled with so much love that children, people, feel that, and they are attracted to it.

R: You know what? When I interviewed you about five or six years ago for the [Orange County, CA, Anti-Defamation League's Holocaust] Oral History Project, you said you didn't know if you would have tried to help if you were not alone. And then a couple of years later, when I was driving you home, I asked you, "Do you really think you might not have done it if you were with your family?" You thought about it and you said, "No, I probably would have, anyway."

I: Probably, but you see, when you are the older daughter and have four younger sisters, you are responsible for them. I witnessed the killing of little children; Christian people as well as Jewish people were killed. So, many times that comes to my mind and I try to answer that

question myself. Many people say, "I don't know if I would do it." You don't know until the time comes, until the necessity is there. People were scared, and truly, I was scared too. But I believed, because I asked God. "If you want to take my life, I am ready. But help, because I don't know what to do." So, it was simple, like A, B, C.

Post-Holocaust Lessons

R: Did the experiences you had in rescuing people during the Holocaust affect your thoughts, attitudes, and behavior after the Holocaust and what you did for the rest of your life?

I: Well, naturally I am very thankful that I was chosen, that God helped me. For thirty years I have traveled and spoken and gone from one place to another, teaching others. Now I am an old woman, and I am not well. I have an illness for which there is no cure. Eighteen years ago I was infected with Hepatitis C from a blood transfusion during a surgery, but it has just come to the surface during the past two years. Nevertheless, I am so happy. I will not sit and cry and say, "Oh, I have to rest." No, to the last minute, I will travel. I will go. It isn't always easy, but it is my responsibility to speak. So many times I was able to tell the survivors [of the Holocaust], when I speak for Yom Ha' Shoah — Holocaust remembrance services — I know the survivors will be there, I say, "My sisters, my brothers, speak! I know it is hard, but we have to speak, we have to tell the kids, the world and the children, because if they do not know it can repeat itself."

R: What do you try to teach the students you speak to? What is the lesson you want them to learn?

I: What I tell them is that hate does not accomplish anything, and that it will ruin their life, their family, and the country. I say, "You study and learn." To Jewish children I say, "You know, you are so important. Israel has to exist; there is no other way. Learn, study, because you have to help." I tell them, "You are the future leaders. When as an adult you assume roles in different places, remember to reach out to each other. Don't hate. Love can build the biggest mountain. It can create anything. Hate does not accomplish anything." It is so simple.

I don't have the education to philosophically define the words. I speak from my heart, and I speak with love, because I want them to know that they have to prepare the future for themselves and for future generations. They are now responsible for what the future of their children will be.

R: It sounds as if one of the important lessons you are hoping that all of us learn is that we are responsible, not just for ourselves, but for others, too.

I: That is correct. We are responsible for others. That is what I tell the children. And they come from all sides, even the big macho boys and the teachers, and by the time I hug all of them, I am very tired. When I speak, I give everything I have, and then I am drained. In Canada, recently, I spoke three times. I was tired.

R: In a world such as ours, which is so violent, and the world that you saw first-hand—the Holocaust world, which was so violent—how do we teach compassion and kindness? What can you tell us to help us?

I: Well, it is up to the parents to watch how they speak to their children. They must not abuse their children by saying things like, "You dummy!" Parents need to love them, explain things to their children with love. It is so much better to teach them to respect others, their teachers, or this or that person. Parents should also tell them that they have much to learn because one day they will be taking over. Parents have to give their children primarily lots of love.

R: That sounds really great for a family, and it sounds great for many other contexts, too, but what I am wondering is how teachers, educators, can teach their students that which you are talking about here. They aren't parents; they have a different role.

I: Well, they have to work with the parents, too. They have to teach because they love it. They must become teachers out of love, because they really care about children. There are some teachers for whom teaching is just a job; such teachers may not project much love or respect. But some teachers cannot be anything else. They want to be teachers.

We must find humanity for ourselves, in our hearts. When children are involved in all kinds of bad books and movies.… We in America could really change how we project everything in films. There is so much beating and kicking, and even little kids are exposed to it. Sometimes, they are taught that this is funny, but violence is not a laughing matter. The little ones must be told that this behavior hurts others. Even advertising on television promotes violence. Little children's minds — perhaps I am overly sensitive — but eventually, with all the hitting and punching.… I think we should screen things more and not allow little children to play with guns. Now, the children bring guns to schools and shoot each other. They are taught that there is no God and that they can do whatever they feel like doing. I think that the belief in Something Higher is so important, and it is important to teach this to children. That is how I feel.

R: Imagine, Irene, that a young teacher is reading this interview. She may be thinking, 'Okay. So what can I do in my classroom with my students?" What would you tell her, in terms of all the things you have talked about?

I: She should bring good thoughts and good thinking. She should have the courage to tell children when they have done something wrong, especially when they are fighting or beating each other up. She should let them know when they have hurt someone else. She needs to let them know that we all belong to one family; we are all sisters and brothers. She should be like a mother. I am not a college educated person, so I cannot perhaps express things well. I can only say how I feel.

R: Well, you have an education from the heart. That is

so beautiful about the life that you have led. This point is so important because, as you know, many of the Nazi leaders were well educated.

I: Yes, I know.

R: It is obvious, then, that education, by itself, is not the answer.

I: No. That is true. That is what I mean. With education, A, B, C is one thing; but education in being a human being is also important. One works with the other.

Can We Teach Kindness and Compassion?

R: What kinds of questions do students ask you, perhaps questions that tell you about their own struggles in their own lives? You come to speak to them about what you did as a rescuer. Do students ask you questions that let you know about the struggles they face?

I: Well, many times, they ask if I hate Germans. I say, "No. We don't hate anyone. I hate Hitler for what he did. Millions and millions of people died. This is something that I can't even understand. But, in human beings in every country there are good people and bad people. You have to choose who you want for your friends. On the Avenue of the Righteous in Israel, there is a tree planted for Germans, also." I do not go and talk to kids in order to spread hate, in any form.

R: Many people feel that because schools don't give children a lot of choice about what to study, it might be difficult to teach the lessons of kindness and love and compassion that you are talking about, especially when the children don't have much free choice to do what is meaningful for their lives. How would a teacher in a conventional school setting teach these lessons? Would the teacher say to the kids, "Okay, today you are going to learn kindness. Then, you will have a test on it." Would it go like that, or what?

I: The teacher would need to make a situation that required the students to find their inner kindness. They have to find their kindness by themselves. They may have to decide to leave a person alone or to mind their own business.

R: Traditional schools are set up in such a way that children are often humiliated. They are taught to compete with each other, and they often feel that they are treated unfairly. In your vision, what would an ideal educational school situation be like that would not be like that and that would allow students, teachers, and parents to learn about kindness, compassion, and so on. How would you describe this kind of educational environment?

I: I don't really know. I think that all the parents and teachers should act like a team. They should get together and decide what to do to encourage the goodness in children. What I notice is that many kids today don't have much respect for anything.

R: Do you feel that children are respected in our culture?

I: Well, it depends how they are treated in the home. Respect is necessary, teachers for children and children for teachers. And for parents. I spoke recently in Scotland and in London. First the teachers met with me, and then I spoke to the children. One thing that I liked is that, unlike here, where the kids dress in whatever fashion they want — some with holes in their clothes as part of their fashion, not because they are poor, and others with their belly buttons showing — there everybody wore decent clothing. They looked nice. Perhaps this is part of respect, too. We have to teach children to respect those who are older, and teachers and parents need to respect children. Sometimes, the way they dress is not respectful.

R: Some people think that respect and love and tolerance and kindness and compassion cannot be taught. They say that you can model it and live it, but that you can't teach it.

I: No, I think you can teach it. The person who is respectful can influence the other. Maybe I am old fashioned. In Poland, of course, it was different. The teachers also had to dress the right way and be compassionate if a child did not understand something. They were expected to help, to make a little special effort for that particular child. I know that teachers don't have much time, but if they can give more help where the help is needed, the child will later be able to help others. Perhaps they will do something like tell a little child to be careful because a car is coming, or something like that. Teachers can create situations that let their students understand that as they get older and they know more, they can help others. Teachers can create situations that bring out their humanity, one child to the other. If they are taught this, when they later find themselves in similar situations, they will know what to do.

R: You emphasize teaching against hating, in your writing and in your speaking. Why is that such an important emphasis for you?

I: Because hate mushrooms. Hate creates war, holocausts, and persecution. All of these things start when governments begin to hate each other. I saw what hate created during World War II, and when I speak to the young people, I tell them that hate grows, like an ulcer or some other disease. You cannot think properly when you are hating. When people start hating, they cannot bring any other feeling to their heart or to their brain. It just grows. But if you are able to realize what is happening, there is a way that you can stop. You may have to have some help. A little child thinks they hate because of jealousy — this one has that — or because this one did this. It is hard for little ones to share.

When my daughter was little, she surprised me by her sharing. Another child had trouble with her hips and had to have casts. She could not move. We were going to the beach, but my daughter did not want to go because the other child would be alone and could not go. Although my daughter wanted to go, she felt compassion for the

other child. She could share in that child's experience.

It is important that we teach children to share, especially little ones. We can tell them, for example, if they have a little cat or a dog that we don't pull animals by the tail or by the ears because it hurts the animal. You see, if you are little or big, you can teach in that way. They may not know, in that moment, that they are hurting somebody, but a grownup can explain it. We can teach kids that others are just like them.

Transforming the World

R: How can we—educators, parents, and community members—help to transform the world so that we no longer create concentration camps, so that we get out of our ignorance and fear? In this regard, what would be a lasting lesson that you might want to leave us with?

I: Well, just as I have said, we have to teach that we are the same, that we are not different from one another, and that we need to reach out to each other. We can say, "Can I help you? You have difficulty with this, so perhaps I can help?" This can apply to schooling or to everyday living, to any problem. It often helps to know that someone is there and that they can understand, spiritually and morally. Extend a hand. Look straight in the eyes. Say, "Can I help you?" We all need help, sometimes. You see, one by one, you create a change. This too will mushroom out.

I met a girl, in Toronto. She did not go to Jewish school, but she was Jewish. After I finished speaking, I reached out to her, and she said that her grandparents were Holocaust survivors. But she doesn't like them because they are very opinionated. I said, "You know, Honey, you don't know what they went through. You may not have them very long because we will all go away. As a granddaughter, love them! Let them tell you their story, little by little." She says, "Why do you have so much love in you? You hug and you kiss." I said, "Well, some people are outgoing, like I am." To me, to reach and hug, I feel deeply in my heart, is something that I need. I need to touch others and tell them, "I love you."

But some people don't feel that way, but as a granddaughter, she doesn't understand what they went through. I know because I was there. They may still be remembering. They are old. I told her to hug and kiss them and make them tell her. When we start talking, it doesn't disappear, but the ice melts. People feel lighter and can speak without crying. I asked the teacher about what this child had said, and the teacher said that the grandparents are not outgoing, don't talk with her enough, and criticize a lot. So my answer was the best that I know, to love them. Loving breaks things down. We can say, "It is hard, I know, but tell me the story. We are just human beings." This is what we have to do. When someone needs help, we need to help them, even though it is hard sometimes.

Teachers too. If a child needs special help, help them. Children can ask their parents to help, if they have a problem with a subject that they cannot understand. Perhaps they feel angry about that. Perhaps they feel ashamed for not understanding something. The feelings are inside. In a case like this, the parents and teachers need to work together, but not by threatening something like, "If you don't do this, we will spank you!"

R: It sounds as if you are saying that, when people are having problems, we need to respond to them not with bitterness and punishment, but with love and kindness.

I: That is correct. That is exactly what it is. How do you talk? Don't get mad. Tell what you need.

R: You have done a lot of hard work over the years to try to teach students and others the lessons of kindness, helping, and compassion. Why do you continue to work so hard to reach as many students as possible? What drives you?

I: The time is short for me, and I want to do as much as I can as long as I can.

R: Why?

I: Because this is important for the children, and it is important to me to tell them, and to hug them and love them. I tell them, "I am here because I love you. I am here not for money or glory. I am here for you. And I don't want you to go through what I did when I was your age, a young girl." And they are so moved, even the boys. And I receive all kinds of letters from kids, from the little ones to the big ones, the little ones painted with crayons, making little Irene Opdyke angels! And I love them. This is beautiful, this is a treasure. I have drawers full of letters from kids. Sometimes they write singularly, and sometimes they write all together. I know that they listen, and that they don't just listen, but they also feel. That is what is important.

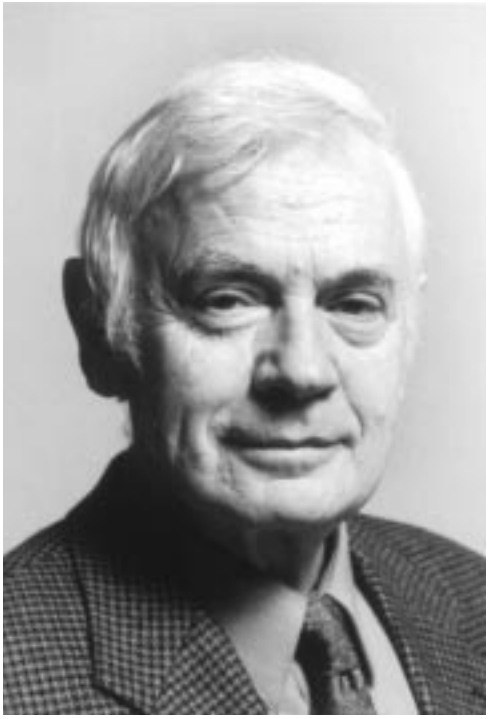
R: Do you have any final thoughts or words that you want to leave our readers with?

I: Well, try to understand each other. Don't criticize too much. If you don't like something, in a way that does not abuse someone else, you can say so. But the most important thing is to reach out to each other. We are one family. There is only one human family, no matter what color, nationality, or religion. There is only one. We have the same heart and feelings, so just reach to each other and try to heal each other. If someone is angry, heal it with your response. That is what I am doing. I am listening, and when I feel that there is a problem, I hug them a little more. I say, "Honey, it will be fine." I am a big grandma, and I would not want to be anything else. I do not do this for money or glory, but for the children. Whatever money I receive, I will not take with me. This, for me, is the most important thing. The book I wrote [*In My Hands*], I wrote for them, for the young people. But it does seem as if grownups love it, too.

The Need to Care and the Obligation to Teach

An Interview with Samuel P. Oliner

"I was born in 1930 of Jewish parents in Zyndranowa, a village near the town of Dukla in southern Poland. I was nine years of age when the Nazis invaded Poland. In 1942 my family was exterminated along with the other inhabitants of the Bobowa and Gorlice ghettos, but I was able to escape. With the help of a Polish family I assumed a Polish identity and found a job as a cowhand on a farm not far from where I was born. Although I lived in constant dread of discovery and suffered many narrow escapes, I was neither beaten nor brutalized. Yet the memories of my boyhood haunt me and I have felt compelled to write them down and share them" (p. 1).



Samuel P. Oliner

Thus begins Restless Memories*:* Recollections of the Holocaust Years*, the personal Holocaust narrative of Samuel P. Oliner, now Professor Emeritus of Sociology at California State University at Humboldt and a leading authority on the study of altruism in Holocaust rescuers. Indeed, the highly influential book The* Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*, which Sam and his wife, Dr. Pearl Oliner, co-authored, is a groundbreaking study now considered a classic in the field. Others of his many writings include the books* Toward a Caring Society*, also co-authored by his wife Pearl, and* Who Shall Live: The Wilhelm Bachner Story*, co-authored by Kathleen Lee. Aside from having an impressive publishing career, Sam is also the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of* Humboldt Journal of Social Relations *and is the Founder and Project Director of the Altruistic Personality and Prosocial Behavior Institute, which is located on the campus of Humboldt State University.*

Keenly interested in human welfare, in human relations, Sam is highly dedicated to the endeavor of seeing caring behavior taught in our schools and enacted in our daily lives. Himself the beneficiary of altruistic behavior, Sam understands experientially and from the heart the life-affirming consequences of such behavior—and, at the same time, the potentially death-dealing consequences of hate, violence, and oppression.

