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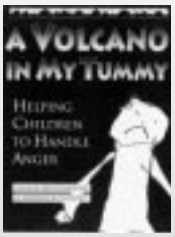

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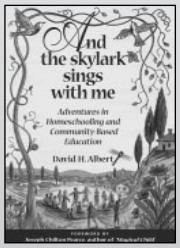

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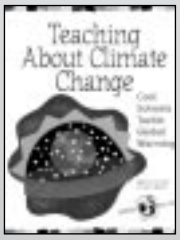

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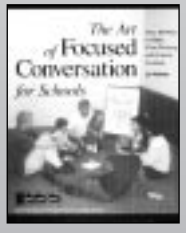

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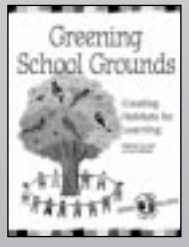

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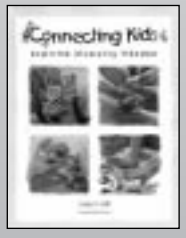

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EDITORIAL

Honoring Others in the Moment, or, Loving Without Regard to Outcome

> "Yet I see now that we become better people if we can touch a hardened soul, bring joy into someone's life, or just be an example for others, instead of hiding behind our silence. The key is in using what we know."
>
> —Jarvis Jay Masters, *Finding Freedom: Writings from Death Row*

Recently, as I was preparing the manuscripts for this issue of *Paths*, I happened to be reading the very powerful, very moving book from which the above epigraph is taken. Knowing the substance of the articles that we would be presenting here, I was quite taken aback when I came to the part in the book in which the