In Sam's undeterred efforts to teach both the history of the Holocaust and the necessity of our practicing caring behavior, we easily see the underlying nobility of his principles and actions. Reading the following interview, we all become students of this most gracious, gifted, and dedicated man.

—Richard Prystowsky

Learning from Experience

Richard: What did you learn from your family about human relationships, which influenced your experiences during the Holocaust?

Sam: What I learned from my family as I was growing up in Poland, right before World War II and during the initial months of the Nazi invasion, was that people can be brutal, violent, antisemitic, and racist. Even at the age of 7, 8, or 9, and throughout the war, I understood that I would have to be cautious and not trust anyone because of the poisoned atmosphere in Poland brought about by the Nazis.

R: How did your Holocaust experiences help to shape your thoughts and attitudes about the need for people to act with love, kindness, and compassion?

S: The Holocaust began when I was nine years old, in 1939, in small increments of degradation and humiliation of the Jewish people. At first, we were segregated by having to wear the Star of David; soon thereafter we were all gathered together into ghettos, in my case the ghetto of Bobowa. We stayed there until 1942, when the entire ghetto was exterminated and buried in a mass grave.

This act of genocide and brutality shaped my thoughts and anger until I was a grown person of approximately 20 years of age. Serving in Korea as an American GI, I saw the misery of the Prisoners of War that the Allies captured. Prisoners of war were captured in great numbers. My interaction with some of the North Korean prisoners who spoke English developed in me a kind of empathy for their plight.

Having enough time on my hands, I wrote notes about my attitudes, feelings, and experiences during the Holocaust years. Little by little, I concluded that hate was destructive to me, and depressing, and decided that what might be the antidotes for a divided, hateful world are acts of kindness and compassion. That is what I have done most of my academic life. Kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are healing experiences. I try to teach this in my classes and in my writings.

Teaching Compassion And Kindness In an Unkind World

R: In your view, how do we teach compassion and kindness in a world that has seen violence such as that in the Holocaust? How do you try to teach these lessons when you speak and write? How do you help your students learn these lessons?

S: The world is still filled with genocide, wars, violence, racism, and poverty. Yet, from my personal experiences as a Holocaust survivor, I teach about compassion and kindness. I think compassion, kindness and social responsibility are teachable, just as bigotry, racism, sexism, and homophobia are teachable.

There is no doubt in my mind that students have a receptivity to "good news" and that students are ready to hear it. An example of this is the class I have introduced at Cal State Humboldt University entitled "The Sociology of Altruism and Compassion." The classes are always over-enrolled, and if we offered two or three sections they would all fill. In a word, students are ready to listen to good news about caring, compassion, and social responsibility. They have had enough of the negativism and the divisiveness that exist in our society.

Specifically, how do you teach it? Through stories, narratives, video tapes, and witnesses who have taken the high road and done the moral thing, specifically people such as rescuers and others who can provide a moral example and serve as moral role models.

R: Is there a main, overriding lesson about the Holocaust that you try to help students learn?

S: The Holocaust is, no doubt, the most documented genocide in human history. There are millions of pages written about it, miles of film footage, and stories written by witnesses such as Holocaust survivors and others. As a result of the availability of information, the Holocaust serves as a model of the most diabolical genocide perpetrated by human beings to destroy other human beings.

The questions arise: How was this possible? Where was justice, mercy, and compassion? The answer is that it occurred incrementally, through the teaching of contempt against Jews. Popes, madmen, bishops, priests, poets, philosophers, politicians—have written antisemitic literature.

In a word, bigotry can be taught by parents, peer groups, and even teachers. Hence the lesson is to try to avoid de-humanizing others, stereotyping them, and denigrating them because doing so can lead to racial violence, beatings, and the humiliation of others. In other words, prosocial behavior can be taught just like bigotry is being taught.

Common Questions, Important Connections

R: Do students who study the Holocaust with you have common questions or concerns? If so, how do you help them understand the relationship between what they are learning about the Holocaust and the pressing needs of their own lives and of the lives of others?

S: Some of the common questions are painful, yet understandable. "How come the Jews walked 'like sheep to the slaughter house' and did not fight back?" It is a distortion of the truth to say that the Jews did not fight back. Jews fought back in ghettos and concentration camps and were represented in various resistance groups in various Nazi occupied countries. And also, Jews were rescuers, about which I have written [see, for example, *Who Shall Live: The Wilhelm Bachner Story*, co-authored by Kathleen Lee].

Finally, the most important response for me is the role of caring, love and affiliation — how can one leave an aged parent or a young child in the ghetto or in the cattle cars taking them to camps in order to kill them and run away or fight to defend oneself? In fact, your first loving duty is to be with them to comfort them, even if that means that you might die with them.

A good example is a man named Janusz Korczak, a Jewish medical doctor in Poland who was famous because of his books about children and child development. He was asked by his non-Jewish colleagues to leave the orphanage in Warsaw, which he was supervising and save himself. He refused to do that because he wanted to remain with his children; in fact, he walked into a gas chamber with the children in order to comfort them to their very last second of their lives. This is true heroism. Thus, the idea of Jewish passivity is of course a myth that needs to be corrected.

R: How do you help your students understand the connections between the Holocaust and other devastating atrocities, including smaller, perhaps more subtle ones? How do you help them see how they can use their knowledge to enact good in the world?

S: By discussing the Holocaust with students I point out that the Holocaust is like all other genocides and at the same time like no other genocide. I treat it like all other genocides because of the mass destruction of human lives; and yet, it is like no other genocide because of its modern approaches, the efficiency in the killing of people. There were sometimes as many as ten thousand people gassed/killed in one day in Auschwitz and in other extermination places. The efficiency, the bureaucracy, the use of euphemisms and cover-ups are very important to see in the Holocaust. Because the world was a bystander, largely, the perpetrators were given the green light to go and kill. This is similar, to some extent, to the recent Rowandan genocide in Africa; the world stood by, and by doing so 800,000 Tutsis brutally perished.

Studying Altruism and Teaching Compassion And Kindness

R: Would you please give us some information about the Altruistic Personality and Prosocial Behavior Institute—what it is, why you founded it, and what it seeks to accomplish, and so on?

S: The Altruistic Personality and Prosocial Behavior Institute was founded in 1983 by Doctor Pearl Oliner and me. Its primary purpose was to study goodness. By goodness we mean such things as caring, compassion, social responsibility, tolerance, empathy—in a word, altruism.

Since its inception, we have studied bonafide rescues of Jews in Nazi occupied Europe, comparing [rescuers] to bystanders. We have also interviewed hospice volunteers to find out what motivates these wonderful individuals to volunteer and be with dying people, comforting them as well as their loved ones. We have also studied moral exemplars, various individuals who exist in a community and who make a substantial contribution to the betterment of that community—military heroes as well as common heroes. In a word, we are trying to find out the common strands that motivate people to do heroic altruism as well as conventional altruism. By heroic altruism we mean those individuals who risk their lives to save another; conventional altruism would be people like hospice volunteers and other moral examplars whose risk to their own lives is not prevalent.

R: What do you think the role of education and educators ought to be in teaching compassion and kindness, and how would you recommend that we go about this kind of teaching?

S: Educators need to substantially change the curriculum in order to include — besides reading, writing, science, and computers, etc. — the teaching of compassion and kindness.

These qualities are transmitted by the way we act towards each other, the kind of help we give to students and the way we treat them, including offering them respect. In the school system, everyone, from the principals to the janitor, should observe respect, kindness, and concern. This is a small price to pay for building a caring atmosphere. We have addressed this issue in a book called *Toward a Caring Society.*

R: In your work, you write, "Altruistic predispositions are learned — cultivated, nurtured, and nourished in primary relationships. The importance of parents cannot be overemphasized, but the task cannot be left to parents alone. If we are to empower people to actively intervene in the presence of destructive social impulses, then many social institutions need to assume this obligation, including schools and churches" (p. 20 of *The Roots of Altruism*, co-authored by Pearl M. Oliner, published by The American Jewish Committee in 1989).

In your view, how can education play a role in empowering people to actively intervene in the presence of destructive social impulses? What would the hallmarks be of an educational organization that was sincere about putting kindness and compassion first on its agenda?

S: Education and educators can play a role in empowering people to actively intervene in the presence of destructive social impulses by information and education, specifically educating students under what conditions destructive social forces arise. What does it take for a hate group to arise? Who are the people who join hate groups? Why do they join them? Why do countries vote for cruel dictators? What are the social, economic, and political conditions that enable demagogues to come to power? Why do people follow demagogues? What is the role of information, education, and a free press? Under what conditions do people in certain groups lose their freedoms? What is the role of poverty and oppressive

class systems? What about morality and moral legislation? What about the role of other institutions in thwarting destructive social processes? A knowledge and understanding of all of these things could help people to prevent and repulse destructive leaders and their ideologies.

R: Can compassion and kindness be taught in a traditional school environment, in which students are given little, if any, control over what they are to study? Since most of the rescuers acted without being coerced and without expecting to be rewarded for their efforts, and since traditional schooling involves a great deal of coercion and employs systems of rewards and punishments, would the project of teaching altruistic behavior be undermined in a traditional school environment? Would this environment need to be changed? In your view, does the traditional school environment contribute to the larger problems that you and your students investigate?

S: Yes, I think that compassion and kindness can be taught in a traditional school environment, but before that is possible, it would be necessary, as I have indicated before, for the principals and other school leaders and administrators to acquire a new vision which would include teaching caring and the consequences of indifference to caring. The environment would need to be changed, but it is not an impossible task. It takes people with vision. There is a receptivity to goodness, kindness, caring, and new ideas which will enhance and empower people to care for each other.

R: What has kept you actively pursuing your work all these years? Are you hopeful about the future?

S: Yes, I am very hopeful about the future. I feel good about myself because I am teaching and talking about what kindness and compassion are and how they can be cultivated. It is not difficult to be kind. As a matter of fact, kindness and compassion cause those who volunteer and give of themselves to live longer and healthier. This has been quite well established. To help, to care, to be available to others is definitely healthy for you as an individual and for the society in general.

R: Do you have any final thoughts to offer our readers?

S: My final thoughts are not original. However, be aware of the fact that understanding, love, and forgiveness are healing in human relations, and that to act in these ways, too, is not an impossible task. All such a change entails is simply attempting to reconstruct and rethink the way we have been operating in our lives and to take a new path. How can the path of loving kindness be helpful to others? Altruism and loving kindness is liberating and healing, and it contributes to the welfare of all.

Creativity for Survival
Reclaiming Ourselves

by Varda One

The possibility must be considered seriously that the number of people on Earth has reached, or will reach within half a century, the maximum number the Earth can support in modes of life that we and our children and their children will choose to want.

—Joel Cohen, in *How Many People Can the Earth Support?*

Many scientists believe that the next fifty years will be a crossroads in history. During this time we will be forced to solve the interrelated problems of overpopulation and overconsumption. As developing countries industrialize, their population growth rate decreases, but their use of natural resources rises because they adopt our no-limits-to-growth policy. All attempts to slow atmospheric pollution by efficiency and simplicity haven't made any significant difference; galloping consumerism has canceled them out.

In view of the immensity of the challenge, fifty years is a short span. Fortunately, members of a new generation are born untainted by our limited thinking culture. If the answers are to come, they will emerge from this generation and/or the few mavericks of present generations who have managed to escape mind-numbing formal education.

Despite our claim of being a nation of individualists, we are really conformists. Our idea of individuality is being in the forefront of a new fad — like blue hair. Most of us have been taught in compulsory attendance, age-graded, standardized curriculum classes in public schools. This system was adopted 150 years ago from a Prussian military model designed to produce docile factory workers. Children were denied solitude to develop selfhood, explore reality first-hand, and discover their own truths. They learned to obey, but not to self-discipline, self-teach, think critically, or make meaning out of experience.

◆

I believe we each have a three-fold purpose — growth, service, and joyfulness. How we carry it out depends on our gifts and our connections to our inner guidance. My own background includes: student at top universities, public and private school teacher, tutor, childcare worker, workshop leader, and homeschooling mother. In my quest to be an A student and fit in, I lost the fun-loving, curious, inventive, imaginative, spontaneous person that taught herself by observing, experimenting, questioning, and trying out adult models.

Luckily, I got a second chance. I escaped the brain-washing because I had total amnesia in my twenties. While reeducating myself, I saw the mean-spirited peer pressure, inaccurate grading, concentration-destroying bells, constant surveillance and evaluation, and memorizing of unrelated trivia through newly-opened adult eyes. I found this schooling scenario absurd and tragic, not realizing that this mindlessness was deliberate. Writer Linda Dobson calls this situation "society-sanctioned child abuse" (p. 52). She isn't referring to inept teachers or physically dangerous schools, but to the system *when it works as intended*.

Because of their authoritarian, assembly-line design, public schools cannot be reformed. Any change that conflicts with the basic mission of schools — conformity — fails. Thousands of caring teachers can't change the system because they lack clout.

Attempted reforms distract from the necessity for total overhaul. The project lasts until funding ends or the innovator bums out because of teacher and/or administrator opposition. Each one revives hope and prevents defection, like rigged slot machines which tease with near-misses.

Discontent parents, who can't wait, increasingly opt for private schools or homeschooling. Those who can't afford these solutions stifle their protests for fear of reprisal toward their children. Schools easily resist change because their clients are powerless children and parents whose interest ebbs after graduation.

◆

In view of the diversity of student needs and parental philosophies, the answer is to encourage choice. Each option should be publicly funded with a yearly allowance for each child. The more variety, the more easily a parent can avoid stultifying bureaucracy and cut-throat privatization. That means eliminating:

1. Geographical restrictions, compulsory attendance, and obligatory curriculum. Children can attend any school that will admit them; follow their own flexible schedule, attend more than one school at a time, or none; combine public and private school and homeschooling; enter, leave, and reenter schools easily; and choose what they study.
2. Testing, except for diagnostic purposes.
3. Certification requirements. Anyone wishing to teach who meets the qualifications (such as competency testing, experience in other areas) set by the school willing to hire them can be employed as a teacher or administrator.
4. Educational requirements for college and employment. Colleges and employers should do their own screening without regard to attendance, performance, or curriculum at prior institutions. The screening must be school or job relevant.
5. Homeschooling supervision. Any parent may educate her or his child as she/he sees fit.

Varda One is a free-lance writer; past careers have included editor, publisher, bookstore owner, teacher, tutor, workshop leader, speaker. Her hobby is doing the impossible. Her latest book, *Writing As Adventure: A Writer 's Companion*, is a collection of her columns for writer's publications.

In addition, students should be encouraged to use their community as an educational resource. This would include travel, internships, apprenticeships, volunteering, jobs, independent study, starting businesses, and mentors. One reason children rebel is that they're isolated from real life; they need to feel included, respected, and useful.

Once we allow more options, we'll realize that:

* Children differ widely in learning styles and readiness, that the "average student" is a myth. We'll wonder how we could have lumped them by age or test scores.
* The mandatory twelve years could be accomplished in far less time because the curriculum is largely busywork. Play is children's work; they need ample free time for it.
* Children don't need to be "made to learn." They can teach themselves because they already know the skills of risking, self-challenging, and self-correcting.
* Those who offer unasked-for teaching interfere with a child's unfolding and discovery process in the same way that a well-intentioned person "helps" a butterfly escape its chrysalis — and in the process, kills it. The more we do for children what they can do for themselves, the more dependent they become and the less they can teach us. Quoting Linda Dobson, "Just as we harm the planet by tinkering with nature's plan, we harm children when we tinker with the marvelously ordered, delicate blend of mind, body, and spirit that they are" (p. 133).

We are born with a homing signal that tells us when we are on track. I knew early on that I would be a writer though I knew no writers or how to become one. I located a typewriter at a children's museum, taught myself to type, and submitted my first story at eight-years-old.

◆

As technology, information, and global outsourcing increase, we will note formal education becoming less relevant. An obsolescent education of 13+ years to prepare for vanishing jobs will force us to rethink this model. Jeremy Rifkin's *The End of Work* envisions a social economy where children and adults share skills and credits. In his scenario, there is increased leisure time; only those who have learned self-discipline and been allowed to freely explore the world will know how to use that time wisely.

This vision is ignored by schools. Like all self-perpetuating institutions, they use crisis management — the space, arms, global economic races — to beat the drums for more funds. They demand a longer school year and day, higher qualifications for more professionals—in short, cradle-to-grave schooling. The curriculum mushrooms, invading the domains of family, religion, therapy, and medicine. We cannot solve the challenge of runaway growth by an institution that lives by this policy. Remember where the Prussians/Germans ended up by following totalitarian education? To quote John Taylor Gatto, a New York State Teacher of the Year, "A future is rushing down upon our culture that will insist all of us learn the wisdom of non-material experience; a future that will demand as the price of our survival that we follow a path of natural life economical in material cost. These lessons cannot be learned in schools as they are" (p. 21).

We need original thinkers who ask "silly" questions and originals who dream up counterintuitive answers. High SAT scores and more PhDs won't rescue us from our environmental mess. Creative people can. As John F. Kennedy put it, "The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men [and women] who can dream of things that never were."

Creativity and uniqueness are resources that are constantly replenished with each baby. We can nourish and encourage them. And those of us in recovery and other groups are reclaiming our authentic selves and becoming self-teachers and lifelong learners.

The Prussian model has always been wrong for children; however, in the wake of the impending crisis, it's suicidal for all of us. As educator Robert Hutchins wrote, "Society is to be improved, not by forcing a program of social reform down its throat, through schools or otherwise, but by the improvement of the individuals who compose it" (qtd. in Dobson p. 82). Let it begin with us.

References

Opening quote. McKibben, Bill. "A Special Moment in History" *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1998, p. 63.

Dobson, Linda. *The Art of Education*. Tonasket, WA:Home Education Press, 1989.

Gatto, John Taylor. *Dumbing Us Down*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992.

Robert Hutchins is cited in Dobson. Quote is from his "The Conflict in Education in a Democratic Society."

Platt, Suzy, ed. *Respectfully Quoted*. JFK quote is from her book. Originally it came from his *Address to Irish Parliament* 6/28/63.

Rifkin, Jeremy. *The End of Work*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. Cited but not quoted.

The Story of a Charter School Closure

Susan L. Flynn and Lourdes Arguelles

Editor's Note: *The Idyllwild Charter High School was located in Riverside County, California, which for some reason is proving to be a rather harsh environment for charter schools. Here's what the* The Press-Enterprise, *a local newspaper, has to say about this troubling situation: "The number of charter schools in California has nearly doubled in the two years since state legislators made it easier to establish the publicly funded alternative schools. But in Riverside County, school districts have denied 10 charter petitions and approved four. Of the four that were approved since 1999, two … are closed and a third … is threatened with closure. During the same time, five [neighboring county] …charters … were approved and are still operating. The situation has earned Riverside County a reputation as the 'Bermuda Triangle' of charter schools" (p. A-1, Sunday, March 25, 2001).*

Only four percent of charter schools have been closed. For the neo-rural hill-town of Idyllwild in Southern California, the closure of its charter high school left no local affordable educational options for many of the parents and youth of the community. It also left many questions unanswered.

With no high school in the immediate area for its students to attend — in fact, the closest public high school is located 45 minutes away, down a mountain road that often proves hazardous because of severe weather conditions — Idyllwild seemed the perfect candidate for a successful charter school, which would cater to the mountain town with a class-diverse population yet a close-knit community feel. Indeed, from most local accounts, Idyllwild's charter school was highly successful. Since the inception of the charter school, parents and students seemed satisfied with the educational programming and teachers felt empowered by the positive impact they had on the students. However, the charter school sponsor, the Hemet Unified School District (HUSD), chose to close the school at the end of its first year of operation ruling that it posed a "severe and imminent danger to the health and safety of the pupils."

This is the story of a charter school closure as seen through the eyes of students, parents, teachers, and community members (Jacobs, 2000). Their narratives provide valuable insight into the short life of the Idyllwild Charter High School (ICHS). These stories also begin to suggest some steps to insure the viability of alternatives to our public school system.

Beginnings and Endings

Early in 1999, a group of Idyllwild residents, concerned about the education of the youth in their community, formed a committee of parents, educators, and students to investigate the possibility of opening a charter school. They all dreamed of creating a high school on the hill specifically designed to meet the local educational needs of the Idyllwild student population. They also hoped to further develop a sense of community and social ecological responsibility among young people while testing innovative pedagogical methods and curricula.

The group's dream became a reality when the Idyllwild Charter High School (ICHS) opened its doors on September 7, 1999. From the beginning, the school seemed to provide a much needed alternative to Hemet High School. According to one Idyllwild parent, "Idyllwild and Hemet are two very different communities. Hemet High is not responsive to the needs of my child. The teachers and the principal do not understand

Susan L. Flynn is a doctoral student and research associate in the School of Educational Studies at the Claremont Graduate University.
Lourdes Arguelles is a professor at the School of Educational Studies, Claremont Graduate University, where she teaches courses that challenge conventional educational systems and practices. She is a full-time resident of Idyllwild.
Ms. Flynn and Dr. Arguelles conducted a pro-bono educational assessment of ICHS for its Board of Trustees.

our community. Down there they are still mired in ugly battles about creationism and homosexuality. In Idyllwild we have some people with extreme views but overall we have a more live and let live approach to life. We value different things than what they value down there, nature for one. It is a totally different school serving a totally different community." One student commented: "Down in Hemet I am a hill-billy. At ICHS I was a person."

Unfortunately, the much needed and appreciated "high school on the hill" was short-lived. On May 2, 2000 the Hemet Unified School District voted to revoke the charter not because of the quality of education students were receiving, but because ICHS teachers did not have teaching credentials and fingerprint clearances. It did not matter that the three teachers had master's degrees, prior teaching experience, and that one teacher had a teaching credential from the State of Florida. It did not matter that the ICHS administration had labored hard to credential its teachers. On June 30, 2000, the Idyllwild Charter High School closed its doors forever.

They all dreamed of creating a high school on the hill specifically designed to meet the local educational needs of the Idylwild student population.

ICHS teachers feel that, for a large number of the school's thirty plus students, the charter experiment was the only chance for success for youth marginalized from education by personal and family troubles as well as by the authoritarian irrationalism of public schooling. Now that ICHS has been closed, teachers worry that many of these students will not continue their education. The majority of students have somewhat unwillingly returned to Hemet High, but, as one teacher said: "Many kids will eventually disappear and fade out of the system. It's real sad." Another teacher added: "A few of the kids will end up on the streets, be into drugs. Only the self-motivators will do well at Hemet High.…"

ICHS in the Context of the Charter School Movement

The Idyllwild Charter High School is one of the charter schools that have been involuntarily closed. A recent national study from the Center for Education Reform, *Charter Schools Today: Changing the Face of American Education*, reports that "only a handful of charter schools have failed. Of the 2,150 charter schools that have opened across the country since 1992, only 86, or four percent, have closed *(Charter Schools Today, Closures: The Opportunity for Accountability)*. In California, home to nearly 300 charter schools, only six, or two percent, have been closed *(Charter Schools Today, Closures: The Opportunity for Accountability)*. In spite of the many difficulties charter schools face, closures are still rare. So when a charter school closes after only one year of operation it is critically important to learn why.

One student commented: "Down in Hemet I am a hill-billy. At ICHS I was a person."

According to the report, *Charter Schools Today*, the few charter schools that have closed have done so for a variety of reasons; "some closed voluntarily, while others were forced to do so because of low enrollment, administrative or fiscal difficulties, and some schools had their charters revoked due to poor management, inadequate educational programs, fiscal or administrative disorder or misconduct" (*Charter Schools Today*, 2000, p. 3). Another study, *Charter School Accountability: Problems and Prospects*, found that "most [charter school] closings so far have involved financial problems" (Manno, Finn, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997, p. 8).

The case of the Idyllwild Charter High School however, does not fit into any of the aforementioned categories. The charter school was not closed voluntarily, it was not forced to close because of low enrollment, administrative or fiscal difficulties, and it did not have its charter revoked because of poor management, inadequate educational programs, fiscal or administrative disorder or misconduct. Rather, the Idyllwild Charter High School was closed by the Hemet Unified School District because of teacher credential and fingerprint clearance problems. The charter school law limits the reasons that a chartering agency (local school districts) may revoke the charter of a school. One acceptable reason is if there is a "severe and imminent threat to the health or safety of the pupils." The motion to revoke the Idyllwild charter cited the lack of credentialed teachers and the lack of fingerprint clearances as causing "severe and imminent danger to the health and safety of the pupils."

Most of the teachers and parents blamed the school closure on the school district because they did not offer any help or guidance. One parent explained that the credential and fingerprint problems were a 'bureaucratic hang-up' and said: "The teachers were supreme educators. The only problem was with the paperwork. The teachers began the credential process before the school opened. They sent their fingerprint cards in seven times, and resubmitted the credential packet four times because the district kept saying they were lost or they had the wrong forms. The school districts do not want charter schools to survive. Lots of districts don't like charters."

Needless to say, the teachers, parents, and students felt strongly that the school closure was harsh and unfair. As one teacher said: "It was like we got the death penalty, with no chance for rehabilitation!" This view echoes the analysis offered in the recent report *Charter School Accountability: Problems and Prospects*, in which the authors state that "the most extreme form of intervention is the immediate shut-down of a school.… [S]o draconian a step should only be taken for serious misconduct or wrongdoing that threatens the health or safety of children" (Manno, Finn, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997, p. 9).

A Narrative Chronology

The charter for the Idyllwild Charter High School was approved on April 20, 1999. During the summer of 1999, the Idyllwild Charter High School Board hired three core teachers, one of whom would also hold the position of Executive Director. As was stated previously, all three teachers had master's degrees and prior teaching experience. One teacher had a teaching credential from the state of Florida. The teachers became known in the community for their commitment to ICHS as well as for their educational practices deemed too experimental by the Hemet Unified School District. Before continuing with the chronology of events, we would like to note some of these experimental curricular and pedagogical practices.

The Humanities were taught through the culinary arts. The ICHS community (teachers, students, staff, parents, and community members) met to cook and eat foods from different countries while they talked about the history, politics, and ecology of those countries. Parents came to teach skills valuable in everyday life. For example, one parent who is a mechanic brought a car to teach both boys and girls and interested teachers and staff how to fix and maintain a car. Emphasis was made in the curriculum to use the natural and human built environs of Idyllwild to teach students both critical thinking skills and art appreciation as well as their place in the ecosystem. Students were placed in internships in community organizations and businesses, such as the local newspaper (the *Town Crier*). In this community work, teaching and other staff facilitated the coming and going of students and provided the needed supervision.

The school districts do not want charter schools to survive.

Core subjects were never taught in isolation, but were enriched thematically with the perspectives of various disciplines. Overall, students had creative elective options available to them. Some of these electives included the Physics of Sound, in which they studied physics by producing a CD — this process was made possible by a community member who is a sound engineer; and the Psychology of Masks, in which students learned how to design and produce masks as well as engage in a process of inner exploration.

The second ICHS director used incense, meditative-oriented music, and art from local artists to create an ambience that was more conducive to learning and that could potentially neutralize some of the negative features of the physical plant (that is, of the school building itself), such as its lack of space.

Excited by the prospects that such pedagogical creativity might afford them and their students, all three teachers prepared their applications for emergency credentials and submitted them to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) on August 24, 1999. Their application packets included the required fingerprint cards, transcripts, and requests for emergency credentials. The teachers also had made arrangements with the California State University of San Bernardino to enroll in an education course required to meet the emergency credential requirement. In addition, all three teachers took and passed the CBEST examination as required for an emergency teaching credential. At the time they submitted their application packets they believed they had met all of the requirements to be issued emergency teaching credentials in accordance with the same standards required for a teacher

seeking such a credential in the Hemet Unified School District. In other words, these teachers acted in good faith, upholding their end of the bargain.

At the time of submission, the Executive Director of ICHS assumed that the required credentials would be issued shortly as a matter of course and so reported to the ICHS Board. After the Idyllwild Charter High School opened its doors on September 7, 1999, however, the CTC returned the application materials as incomplete, less the fingerprint cards. According to the Executive Director, repeated and desperate attempts to receive direction from the CTC were unsuccessful.

Core subjects were never taught in isolation, but were enriched thematically with the perspecitives of various disciplines.

Two months later, citing stress emanating from the difficult relations with Hemet among other things, the ICHS Executive Director resigned and became a full-time core teacher. She agreed to remain as Executive Director until her replacement could be found. The ICHS Board of Trustees quickly conducted a search for an interim Executive Director and eventually made arrangements to obtain the services of Dr. Sam Crowell, Professor of Education at California State University of San Bernardino and a long time Idyllwild resident. Professor Crowell was appointed interim Executive Director on January 24, 2000.

The new Executive Director became aware of the teacher credentialing issue within one week of his starting date. On February 4, 2000, in a telephone conversation with Dr. Stephen C. Teele (Superintendent of Schools for the Hemet Unified School District), Professor Crowell discussed the charter school credentialing problem and the status of the applications and requested help. The ICHS administration was repeatedly referred to different people within the Hemet Unified School District. One administrator at the district office referred Professor Crowell to an administrator from the Riverside County Credentialing Office who informed the charter school that she could be of no help and that the charter school would have to start from the beginning, including obtaining new fingerprint cards. The ICHS administration was also informed that the fingerprint cards they had previously obtained were no longer acceptable and that live scans were required. Further, Professor Crowell was informed that there was no reciprocity for the ICHS teacher who had a teaching credential in Florida.

Without warning and after offering no help in the credentialing process, they pulled the teachers that our kids knew and related well to and put strangers into ICHS.... I think this credential business is another racket and a tool to weed out teachers whose allegiance is not with the unions or the district.

During the next two months, the ICHS administration struggled with the process of completing the new credential packets in order to credential its teachers. Other than occasional letters from Dr. Teele reminding the Idyllwild Charter High School Executive Director of the charter requirements, the Hemet School District administration offered no assistance to ICHS in its credentialing efforts.

Finally, on April 25, 2000 Dr. Teele reviewed the credential situation at the charter school and instructed that temporary credentialed teachers selected from the approved substitute teacher list accredited to HUSD replace the three ICHS core teachers. On May 1, 2000, substitute credentialed teachers took over the instruction at ICHS pending obtaining credentials for existing teachers or employing other teachers. In the words of an ICHS parent: "Without warning and after offering no help in the credentialing process, they pulled the teachers that our kids knew and related well to and put strangers into ICHS. Interestingly enough, the ICHS teachers in my mind and on paper were more qualified than the teachers they sent from Hemet. They also lived in Idyllwild and we trusted them. I think this credential business is another racket and a tool to weed out teachers whose allegiance is not to the unions or to the district." The interim substitute teachers were hired by HUSD with the costs to the district being reimbursed by the charter school. Two of the teachers selected by HUSD had full credentials and one had a 30-day emergency credential and no full-time teaching experience.

On May 2, 2000, the Hemet Unified School District Board, amidst the spirited protest of parents, students, teachers, and other Idyllwild community members, voted to revoke the charter. The vote to close the school was passed in spite of ICHS' willingness and readiness to hire already credentialed teachers for the following year. A petition to keep the school open signed by nearly one-third of the residents of the Idyllwild community (including parents of the charter school students) and further pleas from the charter school students and administration had no impact on the final decision. A student said: "They did not listen to us. They had an agenda. They did not care about our educational experiences. In fact, when we tried to talk about them at the Board meetings they silenced us and said that the meeting was not about the education we were receiving." A community member added: "Education was not on the agenda as it was not on the agenda of the few residents of Idyllwild who were vocal opponents of the school."

On May 3, 2000, Dr. Teele sent a letter to the parents of the youth enrolled at ICHS informing them that the Hemet Unified School Board of Trustees had voted to revoke the charter granted to the charter school. He stated that the

school would cease operations as of June 30, 2000. One community member noted: "When I heard about this letter, I felt like I was living in a colony...that Idyllwild was a colony of Hemet."

In the consumerist language often typical of school choice advocates: "Charter schools, as schools of choice, are responsive to their consumers. Keeping clients satisfied is a hallmark of successful institutions, including most colleges and private schools, but it has not always been characteristic of public schools" (Finn et al., 2000, p. 265). The consumers of the Idyllwild Charter High School were the students attending the school and their parents. According to the consumers, the Idyllwild Charter High School was a success. Narratives from parents, teachers, students, and some community members highlight reasons that the school was so well-liked and explain why it satisfied the needs of the students, their families, and the community at large.

Teachers, Parents, and Students Talk About ICHS

During a series of interviews conducted by the authors, teachers, parents, and students related their positive experiences at the Idyllwild Charter High School (Arguelles and Flynn, forthcoming). Teachers said they had very positive experiences at the charter school and liked teaching at the school for a variety of reasons, including the small school environment and the freedom to develop innovative learning agendas appropriate to the needs of their students. Teachers also felt that their teaching experience was extremely rewarding. They commented that they felt a heightened sense of purpose and empowerment because they felt they had made a real impact on the students' lives. One teacher reported that she felt like she had been instrumental in improving student achievement and fostering a positive attitude toward school and learning: "There was lots of success. I saw these kids really change. Many of them do not fit into the traditional regular high school and many of them had a history of failure at Hemet High. I saw their attitudes change. They became confident that they could learn. This doesn't happen at a regular public school."

Parents also were very pleased with the charter school. One parent stated: "It was the best thing I've ever seen regarding public school experiences; it was like a private school and a public school combined. That school saved my daughter; it fit her needs well." Parents liked the charter school because it was small and there was no overcrowding. They knew teachers were able to provide one-on-one attention and address the special needs of each student. In addition, parents felt that the teachers were supportive, cooperative, and caring. Several parents noted that they had never had the positive and deep interactions with their children's teachers that they had had at ICHS. Life became easier at home with the kids when they were at ICHS compared to when they were at other schools. One parent noted that it was the first time that he had been able to have a "humane" conversation with a teacher.

Ironically, in light of the school district's excuse for closing the school, safety was another important reason that parents supported the charter school in Idyllwild. The mother of a high achieving student felt that having a high school in Idyllwild was safer for the kids on the hill because "the bus ride back and forth to Hemet was often dangerous due to weather conditions and the bus was often unreliable and costly." Another parent commented that it was very difficult for her daughter to feel a sense of community on the hill or in Hemet if she was bussed down every day. In her mind, that sense of community and engagement with the surrounding community that ICHS provided was essential for her daughter to become a well-rounded person. One student stated that

she felt more secure in an environment where there were no gangs. She said: "At Hemet High there are gang initiations during the lunch hour and I feel very unsafe. I am glad I am not going back there."

Parents also liked the charter school because their children's academic achievement levels improved. One parent commented thus about the dramatic improvement of his child's grades: "My daughter improved her grades tremendously while at that [charter] school. She used to get F's, D's, and C's, but at this school she got C's, B's, and A's." Another parent stated: "I know it was too early to evaluate academic performance at ICHS compared to Hemet High with test scores, but I liked what I saw with the academic achievement of my child."

In addition to drastic improvements in student academic performance, parents reported that their children's attitude toward school and learning improved. Another parent discussed his child's improved positive attitude toward school: "My son liked the school. He actually wanted to go to school, and that was the big change. I loved that school; it was good for him." Still another parent said: "I liked the direction we were going in the second semester. Sam Crowell was trying to use art and nature as teachers of our kids. He was light years ahead of what the Hemet High principal thought education was all about. He was also doing this at little or no cost to the school through community volunteers."

Students had positive experiences at the charter high school as well and said they liked the school a lot. One student explained: "There was no ditching at the charter school. Everyone liked it so much they wanted to go to school. I saw students walking in the snow to get to school. At Hemet most of the kids ditch." Students specifically liked the small school environment because there was a sense of community, a friendly atmosphere that was family-like, less social conflict, and more time for one-on-one attention from teachers.

Students also commented that their academic performance and their attitude toward school improved. One student said: "I didn't do well at other schools. I was bad in school; I got D's. But my grades went up at this [charter] school, [where] I got B's. I focused more on schoolwork here [at the charter school], did better, and liked it more." For this student, ICHS provided a better, more humane learning environment than did Hemet High because, at ICHS, she "did not have to stand being called 'Idyllweird,' as most kids from the hill [attending Hemet High] are called."

Start-Up Problems and Challenges

Although the satisfaction levels of teachers, parents, and students were very high, the charter school did face some challenges. As one teacher said, teaching at the Idyllwild Charter High School was both "fun and frustrating." Despite advance planning, the charter school was less than adequately prepared for the task it faced. In addition to the usual problems facing teachers when a new school year begins, there were the problems of a whole new school in a new facility with a new faculty and administrative team. Further, there was a wider range of student abilities, attitudes, and special needs than had been anticipated. The student population included high performing students, as well as students who had learning and behavior problems, and those who required more individual attention and stricter discipline than anticipated. One community member commented: "In Idyllwild like in other communities there is a hidden subculture that is deeply troubled. These people came out of the closet at ICHS. The school founders did not know the extent of the problems of this subculture." A teacher further explained: "The ICHS founders did not anticipate the type of clientele they'd get. It was like a surprise attack with students that were difficult and

had a variety of problems, both personal and behavioral. There was no psychologist or counselor available, and we needed it."

Teachers felt that, with improvements to a number of key, critical problem areas, their jobs would have been easier. Aside from the problem areas noted above, teachers and parents identified several other areas for charter school improvement, including an inadequate physical plant, disorganization, understaffing, and lack of support from the charter sponsor (Hemet Unified School District). Among these areas for improvement, teachers and parents felt that district opposition and resistance was the biggest barrier to the charter school's success. One teacher stated: "It was a bureaucratic nightmare. Hemet could have given the emergency credentials, but chose not to. Hemet said 'Do it yourself' and offered little guidance. At the last school board meeting they told us what we needed to do in order to stay open and we did it all. But the district said, 'Too little, too late.'" Parents also blamed the district for the demise of the charter school. One parent said: "I felt let down by the Hemet school district. They are clearly against charter schools. Hemet acted adversely, at best neutral. The closing was unfair; it was politically and money motivated!"

A student said, "They did not listen to us. They had an agenda. They did not care about our educational experiences. In fact, when we tried to talk about them at the Boaard meeting they silenced us and said that the meeting was not about the education we were receiving.

Over time, the charter school could have improved the physical plant, developed more specific rules and regulations, and established an effective structured environment. It could have expanded its mobilization of community assets by involving even more community members as volunteer teachers and counselors. According to one national charter school study, charter schools do tend to improve over time: "Based on our observations, a lot of these problems get solved, or at least eased, as the school ages and the people responsible for it gain experience …[;] we have seen a positive trend over time with respect to start-up problems" (Finn et al., 1997, p. 1). In fact, there was evidence that the charter school was well on its way to solving some of the initial start-up problems. But as one community member said: "Nothing satisfied the Hemet people. They wanted the school closed and [close it] they did. They did not want to help it. The ICHS teachers and administration did everything they could and more. By the second semester they had many qualified community volunteers. They were planning to hire already credentialed teachers. In a nutshell, they had gotten their act together."

The debate over the true motivation for the sponsoring local school district, that had invested one year's time and $70,000 in funding, to shut down a clearly needed and wanted school may never be resolved. In the words of an ICHS student: "We will never know what truly happened or who precisely it was who was doing all the behind the scenes work to close the school. I would like to know if this is happening elsewhere. If it is, then all hope to make schools better will be lost. I just want to be finished with school so that I don't have to see their [Hemet school people's] faces again."

Charter School-Local School District Relations Under Scrutiny

Charter school advocates cite that one of the major benefits of the school choice movement is the positive impact on traditional public schools. Studies have shown that "traditional public schools have begun to behave differently in order to keep up [with the competition], and in many states [charter school] presence is accelerating system-wide school improvement…. [C]harter schools are a necessary impetus for accountable, results-driven reform" (*Charter Schools Today, 2000*). However, in the case of the Idyllwild Charter High School, competition did not serve as an impetus for improvement.

Rather, competition, or the ICHS potential to develop an alternative, albeit a small one, to the existing schooling system, seemed to pose a "severe and imminent threat" not to the students of ICHS, but, instead, to the Hemet Unified School District. In this instance, there was no "positive ripple effect" encouraging changes in HUSD's administrative practices. One national charter school study found similar hostile school district reactions to charter schools: "We observe continuing — and ever more sophisticated — hostility toward the charter idea from several directions, especially from teachers' unions, school boards, and superintendents" (Finn et al., 2000, p. 173).

The case of the Idyllwild Charter High School is not unique. Other charter schools have reported similar opposition and resistance from local school districts as a significant barrier to their success: "In the beginning, charters faced mainly facility and operational hurdles, but the most common obstacles now involve political opposition from teachers' unions, state boards and bureaucracies, and local board/district offices. By insisting on compliance…the powers that be can—and do—diminish, delay, and even kill charter efforts" (*Charter Schools Today*, Executive Summary, 2000).

Finn et al. (2000) have identified four stages in the traditional public education system's typical reaction to charters: Stage one is "to stop them"; stage two is "to keep them few and weak"; stage three is "to out-do them and success-

fully compete with them"; and stage four is "to accept them and embrace the charter school idea as a way to achieve its own ends" (p. 179). Receiving no help, or at best minimal help, from the charter sponsoring agency (the local school district) represents a stage one reaction of stopping charter schools dead in their tracks.

The closing was unfair; it was politically and money motivated!

Manno et al. (1997) believe that "states have not paid enough attention to less draconian steps by which faltering charter schools might be warned or healed. If the death penalty is the only sentence available, a lot of crimes will go unpunished — and perhaps some needless deaths will occur" (p. 9). The closure of the Idyllwild Charter High School may have been avoided with an intervention program. Manno et al. (1997) found that effective intervention programs are rare: "We have not found a single jurisdiction with a well-formed plan for dealing with problem [charter] schools or outright [charter school] failures. Few even have an adequate monitoring program to pick up early warnings of schools in trouble" (p. 9). One Idyllwild community member summed up the charter school saga this way: "ICHS had some problems and it dealt with them. The only problem it could not deal with was the district. After this
experience I believe that to have the alternatives to the school system under the school system's umbrella is wrong. The system will only embrace its extensions, not true educational alternatives that are rooted in the needs and wants of communities. I was a strong supporter of the public school system until they closed ICHS and I found that our community had no recourse."

The ICHS experience underscores among many things the necessity of publicly subjecting the relationships of the public school system and the charter school movement to serious scrutiny. This scrutiny is necessary if the potential of charter schools to improve our deeply flawed schooling system by providing true educational alternatives is to be realized. At the time of the writing of this article, the Board of Trustees of ICHS and other community activists are exploring educational options outside of the public school establishment, such as grassroots learning networks, homeschooling, and a community supported private school. In the future, they may also venture into creating a school whose mode of organization is more congruent with the traditions of the local community, such as a cooperative school (Rofes, 2000), or even seriously consider various "unschooling" proposals. Hopefully, the veterans of the ICHS experiment will join other communities and educators to put pressure on state governments to free the charter school movement from the public school bureaucracy.

References

Arguelles, L. and Flynn, S. L. "Challenges to conventional public schooling." Forthcoming article.

Arguelles, L. and Flynn, S. L. (2000) "The Idyllwild Charter High School (ICHS) as seen by students, teachers, parents, and community members: A report to the ICHS Board of Trustees.

Finn, C. E. Jr., Manno, B.V., and Vanourek, G. (2000). *Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Finn, C. E., Jr., Manno, B.V., Bierlein, L.A., and Vanourek, G. (1997). "The birth-pains and life-cycles of charter schools." In *Charter Schools in Action Project* [On-line]. Available: www.edexcellence.net/chart/chart3.htm.

Jacobs, E. (2000). "Idyllwild Charter High School: Administrative performance review." Unpublished report to the Idyllwild Charter High School Board of Trustees.

Manno, B. V., Finn, C. E., Jr., Bierlien, L.A., and Vanourek, G. (1997). "Charter school accountability: Problems and prospects." *In Charter Schools in Action Project* [On-line]. Available:www.edexcellence.net/chart4.htm.

Rofes, E. (2000). "Teachers as communitarians: A charter school cooperative in Minnesota" In *Inside Charter Schools*: *The Paradox of Radical Decentralization*. Bruce Fuller (ed.), Cambridge: Harvard Educational Press, pp. 203-229.

The Center for Education Reform. (2000). "Charter Schools Today: Changing the Face of American Education." [On-line]. Abstract and Executive Summary. Available: http:edreform.com/charter_schools/today/index.html.

The Center for Education Reform. (2001). *Closures*: *The Opportunity for Accountability*. [On-line]. Available: http://edreform.com/pubs/cs_closures.htm.

Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting by Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn

Reviewed by Nat Needle

Editor's Note: In our Winter 2001 issue, we published an interview with Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, the authors of Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting. *For this issue of* Paths, *we present a provocative review of the Kabat-Zinns' book, written by a member of our editorial board who is well versed in the practice of mindfulness. Given the beauty and influence of the Kabat-Zinns' book, as well as the many possibilities for mindful living that it opens up and the many questions about our own practices that it raises, we invite our readers to send us their thoughts on the art and practice of mindful parenting. We will try to publish as many responses as possible.*

It's after 10 pm, and I'm under the covers on a cold winter night with Asa, my 5-year-old night-owl son. Asa's road to the land of Nod is long. He devotedly places stickers on a grid charting his progress towards this moment: Put away toys, get into pajamas, drink warm milk, brush teeth, go to the bathroom, set up tapes or CD's to listen to at low volume in the dark after I have read to him. I'm liable to pass out before he does; if I do, he gets lonely. On occasion, when he has roused me out of my first sweet moments of slumber, I've shouted furiously, he's cried hysterically, and the day has ended miserably. Knowing this may be coming, before succumbing to sleep, I mentally rehearse a calmer response. Now Asa has started his tape — my cue to close my exhausted eyes and let sleep envelop me. Good night.

Asa: Daddy!
Me: (waking up groggy) What? What is it?
Asa: I didn't put the sticker on for setting up my CD's!
Me: (this slowly reaches my brain) Okay, Asa, just go and do it now if you really want to.
Asa: Come with me — I'm scared.
Me: (my limbs are jelly) You can turn on all the lights—just go and come back.
Asa: No, I need you to come with me.
Me: (Darth Vader) Look, Asa, I am not getting out of bed again. You have two choices. You can either go put your sticker on by yourself, or put it on in the morning.

I tense for a battle of wills and a cascade of emotions plummeting to a horrible end to our day. Tonight, however, Asa just groans and whimpers, slips back under the covers, and resumes his tape. My last thought is one of gratitude for a small triumph. I got my way.

Early the next morning, I am reading in *Everyday Blessings*, by Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, about the importance of empathy and reflecting on my "victory" of the night before. I think of how Asa and I created his sticker chart together, with me holding down the straight-edge as he carefully wielded his pencil, etching the lines and laboriously writing the words "MORNING" and "NIGHT." I consider how completing the chart along with the day is a key piece of a ritual that Asa assumes is mine just as much as his. I reflect that if, at that moment, I had realized that I'd left the heat turned up, I would have summoned the will to get up one more time to save a couple of bucks. With Asa, though, my fear of not being in control, of having to satisfy his desires instead of my own, tempts me to justify my use of coercive power to get what I want. "I will not let him manipulate me," I say, assuming he's refusing to go to

Nat Needle has been involved in alternative education since 1975, when he co-founded Oddfellows Playhouse, a youth performing arts center. He co-founded and directed a small independent alternative high school from 1983-86, and was the head teacher of Clonlara Campus High School from 1991-96. He has taught in a public elementary school in Massachusetts, a public alternative school in France, and in both an alternative higher education center and a traditional university in Japan. He holds a doctorate in Education from the University of Massachusetts.
Nat has practiced Zen meditation for many years, and received ordination as a lay Buddhist minister in 1995. He likes to play swing piano, make up songs, and learn Saori improvisational weaving from his wife, Mihoko Wakabayashi. Nat and Mihoko now live in Worcester, Massachusetts, with their sons Asa, 6, and Noriyoshi, 2. Nat and Mihoko are allowing Asa to continue learning without schooling as long as he wants to. They have helped to organize a family learning co-operative in their area. Nat is currently working as a youth advisor at Dynamy, an experiential learning program, and assisting Mihoko in developing her Saori work. Check out Dynamy at www.dynamy.org and Saori at www.saoriworcester.net

the kitchen alone just to test his own clout. "He's got to learn that other people have needs too," I say, assuming that's the lesson he will draw from having his wishes summarily denied.

I let my actions of last night teach me. I resolve to work out an agreement with Asa when he wakes up this morning that anticipates both our needs on nights to come.

Me: Asa, listen, at night, when we're going to bed, if you have to go to the bathroom or there's some other emergency.…
Asa: You mean like an earthquake, or a tornado.…
Me: Yes, exactly, well, if you're scared to go out of the room alone, I will always go with you, and you can wake me up for that. But I don't want you to wake me up if you've forgotten a sticker.
Asa: Well, then don't go to bed until I've done all the stickers!
Me: Fine, but it's been your job to check them. If you remember one after you've already started the CD, then can we agree we'll do it in the morning?
Asa: That's all right (I stick out my pinky, and he wraps his pinky around mine. This means we have a deal).

I adore my children, I do my best to remain aware of my thoughts and emotional patterns, and I meditate every day. Even so, over the course of a long day with my two little boys, sometimes the sudden urge to take control of an uncomfortable situation by losing control of myself gets the best of me. How interesting! Also, I notice that my mind does not like staying in the present moment, where Asa and Noriyoshi (age 2) insist that I keep it. How many times a day does Asa say, "Daddy, are you thinking about something else?" Zen teachers have whacked me with sticks — the effect is about the same.

So I came to *Everyday Blessings* ready to embrace the Kabat-Zinns' idea of parenting my "live-in Zen masters" as "an eighteen-year retreat" for spiritual purposes. The title advertises the book as a guide to "the inner work of mindful parenting," so I was eager to absorb new inspiration and pointers regarding how to take up this work. In this regard, my hopes for the book were amply fulfilled. I was also concerned, however, that this book, with its serene lotus leaf on the cover, would hold up a standard of mindfulness in parenting that would leave me feeling inadequate and alienated, considering the wild and messy rodeo that a day with my boys can be. The authors clearly anticipated such concerns. Towards the end of this review, I'll assess how well I think they addressed them.

Everyday Blessings is a book with a mission: To persuade parents to embrace parenting as a spiritual quest, and to treat all its trials and inconveniences, no less than its wonders and delights, as "blessings." These blessings are manifested in our awakening through parenting to the fullness of human experience, and also in the healing and wholeness that we bestow upon our children when our relationship with them is cradled in the arms of mindfulness.

What is mindfulness? "Mindful" has recently become a buzzword that gets used a lot to add a sort of heightened and softened glow to actions that used to call for plainer words like careful, thoughtful, aware, deliberate, attentive, or considerate. In a recent meeting, I heard phrases like "Let's be mindful of the time" and "We have an opportunity to set this policy mindfully." I'd vote for "aware" in the first instance, and "deliberately" or "thoughtfully" in the second, because once we become accustomed to hearing "mindful" used casually, we might have difficulty focusing on its more precise meaning.

Mindfulness is a practice described in discourses given by the Buddha more than 2,500 years ago, notably in the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, the "Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness." (Walshe, 1987, p. 335-350) The Kabat-Zinns describe it thus: "Mindfulness means moment-to-moment non-judgmental awareness. It is cultivated by refining our capacity to pay attention, intentionally, in the present moment, and then sustaining that attention over time as best we can." Disciplined mindfulness practice often begins with being aware of the breath. Why the breath? Breath is the most natural touchstone for our attention. It is always going on, easily noticed, and immediately becomes the most important thing in the world if its rhythm is interrupted in any way. Yet even a few minutes' effort to pay attention to breath alone reveals to us that the mind that we have come to identify with is not under our control, that it will not stay put, that it has a mind of its own, so to speak. Most people run from this insight. But instead one may begin to ask, "What is this mind? What is it up to? If I am not this mind, then what am I?"

Returning to awareness of the breath helps us watch the mind with some measure of detachment. We can become aware of the impermanent quality of our thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and other sensory experiences. We can become aware of the quality of suffering, obvious or subtle, inherent in the mind's grasping for what it considers to be agreeable and in its pushing away what it takes to be disagreeable. The "non-judgmental" aspect means that, through familiarity with their automatic nature, we refrain from identifying with these mental and physical phenomena that come and go. "Oh, that anger is coming through now," we might say, or "Oh, my chest feels tight; it's my old friend fear now," always returning to our awareness of the breath going in and out. In this way, we develop the capacity to know what is happening but not become caught up in a long internal dialogue about it nor act reflexively in an outward way (by shouting or striking out, for example) in an attempt to relieve inner distress. There can then be a moment of "suspension," of simply experiencing the discomfort, or the pleasure, without judging it or doing anything about it, just letting it be. To quote the authors:

"The real work of mindfulness is making room for whatever is happening while it is happening, with openness, equanimity, empathy, and compassion. It means being patient with ourselves and with others and not jumping to move on prematurely to something else because of our discomfort." This is simple to say, yet there is no harder work.

When our thoughts, speech, and action are unconsciously directed towards relieving distress or grasping for ease and delight, we cannot perceive what is actually going on around us, just as it is. We cannot know what is going on with other people, so our action cannot be motivated by such knowledge. Within this suspended, open space, however, we can know what we are bringing to this moment. If we can let that just be, our attention can focus on others. As a result, we can rise to what the Kabat-Zinns call discernment, a clear seeing into what is right in front of us. As we recognize in others the same process of rejecting and grasping, of suffering, that we have become so familiar with and accepting of in ourselves, compassion arises. When Asa wants the bedroom door closed to keep the light out and I want it open to let the heat in, I can sometimes know, straight through all stubbornness, that we two are in the same boat, one that is floating on a vast, safe, and reliable sea. Sometimes we both get this (how marvelous), but not until each of us has tried every trick in the book (not the Kabat-Zinns' book) to get the upper hand.

The authors do not presume to tell me the "right" way to handle my nocturnal tussles with Asa. They say instead that I can learn the way to that attentive open space within which I can see where each of us is coming from. They say I can practice this attention as soon as I can remember to do so, sometimes before the hysteria, sometimes after. They say I can choose to practice fully in this *now* of remembering, without comparisons, and without clinging to ideas of doing it better or worse in the past or future. Applying this effort to my relationship with my child is "the inner work of mindful parenting."

The Kabat-Zinns, keeping this central practice in mind, derive a potent handful of values that are both supports for and fruits of mindfulness in raising our children. The authors repeat them throughout the book, applying them to all aspects of parenting: birthing, bedtime, touching, dealing with the media and consumer society, letting go as children grow older, and more. These values are:

- Respect for our children's sovereignty — their essential nature as autonomous beings who make decisions about their own desires, well-being, and lives. This is the theme of two archetypal stories in the book, "Sir Gawain and the Loathely Lady" and "Tatterhood," both of which focus particularly on male recognition of female sovereignty.
- *Empathy* — putting ourselves in our kids' shoes and seeing things their way.
- *Acceptance* — not objecting to the way a child is at a particular moment, nor assuming that she or he is being unpleasant just to frustrate us.
- *Presence* — the power to be attentive and receptive to a child, often in silence, bringing one's mind back when it wanders off to do something else.
- *Attunement* — which might be called a synthesis of empathy, acceptance and presence, in which the parent is "resonating in harmony" with a child. The authors give the example of a baby nursing blissfully, or a mother wordlessly massaging her stressed-out teenager's neck.
- *Balance* — from infancy through young adulthood, the paradox of the child-parent relationship is to acknowledge the child as a sovereign being and his or her dependence upon parental instruction, guidance, and even constraint. We require all the above skills and intuitions to know how to encourage initiative and independence, yet "provide limits" to unacceptable behavior. Seeking balance is "a continual process, since the balance point keeps changing." With smaller children, we may restore balance by changing the schedule or getting into a bath. With teenagers, conversation might evoke their own solutions, but also the parent might help locate new outlets for a teenager's expression or work to change his or her educational situation. Parents must continue to find new balance points as their children grow to lead their own adult lives.

As we recognize in others the same process of rejecting and grasping, of suffering, that we have become so familiar with and accepting of in ourselves, compassion arises.

The Kabat-Zinns encourage parents to hold these values in a spirit of self-healing, self-awakening, and self-acceptance. They do not propose them as a basis for approving of oneself or for beating oneself up, nor for comparing oneself with real or imagined others, nor for judging one's progress towards ultimately, someday, parenting the "right" way. In fact, in their defining chapter, "What is Mindful Parenting," they affirm that "there is no one right way to parent."

In some places in the book, the authors skillfully uphold this attitude. For example, in their sensitive argument in favor of the family bed, they leave no doubt about their personal preference, yet stress that "far more important than the choice of sleeping arrange-

ments is finding your own way to foster feelings of trust and connectedness." In other places, however, I found this openness undermined by numerous examples of specific choices that mindful parents might be expected to make: Continuing nursing into toddlerhood, avoiding putting 1- and 2-year-olds in strollers, limiting taped stories for children that "encourage them to be passive." In these cases, it's up to the reader to trust that the authors are advocating the empathy informing such choices, and not the choices themselves, as universals. Certainly, adhering to any list of "correct" practices does not a mindful parent make.

Further, the authors reject the notion "that, in parenting mindfully, there is some ideal standard we have to measure ourselves against or try to achieve." This disavowal is sometimes hard to swallow, since idealism seems to pervade the book right alongside pragmatism. When the authors propose "giving ourselves fully to our children, limitlessly in terms of our being," I hear that as an ideal standard against which to measure my wandering attention when I'm with my boys. Again, it's left to the reader to resolve or simply embrace this paradox. For myself, I notice that my mind likes to imagine a standard and use it as a ruler to hold myself against, rather than as a star to steer by. Thus I read Jon Kabat-Zinn's vignette about his high-powered game of pond hockey with his son, and felt inadequate. Then I read Myla's account of a wild bedtime during which she slapped her daughter, and felt adequate again. My practice of mindfulness is to observe this mind-activity, and create space around it by returning to an acceptance of the best effort I can come up with in this moment, the only moment that is.

I think we should keep up some down-to-earth talk about what mindful parenting is. At the very least, this book illuminates the path of any parent with a dedicated meditation practice, who might wonder if he or she is traveling a second-class spiritual road by raising a family instead of living in a monastery. But the authors seek and deserve a wider audience. Therefore the work of revealing mindfulness practice as accessible to people of all cultural backgrounds and walks of life deserves ongoing refinement. I hope that *Everyday Blessings* will prove to be the first word on the subject rather than the last. Therefore, here are my suggestions for future contributions to this dialogue, including any future editions of this book:

- Examples and stories have a far more visceral effect upon one's understanding than do abstract reassurances that there is no fixed standard or one right way. A broader variety of stories from all kinds of parents at all points of the falling-down-then-getting-up, forgetting-then-remembering cycle would drive this point home. Moreover, the authors invite parents to bring "their entire creative genius to the work of mindful parenting." Jon and Myla, by alternating the writing of chapters, do provide some binocular depth of perspective regarding the forms such genius might take. A greater diversity of voices, however, would convince readers that they do not have to be highly educated or unusually gifted to raise children mindfully.
- We cannot do without colossal spurts of humor if we would spare mindful parenting an unendurable heaviness. In this book, there is much talk of work, difficulty, darkness, and even remorse, but not enough plain fun. Even Jon's anecdotes about chess and baseball play with his daughter seem quite serious, almost humorously so. He did include one brief bit about how, half-asleep, he began telling his daughter a story about a lion, only to morph the lion into a rabbit. I smiled in recognition, but didn't laugh. In the next edition, Dave Barry should write every third section.
- We need more emphasis upon relationships among adults to obtain a complete, holistic picture of mindful parenting. The Kabat-Zinns delve deeply into the relationship between parent and child, and helpfully touch upon how that relationship is insufficiently supported by our society. Yet they underplay how important it is for many parents to have time away from children if they want to be mindful when they are with them. How much easier is it for fathers to get such a break than mothers? How important is time for parents to share the insights and struggles of parenting, not only within the family, but also among groups of parents of both sexes? Most critically, to what degree can we, as isolated individual parents, take up the work of "giving ourselves fully" in a healthy way? In her chapter "Hanging By A Thread," toward the book's end, Myla addresses this last issue only briefly, concluding that "we need community to round out our individual resources." But how shall we, right in the midst of this society, create communities based on mindfulness that embrace parenting and children? What is already being done around the world in this regard? We need another whole book to answer such questions: "the outer work of mindful parenting," perhaps.

These suggestions are not meant to detract from the generous sweep of this work, ranging from infancy to the teenage years, and even going beyond to consider communication with our children once they become adults. This book has granted me a framework, and, yes, a standard, for my life with my children. I have no doubt that it will join the very small set of books that exert a perennial influence upon my parenting, and upon my teaching as well.

Reference

Walshe, Maurice (trans.) *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Digha Nikaya), 1987, Wisdom Publications, London, England, 648 pp.

"What Is Mindful Parenting?" From *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* by Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindful parenting calls us to wake up to the possibilities, the benefits, and the challenges of parenting with a new awareness and Intentionality, not only as if what we did mattered, but as if our conscious engagement in parenting were virtually the most important thing we could be doing, both for our children and for ourselves.

This book is a series of meditations on various aspects of parenting. It is about meeting our children's needs as fully and selflessly as possible by cultivating a certain kind of awareness. This awareness, known as mindfulness, can lead to deeper insight into and understanding of our children and ourselves. Mindfulness has the potential to penetrate past surface appearances and behaviors and allow us to see our children more dearly as they truly are, to look both inwardly and outwardly, and to act with some degree of wisdom and compassion on the basis of what we see. Parenting mindfully can be healing and transformative—for both children and parents.

As we shall see [later in the book], from the perspective of mindfulness, parenting can be viewed as a kind of extended and, at times, arduous meditation retreat spanning a large part of our lives. And our children, from infancy to adulthood and beyond, can be seen as perpetually challenging live-in teachers, who provide us with ceaseless opportunities to do the inner work of understanding who we are and who they are, so that we can best stay in touch with what is truly important and give them what they most need in order to grow and flourish. In the process, we may find that this ongoing moment-to-moment awareness can liberate us from some of our most confining habits of perception and relating, the straitjackets and prisons of the mind that have been passed down to us or that we have somehow constructed for ourselves. Through their very being, often without any words or discussion, our children can inspire us to do this inner work. The more we are able to keep in mind the intrinsic wholeness and beauty of our children, especially when it is difficult for us to see, the more our ability to be mindful deepens. In seeing more clearly, we can respond to them more effectively and with greater generosity of heart, and parent with greater wisdom.

As we devote ourselves to nourishing them and understanding who they are, these live-in teachers, especially in the first ten to twenty years of our "training," will provide endless moments of wonder and bliss, and opportunities for the deepest feelings of connectedness and love. They will also, in all likelihood, push all our buttons, evoke all our insecurities, test all our limits and boundaries, and touch all the places in us where we fear to tread and feel inadequate or worse. In the process, if we are willing to attend carefully to the full spectrum of what we are experiencing, they will remind us over and over again of what is most important in life, including its mystery, as we share in their lives, shelter and nourish and love them, and give them what guidance we can.

Being a parent is particularly intense and demanding in part because our children can ask things of us no one else could or would, in ways that no one else could or would. They see us up close as no one else does, and constantly hold mirrors up for us to look into. In doing so, they give us over and over again the chance to see ourselves in new ways, and to work at consciously asking what we can learn from any and every situation that comes up with them. We can then make choices out of this awareness that will nurture both our children's inner growth and our own at one and the same time. Our interconnectedness and our interdependence enable us to learn and grow together.

To bring mindfulness into our parenting, it is helpful to know something about what mindfulness is. Mindfulness means moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness. It is cultivated by refining our capacity to pay attention, intentionally, in the present moment, and then sustaining that attention over time as best we can. In the process, we become more in touch with our life as it is unfolding.

Ordinarily, we live much of the time in an automatic pilot mode, paying attention only selectively and haphazardly, taking many important things completely for granted or not noticing them at all, and judging everything we do experience by forming rapid and often unexamined opinions based on what we like or dislike, what we want or don't want. Mindfulness brings to parenting a powerful method and framework for paying attention to whatever we are doing in each moment, and seeing past the veil of our automatic thoughts and feelings to a deeper actuality.

Mindfulness lies at the heart of Buddhist meditation, which itself is all about cultivating attention. The practice of mindfulness has been kept alive and developed within

---

Editor's note: On pp. 24–25 of our January 2001 issue, following our interview with Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, we published the "Epilogue" to the Kabat-Zinns' book, which contains information on "Intentionality—Parenting As a Spiritual Practice" and offers "Twelve Exercises for Mindful Parenting."

various meditative traditions across Asia for over twenty-five hundred years. Now it is making its way into the mainstream of Western society in many different contexts, including medicine, health care, education, and social programs.

Mindfulness is a meditative discipline. There are many different meditative disciplines. We might think of them all as various doors into the same room. Each doorway gives a unique and different view into the room; once inside, however, it is the same room, whichever door we come through. Meditation, whatever the method or tradition, is the tapping into the order and stillness embedded in and behind all activity, however chaotic it may appear, using our faculty of attention. It is not, as is so commonly thought, an inward manipulation—like throwing a switch or merely relaxing—into some "special state" in which everything feels different or better, or in which your mind goes "blank," or you suppress your thoughts. It is a systematic and sustained observing of the whole field of our experience, or of some specific element of it.

While it received its most elaborate articulation in the Buddhist tradition, mindfulness is an important part of all cultures and is truly universal, since it is simply about cultivating the capacity we all have as human beings for awareness, clarity, and compassion. There are many different ways to do this work of cultivation. There is no one right way, just as there is no one right way to parent.

Mindful parenting involves keeping in mind what is truly important as we go about the activities of daily living with our children. Much of the time, we may find we need to remind ourselves of what that is, or even admit that we may have no idea at the moment, for the thread of meaning and direction in our lives is easily lost. But even in our most trying, sometimes horrible moments as parents, we can deliberately step back and begin afresh, asking ourselves as if for the first time, and with fresh eyes, "What is truly important here?"

In fact, mindful parenting means seeing if we can remember to bring this kind of attention and openness and wisdom to all our moments with our children. It is a true practice, its own inner discipline, its own form of meditation. And it carries with it profound benefits for both children and parents, to be discovered in the practice itself.

For us to learn from our children requires that we pay attention, and learn to be still inwardly within ourselves. In stillness, we are better able to see past the endemic turmoil, cloudiness, and reactivity of our own minds, in which we are so frequently caught up, and in this way cultivate greater clarity, calmness, and insight, which we can bring directly to our parenting.

Like everybody else, parents have their own needs and desires and lives, just as children do. Yet, too often, in both big and little ways, the needs of the parent in any given moment may be very different from those of the child. These needs, all valid and important, are simply different, and are often in conflict. The clash of needs in any given moment may result in a struggle of wills over who is going to get "their way," especially if we, the parent, are feeling stressed, overburdened, and exhausted.

Rather than pitting our needs against those of our children, parenting mindfully involves cultivating an awareness, right in such moments, of how our needs are interdependent. Our lives are undeniably deeply connected. Our children's well-being affects ours, and ours affects theirs. If they are not doing well, we suffer, and if we are not doing well, they suffer.

This means that we have to continually work to be aware of our children's needs as well as our own, emotional as well as physical, and, depending on their ages, to work at negotiations and compromises, with them and within ourselves, so that everybody gets something of what they most need. Just bringing this kind of sensitivity to our parenting will enhance our sense of connectedness with our children. Through the quality of our presence, our commitment to them is felt, even in difficult times. And we may find that our choices in moments of conflicting and competing needs will come more out of this heartfelt connection, and as a result will have greater kindness and wisdom in them.

We see parenting as a sacred responsibility. Parents are nothing less than protectors, nourishers, comforters, teachers, guides, companions, models, and sources of unconditional love and acceptance. If we are able to keep this sense of parenting as a sacred responsibility in mind, and we bring a degree of mindfulness to the process as it unfolds moment to moment, our choices as parents are much more likely to come out of an awareness of what this moment, this child—at this stage of his or her life—is asking from us right now, through his very being and his behavior. In rising to this challenge, we may not only come to do what is best for our children; we may also uncover and come to know, perhaps for the first time, what is deepest and best in ourselves.

Mindful parenting calls us to acknowledge and name the challenges we face daily in trying to parent with awareness. For awareness has to be inclusive. It has to include recognizing our own frustrations, insecurities, and shortcomings, our limits and limitations, even our darkest and most destructive feelings, and the ways we may feel overwhelmed or pulled apart. It challenges us to "work with" these very energies consciously and systematically.

Taking on such a task is asking a great deal of ourselves. For in many ways, we ourselves are products, and sometimes, to one degree or another, prisoners of the events and circumstances of our own childhoods. Since childhood significantly shapes how we see ourselves and the world, our histories will inevitably shape our views of who our children are and "what they deserve," and of how they should be cared for, taught, and "socialized." As parents, we all tend to hold our views, whatever they are, very strongly and often unconsciously, as if in the grip of powerful spells. It is only when we become aware of

this shaping that we can draw on what was helpful, positive, and nurturing from the way we were parented, and grow beyond those aspects that may have been destructive and limiting.

For those of us who had to shut down, to "not see," to suppress our feelings in order to survive our own childhoods, becoming more mindful can be especially painful and difficult. In those moments when we are ruled by old demons, when harmful beliefs, destructive patterns, and nightmares from our own childhood rise up and we are plagued by dark feelings and black or white thinking, it is particularly difficult to stop and see freshly.

By no means are we suggesting that, in parenting mindfully, there is some ideal standard we have to measure ourselves against or strive to achieve. Mindful parenting is a continual process of deepening and refining our awareness and our ability to be present and to act wisely. It is not an attempt to attain a fixed goal or outcome, however worthy. An important part of the process is seeing ourselves with some degree of kindness and compassion. This includes seeing and accepting our limitations, our blindnesses, our humanness and fallibility, and working with them mindfully as best we can. The one thing we know we can always do, even in moments of darkness and despair that show us we don't know anything, is to begin again, fresh, right in that moment. Every moment is a new beginning, another opportunity for tuning in, and perhaps coming—in that very moment—to see and feel and know ourselves and our children in a new and deeper way.

For our love for our children is expressed and experienced in the quality of the moment-to-moment relationships we have with them. It deepens in everyday moments when we hold those moments in awareness and dwell within them. Love is expressed in how we pass the bread, or how we say good morning, and not just in the big trip to Disney World. It is in the everyday kindnesses we show, the understanding we bring, and in the openness of our acceptance. Love is expressed by embodying love in our actions. Whether we are facing good times or hard times on any given day or in any moment, the quality of our attention and our presence is a deep measure of our caring and of our love for our children.

This book is for people who care about the quality of family life and the well-being of their children, born and unborn, young or grown. We hope it will support parents in their efforts to show their love through their being and their actions in their everyday lives. It is not likely that we can do this unless we can be authentic in our own lives and in touch with the full range of feelings we experience—in a word, awake.

Parenting is a mirror in which we get to see the best of ourselves, and the worst; the richest moments of living, and the most frightening. The challenge to write about it sensibly is daunting. There are times when we feel that things are basically sound in our family. Our children seem happy, strong, and balanced. The very next day, or moment, all hell can break loose. Our world fills with confusion, despair, anger, frustration. What we thought we understood is of no use. All the rules seem to have changed overnight, or in an instant. We can feel like we have no idea what is going on or why. We can feel like the biggest of failures, like we don't know or understand anything.

But even in those moments, we try to remind ourselves as best we can to hold on to the thread of some kind of awareness of what is happening, no matter how unpleasant or painful things are. Hard as it is, we try to acknowledge what is actually taking place, and even in those difficult moments, try to see what is really needed from us. The alternative is to get caught up in our own reactivity and automatic behaviors, and surrender what compassion and clarity we have to our fear or fury or denial. And even when this happens, as it inevitably does at times, we try to reexamine it later, with greater calmness, in the hope of learning something from it.

This book comes out of our own experience as parents. Our experience will undoubtedly differ in many ways from your experience as a person and as a parent. You may find some of the specific ways we chose to parent to be very different from how you were parented or how you have parented your children. You may find yourself reacting with strong feelings to some of the things we say or to some of the choices we have made. The whole topic of parenting can arouse deep emotions in all of us, because it is so intimately connected with how we think of ourselves and with how we have chosen to live our lives.

We are not suggesting that you should do everything as we have done it, or if you didn't, that you were lacking in any way. As we all know, there are few easy answers or consistently simple solutions in parenting. Nor are we saying that mindfulness is the answer to all life's problems, or to all questions regarding parenting. We are simply trying to point to a way of seeing and a way of being which can be integrated in many different ways into your way of parenting and into your life. Ultimately, we all have to make our own individual decisions about what is best for our children and for ourselves, drawing most of all on our creativity and our capacity to be awake and aware in our lives.

We share with you our experiences and this orientation called mindful parenting, in the hope that some of its transformative potential will resonate with your values and your intentions, and be of some use as you chart your own path in your parenting.

Ultimately, mindful parenting is about seeing our children clearly, and listening to and trusting our own hearts. It gives form and support to the daily work of parenting with awareness. It helps us find ways to be sources of unconditional love for our children, from moment to moment, and day by day.

Cafi Cohen's *Homeschooling: The Teen Years* A Critical Review

by Leslie Shores

Before I read this book, *Homeschooling: The Teen Years*, by Cafi Cohen, my confidence level laid dormant at the bottom of the ladder. My oldest son had turned twelve in December and I cringed at the thought of tumultuous times ahead. My biggest fear was his boredom. I remained eager for another chance to conquer Algebra, peruse Shakespeare, and explore teen angst. His enthusiasm was minute. It was with great expectations I turned to page one.…

The introduction explains that the book is based on submissions gathered worldwide from 104 parent surveys and thirty-three shorter surveys from homeschooled teens. Immediately, I am impressed. This isn't a collection of just Ms. Cohen's ideas; these are ideas gleaned from many sources representing varied lifestyles, educational levels, economic positions, and attitudes. If you have any doubts that you are qualified to "teach" your teenager, these pages alone can empower you. According to Ms. Cohen, the parents who responded to the survey all "share two traits: the desire to provide the best education for their children and the willingness to support that goal with their time." Check and double check. I'm feeling better by the minute.

Part One deals with all the questions and insecurities most homeschooling parents own. It encourages evaluation of your relationship with your teen and honest discussion of his or her goals and expectations. The book presents both the positive and negative aspects of homeschooling a teen, but for the most part, this initial segment enthusiastically suggests that the rewards are priceless. Ms. Cohen offers us chapters with titles such as "The Joy of Learning with the Homeschooled Teen"; her positive attitude is certainly refreshing. The old adage "Teenagers are horrible to be around" is not welcome here. After I assess my family's current activities, from community service to piano lessons, my confidence level begins to creep up the rungs.

Jam-packed with "how to" ideas, Part Two is the hands-on section and true heart of the book. What's an interesting way to study the Constitution? Should I continue ferrying my children to museums for art appreciation while drowning in choruses of "This will be soo boring!"? Chapters bearing titles such as "Reading and Writing to Learn," "Math, Science and Computer Literacy," and "Understanding Our Life and Times: History, Geography, Government, and Economics" reveal the startling answer to these questions and to others.

I eagerly delve into the excerpts from the surveyed families as streams of uncomplicated and truly useful activities pour forth. Consider this terrific tip: "One way to sneak in good fiction and non-fiction is to simply let teenagers trip over it in your home." (Of course, in MY home, my son would just trip over it and continue walking without bothering to pick it up! But more on humor later.…) Or how about: "Many homeschoolers who otherwise find history unappealing enjoy exploring the history of a hobby or special interest." The "How We Did It" inserts, sprinkled throughout, offer many interesting approaches. For example, under "How We Did It, How Teenage Homeschoolers Learn Science," Ms. Cohen suggests Nature Field trips, Lab kits, TV science specials and documentaries, and Activities such as 4-H.

Part Three discusses a number of important issues, including the creation of a well-stocked home learning environment, the use of computer technology and television, and finally stepping out, whether to paid employment or college. The surprisingly short chapter "The Learning Journey Merges Onto The Information Superhighway" provides the quote, "Television provokes more controversy than computer use." I found this very startling indeed. It is hard for me to understand why these two media can stir up a maelstrom of inflexible, inadequate attitudes in otherwise flexible, competent families. In support of her assertion, Ms. Cohen quotes "Cheryl," who explains, "We have never owned a TV, mostly because we would not be self-disciplined enough to turn it off and build relationships within the family. We rent a TV for one week per year during the Thanksgiving

Leslie is the optimistic mom of two spirited boys, ages nine and twelve. She can often be found reading to her children or by some miracle, quietly by herself. She is looking forward to her sons' teen years, relishing the idea of having two pairs of strong arms to carry rocks to her beloved cactus garden.

holidays. Whatever videos we watch then last us the year." I was concerned that the teenage users of both TV and computers had little input in this chapter, as most of the quotes and tips obviously came from the parents. There is no question that we are a media-based society; to eliminate or severely limit a teenager's involvement in these technologies based on adult fears could be a dangerous consideration, one I had hoped would be discussed at greater length here. Preparing one's children for the technologically driven, computer filled, robotic future seems to be a reality this book overlooks.

More disappointing news: Chapters of this book seem to be missing. For example, try to digest the fact that a 300-plus page book on homeschooling teens never mentions sex education, spirituality, alcohol and drug abuse, social etiquette, dating, mental health or morality. Amazingly, this book only covers the surface topics and doesn't respect the hormonal driven changes in teens that most assuredly affect their daily outlook. It is impossible to separate their emotional state from their learning attitude, and consequently struggles arise. These complex issues should have been addressed and resourced thoroughly.

Overall, this is a terrific REFERENCE book, crammed with imaginative, practical ideas to help us all smoothly ascend our own "confidence ladders." I especially enjoyed the "Simple Starting Points" and "Resources" listed at the end of each chapter, which beg to be highlighted and book marked. If you seek a book with well organized, direct advice and insights in regard to the "schooling" of your teen, your quest is over. However, be forewarned that not all of the bases are covered here, some of which are the most prevalent in a socially active teen's life.

Finally, there is one more aspect of this book I sorely missed — it has a sense of humor. It is universally known that all human beings dealing with teenagers cannot survive without one.

The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling by Pat Farenga

Reviewed by Paula Weigel

Until last July I hadn't given the notion of homeschooling much serious thought. I am a product of the public school and state university system and have, by most accounts, done just fine. So, to suddenly consider something that seems like a radical departure from the norm means that a significant event has occurred in my life. That significant event was the arrival of Gabriel, my first child. The hopes and fears that I suspect most parents experience had come home to roost. The endless "What Ifs?" that appear out of nowhere in the middle of the night have opened up a whole new world of worry and concern. Among those questions that have hit me hardest are these: What and how do I want Gabriel to learn? What kind of learning environment will encourage him to be the kind of person we hope he will be?

Reading Pat Farenga's book *The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling* gave me, a novice in the parenting arena, a wonderful new perspective on the concepts of learning and education. The book is intended as a guide for those who are ready to pursue homeschooling, and from that standpoint, Farenga provides a comprehensive, insightful and extremely user-friendly, step-by-step guide. He advises readers about how to create an environment that best suits the unique educational needs, style, learning pace, and interests of their child. He also goes beyond the practical, allowing readers room to contemplate what education and learning mean to them personally. In this book, he presents the myriad of possibilities that homeschooling affords and dispells many of the common myths and misunderstandings that surround homeschooling.

Farenga begins by noting that children learn quite naturally from the moment that they become part of this world. Indeed, as I watch Gabriel today, I realize that there is no "teaching" occurring in the conventional sense of the word; he is motivated by his own innate curiosity to investigate the world and learn through his interactions with that world. Farenga talks about this in his book, the fact that children "learn through living" — a philosophy that seems to be a primary underpinning of the homeschooling experience.

A recurring theme in *The Beginner's Guide* is that learning should be connected to real life. Farenga reminds us that we learn in all sorts of ways every day through our interactions, at play or at work, and through time spent on our own, reflecting on life. Learning doesn't have to be reduced to a lesson, or to answers which are right or wrong. Throughout this book I found myself thinking back to how I learned in public school, re-examining the experiences I had as a student. At some point in my elementary school education I experienced a subtle shift in the source of my motivation, a change from real and sincere curiosity about words and reading and numbers to a desire to achieve for the sake of achieving. I found myself to be more concerned with how well I performed, and developed a fear of failure as well as of disappointment from my parents and teachers. I want to spare Gabriel as much of those feelings of fear, shame, and frustration that naturally arise when you don't "get it" in a competitive environment. In *The Beginner's Guide*, Farenga provides a refreshing look at what happens when children learn with a genuine sense of curiosity and joy in the process of learning. As these homeschooled children are allowed to pursue subjects that interest them and to move at their own pace in learning these subjects, a certain confidence appears to be built within them. Developing confidence in their own abilities, not based on achievement at the expense of others, appears to create real and lasting self-esteem.

The Beginner's Guide describes the background of the homeschooling movement, followed by a general characterization of homeschooling experiences, giving the reader a sense of the different ways people choose to homeschool. It is in this section that Farenga talks about socialization, probably one of the most commonly asked-about issues concerning homeschooling and (based on my own informal and unscientific survey) one of the bigger criticisms of the homeschooling approach

Paula Weigel is currently employed in the semiconductor capital equipment industry in Silicon Valley as a Director in Marketing. She was public-schooled in Des Moines, Iowa, and received her Bachelors in Industrial Engineering from the University of Iowa in 1989. In 1994, Paula graduated from the Sloan School of Management at MIT with a Masters in Management Science. She is the proud parent of eight month-old Gabriel Weigel, her most valued accomplishment to date.

to education. He provides a compelling argument here against those who criticize homeschooling on this ground, stating that "it is the idea that children must be socialized by compulsory schooling rather than family and other institutions, that prevents them from accepting homeschooling as an alternative." Why is it generally accepted that children are and should be "socialized" by other children their own age within a school system? To be sure, being socialized to and by other children is an important aspect of socialization in general, but it isn't the most important aspect. I would venture that most people hope and feel that their role as parents has the most influence on their children's social development and ultimately who they are as individuals, not compulsory schooling. Homeschooling is what one makes of it, and any pre-conceived ideas about what happens with homeschooled children (for example, the lack of social skills) are probably not all that accurate. Consistent with the intention that *The Beginner's Guide* be used as a guide, Farenga includes in this section a list of additional resources that go deeper into the subject of socialization.

This book isn't just about
how to homeschool,
although from that perspective
it is certainly practical,
comprehensive, and
resource-rich.
In a larger sense
it is about how
to be a better parent.

Farenga describes the demographics of homeschoolers (again giving the reader a list of additional resources for more specific homeschooling types) and then discusses how homeschooling works with working parents. I found this section particularly useful in thinking about how homeschooling would work in my own family and how we would need to balance our lives around this type of commitment. It is clear to me after reading *The Beginner's Guide* that the decision to homeschool should not be taken lightly or without a serious and realistic assessment of what will be required from both parents.

For any newcomer to homeschooling, perhaps the greatest curiosity lies in what happens in a typical day of homeschooling. *The Beginner's Guide* addresses this question head-on, giving what now seems like an obvious answer: There is no typical day. Farenga cites several anecdotes illustrating the range of differences in how families homeschool, including the methods and ways in which teaching and learning work for them. His statement that "homeschooling children learn through conversation, through solitary reflection, through play, through outside classes, through volunteer work and apprenticeships" is an insightful one, an idea that really should apply to all children — homeschooled or not. He also points out that homeschooling does not necessarily mean that all learning is done at home, with parents always providing guidance; in his own situation, he and his wife are not the only ones involved in their children's homeschooling. He describes some of the ways that the learning horizon of children may be expanded, including scheduling activities with other children, forming clubs around common interests, or through classes offered through other outlets. This section clearly demonstrates the freedom that homeschooling allows both children and parents in pursuing — at their own pace — the things and topics that interest them.

In the next part of the book, Farenga embarks upon a discussion of what one would need to know about how to begin, and gives readers many options to think about with respect to how they might structure (or not structure) their child's curricula. According to the author, there are as many approaches as there are homeschoolers. Newcomers may want to use a standard curriculum until they become comfortable enough to diverge from that curriculum to spend time on other, non-academic topics. Farenga reassures readers that, however they want to do it, it's OK; their initial choices in how to homeschool may or may not change over time, but that flexibility to change the "how" of homeschooling is part of the process. He emphasizes that the ability of parents to stay attuned to the homeschooled child and his or her needs (such as the child's desire to move on to new subjects or to stay with old ones) and enable a natural path of learning is the foundation to a good education.

From his years of experience at Holt Associates, Pat Farenga has become familiar with the newcomer's thought processes and concerns. By relating anecdotes about such things as a typical homeschooler's day, how homeschoolers view their own education and their relationships with non-homeschoolers, and the ways in which parents deal with subjects they don't feel knowledgeable about, Farenga inserts a realistic aspect to the book that only people who are familiar with homeschooling can effectively convey.

This book isn't just about how to homeschool, although from that perspective it is certainly practical, comprehensive, and resource-rich. In a larger sense it is about how to be a better parent. The Farengas' carefully-considered decision to "unschool" their children stemmed from a deep desire to have their children learn from the institution of the family rather than from the institution of school. The seriousness with which they take their parenting responsibility is admirable, as is their approach to learning and education from the perspective of what is best for their children, not what is best (or easiest) for themselves. Pat Farenga gives read-

ers the confidence to think outside of the box, not only in their choice of a learning environment for their child's education, but also in ways to provide their child with learning experiences outside of academics. He encourages us to believe in our own ability as teachers and to take advantage of all the resources which surround us, relying on others when appropriate as part of the educational journey. His suggestion to incorporate the use of libraries, museums, and clubs such as 4-H and Boy Scouts into a child's life is an extremely useful reminder to me as a parent in thinking about all the different educational and interaction opportunities available in the community.

The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling is a comprehensive and helpful guide for anyone interested in homeschooling. It is a good synopsis of what one would need to do to pursue homeschooling — from the practical aspects to the legal ones. Farenga's ability to go beyond the practical aspects of homeschooling is where the book provides real value to me. He offers excellent insight into the issues that are (to me at least) more intimidating than the "how-to" ones — issues of a more emotional nature. He raises questions relevant to novices, such as "Will I know how to do this? Will my child be motivated? Will he get the education and socialization that he needs to live in this world?" His answers to those questions left me with the thought that my ability to homeschool our children is not all that different from my ability to simply be a good parent. Not only is homeschooling an experience in which we learn by doing, but the results might well produce self-confident and independent individuals who retain a lifelong love of learning.

Reading *The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling* opened up my mind to the countless ways that I can provide an unencumbered and positive learning environment for my son, and gave me an enlightening glimpse into all the possibilities that homeschooling offers.

I also gained a much deeper appreciation for the commitment of time and energy that homeschooling requires. Perhaps most importantly, *The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling* forced me to confront and assess my own concepts of learning and school. I now wonder why I had confined myself to thinking that learning is an activity that is primarily the domain of school. Don't we learn quite competently in the first few years of life through our senses and our experiences and by observing those role models around us? When and why does learning become a chore rather than a natural pursuit of things that interest us? Pat Farenga offers alternatives and inspiration as I ponder the kind of experience I would like Gabriel to have in the pursuit of his own education.

The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling
by Pat Farenga. 128-page paperback, $10.95.
Published by Holt Associates (1-888-925-9298)
and available at local bookstores.

Dear Paths/Dear Readers

We thank those of you who write to let us know how we're doing. We're happy to know that we continue to provide a forum of support for parents, teachers, students, neighbors, and others who are interested in pursuing meaningful, holistic lives and that we're maturing well as a magazine.

I loved the interview with [Charlie Miles], Richard [Prystowsky], and the Kabat-Zinns in the recent *Paths of Learning* [January 2001]. In fact, I thought the issue was the best to date, a sort of coming-of-age of the journal.

Betsy Herbert
Boulder Creek, CA

I am so happy to be receiving your magazine, *Paths of Learning*. It is helping me so much to manage my different ideas of what education should be. The articles are helping me connect and realize that there are others out there who are also trying to find the right "paths" for children to learn. It seems to me that our children are becoming trapped in systems that are ultimately organized to make money first and educate second. I have read many books by advocates for alternative education and in my heart I know that we are putting much too much emphasis on the idea that our children are not learning instead of realizing that they are learning every minute. We are the role models from whom they learn. Are we good role models? That is the question. Also, when do children need structure? Are ritalin and other mind controlling drugs really necessary? It scares me to think that so many parents are allowing their children to be drugged in order that they fit in and get the grade in school. I hate the word "school"! Please continue [your] very wonderful magazine.… I am so relieved that we are talking alternatives. My hope is that people start listening to the truth about what we are doing and where we really should be going with education. Our children are so precious and beautiful, every one. Let's celebrate all they do know and let them have a childhood. Bravo, *Paths of Learning*! You are on the high road.

[The writer of this response wishes to remain anonymous.]

As always, we view our articles not as ends in themselves, but, rather, as parts of ongoing dialogues and debates. To this end, we invite readers to take part in the discussions by sending us their thoughts on the articles that we publish. The piece that we published by Daniel Greenberg in our January 2001 issue, "Learning for the 21st Century," prompted one of our readers to do just that. We present, below, this reader's critical analysis of Dan's article, as well as Dan's reply, and we invite all of you to join the discussion by sending us your thoughts on the issues at stake here.

Editor, *Paths of Learning*:

In the January 2001 issue of *Paths of Learning* (page 46), Daniel Greenberg reports "virtually unanimous agreement" among a broad diversity of educators that, among other things, "… a content-based curriculum, in which a body of information is imparted to students, is entirely inappropriate as a means of preparing children for their adult roles." I wish to take issue with this conclusion, as I believe it is a result of fatally flawed logic.

The reason Greenberg gives for this conclusion is that "this century will be one of constant, rapid change … and people will have to be life-long learners who know how to seek out and master what they need at any given time in their lives." This statement is true enough but to go from here to the conclusion that content is inappropriate and may be dismissed from the curriculum is *non sequitur* — it doesn't follow.

First, not all knowledge is in a state of flux and change as Greenburg suggests. The basic laws of chemistry and physics are now understood and will remain constant as they have since the beginning of time. The basic anatomy and physiology, the major roles of the various organs, etc. is known and will not change. Likewise the basic structure of the solar system, basic ecological principles, basic geological phenomena, and many other areas of science are now understood to a degree beyond any meaningful doubt. The same may be said regarding other fields of study as well.

The tremendous flux of new information involves progressive advancement and deepening of understanding at the edges, so to speak, and developing new technologies based on that advancing understanding. Yet, the basic principles at the core remain unchanged. All bodies will continue to move, or not move, as dictated by physical forces. Chemical reactions will continue to obey the laws of chemistry, the human body will still function according to biological principles, and so on.

Second, a person's increase in knowledge and understanding is a process of building on what they have already learned from previous study and/or experience. I cannot just go to the internet or anywhere else and gain any kind of meaningful understanding of nuclear physics without first gaining an in-depth understanding concerning the nature of atoms. Similarly, I cannot gain a meaningful understanding concerning a new cancer therapy without first having an understanding of how cells normally grow, divide, and differ-

entiate to form the body's tissues. In short, it is a foundation of basic knowledge/experience (content) that generates the desire and the ability to gain more.

Thus, to pretend that students can, much less will, become life-long learners without having acquired a substantial structure of content to build on is an unmitigated absurdity. Dismissing content from the curriculum is to remove the bottom rungs from the ladder that students will need to attain further knowledge. To break away from the confines of ignorance, to have the freedom and ability to explore the vast realms of knowledge, students will need a curriculum that gives them a repertoire of more content, not less.

Of course, this brings us to again confront the question: Exactly what lessons should constitute the curriculum? There has been a very justified reaction against "content-based" curricula that demand students to commit long lists of unrelated facts to rote memorization. Indeed, the agony endured and the lack of inspiration engendered by such curricula are ample reasons for throwing them out. But to throw out the content is to throw out the baby with the bath.

My contention is that children can [be] guided to gain a comprehensive foundation of content while at the same time fostering their natural inclination to question, explore, and discover in an atmosphere of "self-initiated" learning. The essence of the technique is bringing children to make more pertinent observations and ponder what they are already familiar with — the way their shadows change in length and direction through the day, for example — and then building on this incrementally and systematically. To illustrate, the movement of shadows can be connected to understanding the rotation of the earth, telling time, compass directions, and [can] lead into further aspects of geography.

As each subject is presented and developed in this way, students continually experience how their own observations and thought processes are key in their gaining knowledge and understanding. They further see how each lesson builds on previous lessons and provides a stepping stone to the next. In other words, they gain a solid, structured foundation of content, and the talent for building further knowledge and life-long learning is truly engendered.

For those interested, a complete, detailed description of the curriculum I propose may be found in my book, *Nebel's Elementary Education*, available from www.1stbooks.com.

Bernard J. Nebel

Daniel Greenberg responds:

Bernard J. Nebel's letter is a perfect validation of my argument against content-based curricula. It is ridden with errors and misses the key point I was making in my article.

Let me preface my reply by [writing] that I am a trained physicist and historian, and have taught both subjects in the Physics and History departments at Columbia University before becoming involved with Sudbury Valley School.

Nebel says, "The basic laws of chemistry and physics are now understood and will remain constant as they have since the beginning of time." In fact, those basic laws are as elusive today as they have always been; the main task of physicists on the cutting edge is to make some progress towards a better understanding of those laws. Nor is it even universally agreed that the laws themselves, though unknown to us, have remained constant over time, there being a respectable school of thought that maintains that the physical universe operates under an evolving set of laws. As for all the other "basics" in Mr. Nebel's third paragraph, most are likewise under investigation, and none are "understood to a degree beyond any meaningful doubt." Few people in the fields mentioned would hold to that view, and those that do have a short memory, since the last time anyone claimed that all basic laws are fully understood was towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century made a mockery of their arrogance. Of course, if Mr. Nebel means "trivial" rather than "basic," he is right to a certain extent, since it is known beyond reasonable doubt that the sun exists, that certain planets exist, that the body contains a number of organs such as a heart, lungs, a liver, etc. But no practicing cardiologist, for example, will be rash enough to say that s/he understands thoroughly the basic physiology of the heart, and all that remains is a "deepening understanding of the edges."

Mr. Nebel seems to think that "basic laws" means such things as "bodies … move, or [do] not move, as dictated by physical forces." That, of course, is not a law at all, but a tautological definition of "physical forces" — to wit, that which makes bodies move. The laws have to do with what those forces are, which we do not "know" today any more than Aristotle knew them 2300 years ago, although people have their theories.

A curriculum based on the kind of knowledge Mr. Nebel thinks is thoroughly understood would be a curriculum based on superficiality and misinformation.

In addition, it should be clear that I never implied that people don't need to learn a bunch of stuff in order to do something. Of course a person needs a background in physics in order to do nuclear physics, and a person needs a background in biology and chemistry in order to work on cancer therapy, etc. My point — and this is the central fallacy of a content-based curriculum — is that not every single person needs to know physics and biology and chemistry and geology and ecology and astronomy and "other fields of study as well" in order to function effectively as productive and creative adults in their areas of interest. Being a life-long learner means being able and eager to absorb background information about one's evolving interests throughout a lifetime, and since each person's interests and talents are unique, so too is the information each person needs to acquire as s/he goes through life.

The key is to be able to learn effectively on one's own initiative, and this ability is precisely what the prescribed curriculum does its best to kill.

To state, as Mr. Nebel does, that schools should be "bringing children to make more pertinent observations and ponder what they are already familiar with" is an outrageous affront to the native abilities of all children to make all the observations, and do all the pondering, that they need, without the help of Mr. Nebel or anyone else, thanks to Nature and evolution, which [have] provided so well for the human race. Why on earth every child should relate "the movement of shadows" to "rotation of the earth, telling time, compass directions [which, by the way, are different for every location], and...further aspects of geography" is beyond me. What's wrong with a child relating the movement of shadows to shapes and forms, to aesthetic pleasure, to ghostly fantasies, or to any other delight that they derive from shadows?

Long ago, Aristotle noticed that "human beings are naturally curious," and use that curiosity, unaided, to make observations, inform their thought processes, and gain knowledge and understanding. Humanity has been doing this with great success long before the introduction of artificial curricula (a very recent aberration). To be sure, anyone wishing to read Mr. Nebel's book might enjoy the experience; but to make that book, or any other, the basis of a universal curriculum designed to replace children's unencumbered, joyful journey of self-discovery is to run directly counter to the needs of our times.

Our January 2001 issue also contained an informative and provocative exchange between Martine Archer, one of our readers, and Herbert Kohl, concerning some comments that Herb had made about homeschooling in the interview that we did with him for our Summer 2000 issue. In the course of his comments, Herb made some critical remarks about the writings of John Taylor Gatto, to whose work Martine Archer had appealed for support of her views: "John Taylor Gatto's writings about the origins of public education[,]" Herb wrote, "are idiosyncratic, mean spirited, and historically distorted." He then countered Gatto's views by discussing, among others, the work of Froebel, Pestolozzi, and Dewey.

Shortly after the January 2001 issue of Paths *came out, we received a lengthy letter from John Taylor Gatto, written in response to the above cited comments of Herb's. In the spirit of continuing the dialogue, we present John's letter below, in full. We invite those of you who want to join the discussion to send us your thoughts, too.*

Dear Paths of Learning:

I'm grateful to Herb Kohl for pointing out that my writings on the origins of public education are 1) idiosyncratic 2) mean-spirited 3) historically distorted. Numbers 1 and 3 your readers might want to verify for themselves on my website **www.johntaylorgatto.com** where two chapters of the galleys of my latest book, the one referred to by Martine Archer in your [Winter 2001 issue's] letter column, are contained, and where eventually the whole book will be so that it can be read without cost. Let me appeal to Herb's more generous spirit to do the same with his corpus, Lord knows the poor of the world will appreciate that.

Incidentally, any visitor to the website who leaves his or her name will be eligible for a drawing next September for a free month at my oceanview apartment in Spain. No purchase necessary. I decided to offer that in my never-ending struggle against a mean-spirited nature, a depraved spirit I choose to believe we all share, even Herb.

I'm not sure Herb is referring to my latest book, *The Underground History of American Education*, which will exist only in bound galleys until late next Spring, but even if not, where I seem to have transgressed is in my under-standing of the actual role figures like Froebel, Pestalozzi, Calvin Stowe (Herb and I differed on that gentleman long ago in a session I gave at Apple Computer), and John Dewey. I would also emphatically deny his statement to Martine Archer that "There has been a long and effective tradition of state supported education in Great Britain, etc, etc." Not only do I find British schools, in general, even more despicable than our own, but the best anatomy of what they are about is contained in Arnold Toynbee's monumental *History*.

If I read correctly through Sir Arnold's elegant prose style, the schools there were seized upon immediately and bent to the needs of a commercial last [sic]. Through them the government is able to communicate effectively the wishes of industry and institutional leaderships for this type of boy or girl or that.

I recognize that Herb will probably find that idiosyncratic, mean-spirited, and historically distorted but he will have to take that up with the Toynbee Trust, not me. I might also add that a rather nifty little volume is making the rounds at present, a stirring denunciation of the British school institution written by its own first (I believe) chief school inspector. The name eludes me for the moment, but not the text. I'm certain Martine Archer knows of the book and could refer HK to it with greater precision.

The greatest part of my new book is about the inexorable rise of a new British episcopate in America, levered into place importantly by the "new" school institution which appeared whole about 1910 in America. Since I spend 310,000 words making this case in *Underground History*, I won't go into any particulars now except to say that it's the only general field theory that can make sense of the confusion of school history since 1865. Like evolution, historical explanations are all theories; despite what the Germans thought there is no way to prove or disprove historical theories—even of the scientific variety like evolution.

But that doesn't mean narrative explanations are valueless, indeed they are the only thing which makes any human sense. We count on them to orient ourselves to a welter of meaningless facts. I've spent the better part of 10 years trying to understand intellectually the 30 years I spent in government school classrooms. I do believe I have a genuine piece of truth in my book(s), it feels right to me and more important than

that, it allows me to make predictions about the way this thing is westering.

Homeschoolers like Martine Archer are the most important counter-revolution in western society today. Nothing that 1960s retreads, like myself can say or do is remotely as important. Time has passed us by and although that's not to say that we have no value, because we do, anyone who's really committed to helping the children of the future will be thinking already far out of the box of forced schooling.

Learning is too easy to do, too universal a potential, for any of us to seriously champion institutional anything as the way to utopia. I wrote *The Underground History* as an essay (not a history) to help free those whose conditioning or self-interest allows them to listen. It's too late for me and my own children, but like Martine I feel a moral responsibility for other people's children. She discharges her own obligation by protecting her kids from the state, by writing letters to *Paths of Learning* making statements so wise and caring the rest of us are put on notice that PhD's and contracts with school districts aren't where it's at; I discharge my own obligation these days by writing books informed by reflections, but actually distilled from three decades locked away from society, in the monastery of forced schooling

And Herb discharges his own obligation as well, I wouldn't say ever that he doesn't.

My own brief against dead souls like Pestalozzi and Froebel who are regularly dredged up for shallow panegyrics by holistic school folk is that they weren't at all as described. In a search for practitioners of better educational practices than homeschooling or local schooling arrangements, the early arrangers of our first myths of American (ard also German, French, and English) schooling found it necessary to distill supposedly "scientific" principles from a group of supposed forbears, beginning with Comenius (real eggheads can take you back even further). The victims selected, like Pestalozzi and Froebel, didn't quite fit the mold wanted, but following orthodox academic practice, even then, what didn't fit was forgotten.

Why this matters at all is that unless the mystique of their reputations by popular acclamation is untracked, a mischievous sort of hero worship ensues — misleading the student still further into believing that someone else, worthy to be emulated, had the right answers early on. And that those immortals have spawned a steady line of descent among right-thinking people. Every teacher college in the country, for instance, digs up those Swiss and Austrian corpses regularly, to damn them with faint praise. What a waste, they are only scrims.

It only takes a little work to find the stranger truth Pestalozzi failed at everything he touched; none of his school enterprises sustained themselves owing to staff revolts, community displeasure, and a difficulty in acquiring and keeping pupils. Nothing odd about that, it's the familiar story of the "free schools" of the late 6Os and early 70s. At the very moment they were being embraced by the press, they were stone cold dead, self-slaughtered for the most part. I was faculty liaison to many of these places at the time, as a hire at Queens College expressly for that purpose.

If P. were only remembered for his humanitarian attitudes toward children, who would be so mean-spirited to attack his well-meaning failures? But he isn't a memory history has kept alive for signal kindnesses, he was a deliberately manufactured memory, kept alive by a curious coalition of disparate elements — the Prussian government who sent more than a dozen assistants to observe his establishment, a nobleman named Von Fellenberg who had important ties to Freemasonry (as did P. himself), and to the Quaker/Anglican establishment of Philadelphia, who we might properly regard as the founder of the School-To-Work movement poisoning institutional schooling today. Ties as well to the romantic socialists of Great Britain (not the later Marxian variety), and — I'll stop there.

It only takes a little work to find the stranger truth Pestalozzi failed at everything he touched; none of his school enterprises sustained themselves owing to staff revolts, community displeasure, and a difficulty in acquiring and keeping pupils.

Pestalozzian schooling is the original dumb-them-down movement; it is at the core of the famous/infamous Lincoln School experiment at Columbia Teachers, ditto the Gary Schools praised by Dewey (in *Schools of Tomorrow* [1915?]) in the U.S. Steel company town of Gary, Indiana — both projects underwritten by the Rockefeller family, as was T.C. itself. Rockefeller largesse followed Dewey wherever he went, but that's another- story.

P. was nearly illiterate himself, but boasted that that was a strength in relating to his near-illiterate charges who, by a steady diet of fun and games, could be kept that way. Nobody meant any harm by this, of course, it was a way of keeping everything in its place, like the ancient Anglican "Homily of Obedience" decrees.

The mechanism fascinated the Prussians, just as it did the Philadelphia Quakers, the Episcopalians, and even — God forgive him — Robert Owen, a man determined to achieve utopia on Earth. It's true that if Pestalozzi hadn't been resurrected as a patsy another would have been found, but that's hardly grounds for his sanctification.

Froebel is an even stranger case, were he alive today he would be in a padded cell. His theory that children are vegetables is not, in itself, enough to condemn him, the freethinkers of that day, just as in our own, were rabid about replacing the

theory that children were unique spirits sent from God with unique destinies, for collectivist scientific theories which could endow a professional class with justification to replace family sovereignty. Froebel wasn't the only "kids are vegetables" nut around, and this particular hobby-horse is certainly preferable to the "children as machines" and "children as empty containers" screwballs, but Froebel went beyond giving his opinion.

His great life's ambition — he wrote! — was to become a member of the Prussian Army. He was crushed when told as an Austrian that dream was hopeless (you see, even the Prussians had principles, an Austrian, indeed!). And yet he did manage to serve the Prussians for a while; his gardens of child-vegetables were a way to weaken the stamp of idiosyncratic (there's that word again) family life and replace it with rational principles subscribed to by the State.

Eventually the Prussians became suspicious of Froebel and he was drummed out of their society, but fortunately he fell into the hands of Wagner's mistress (you recall the musician-fellow, who had interesting holistic ideas of his own). The Countess von-Bulow paid Froebel's bills and saw to it that he came to the attention of some pretty important Americans in the Boston/New York axis. The rest, and kindergarten, is history.

Dewey is an altogether more complicated matter indeed. I won't even begin to wrestle with his legacy here except to say that Herb Kohl's statement that his "educational ideas had a major positive affect [sic] on public education" is far from the truth. Dewey has had almost no influence on government schools at all, a truth that Deweyans are among the first to acknowledge, with bitterness. Noam Chomsky, my own favorite cage-rattler in our undemocratic and unrepublican America, is, alas, a Dewey booster, for reasons I'm unable to discern from his talks which mention Dewey. Yet on one thing we agree — Dewey is unread and unacted upon. Surely the days for martial rhetoric about sad-eyed Dewey are long gone.

If this sounds mean-spirited of me, how would you categorize Dewey's actions in destroying the legendary progressive Randolph Bourne's writing career, behind Bourne's back, by notifying every magazine in which Bourne's articles appeared that they would have to choose: Publish Bourne or publish Dewey, not both. That's the kind of mean-spirit which puts my own feeble efforts to shame.

The best to you all.
John Taylor Gatto

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 488
Ashfield, MA 01330
(413)628-0227
maryskole@aol.com
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.

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.

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.

Institute for Democracy in Education
College of Education, McCracken Hall
Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701-2979
(740) 593-4531
www.ohiou.edu/ide

Promotes educational practices that help students develop democratic attitudes and values by directly experiencing the ideals of equality, liberty and community. IDE is a partnership of teachers, administrators, parents and students working for positive school change. IDE publishes the journal Democracy & Education, which provides first hand accounts of democratic practices and critiques of authoritarian trends such as standardized testing. IDE also sponsors conferences and workshops and publishes curricular materials.

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.

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.

Sudbury Valley School Press
2 Winch Street
Framingham, MA 01701
(508) 877-3030

Sudbury Valley School has educated young people in a free, democratic environment for over thirty years, and educators associated with the school have written numerous essays and books on the philosophy and concrete results of the school's distinctive approach. SVS Press distributes these thought-provoking writings, along with audio and video tapes, periodicals, and planning kits for starting new democratic schools.

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

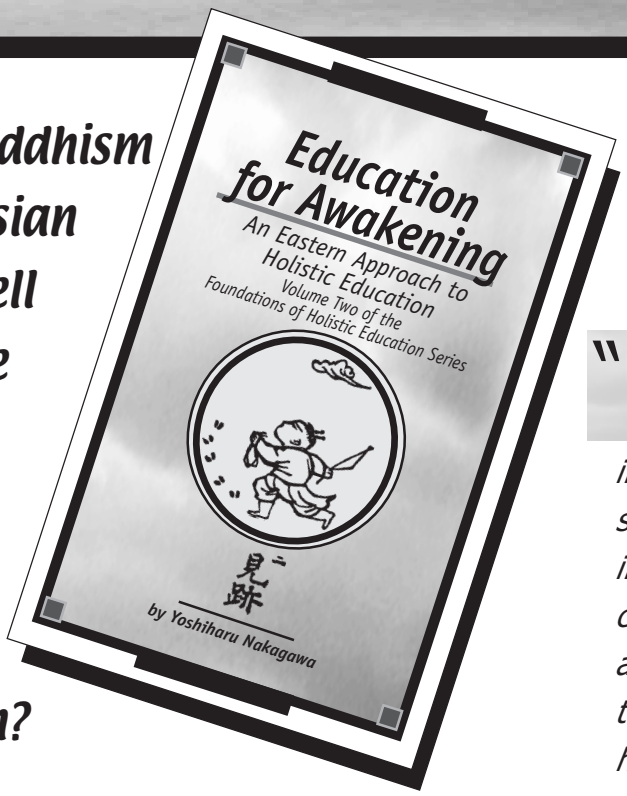
Youth on Board is a nonprofit organization that helps young people and adults think differently about each other so that they can work together to change their communities. They offer highly interactive training programs for young people and adults and a wide array of publications on youth involvement 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.

Visit Paths of Learning Online at ww.great-ideas.org

Education for Awakening



What do Buddhism and other Asian traditions tell us about the spiritual, moral, and ecological dimensions of education?

Japanese philosopher Yoshiharu Nakagawa explores the holistic worldview of traditional eastern ways of thought and demonstrates how they could transform modern approaches to teaching and learning.

$18.95

To order, or for more information, contact:

Foundation for Educational Renewal
P.O. Box 328
Brandon, Vermont 05733
(800) 639-4122
www.PathsOfLearning.net

"This is a pioneering, inspiring work of interpretation and synthesis—filled with profound insights yet written in a cogent and lucid style. It is an important contribution to the serious literature on holistic education."

Ron Miller, Ph.D., founding editor of *Holistic Education Review* and author of *What Are Schools For? Holistic Education in American Culture*

Education for Awakening is volume two of the Foundations of Holistic Education series published by The Foundation for Educational Renewal, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the transformation of teaching and learning. The foundation promotes books on holistic and alternative education, and publishes the quarterly magazine *Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities.*

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

A sampling of features in the next issue of

PathsofLearning
Options for Families&Communities

In the Next Issue of *Paths*

- Teaching approaches and learning environments that truly allow young people to thrive as seen through the eyes of both the students and their parents
- Reflections on their school experiences by graduates of the Community School in Camden, Maine
- An article by David Carlson on his daughter's bilingual and bicultural experiences
- A mother's interview with her daughter, "How Katie Got Unschooled"
- A profile article on The Touchstone Center, "a nonprofit educational organization for supporting the creative and imaginative efforts of children and adults alike," by Richard Lewis, the Center's founder and director
- "Connecting With Nature, With Others, and With Ourselves," an article by Tina Dawson on the merits of outdoor education
- Plus book reviews, kids' writings, poetry, and a whole lot more!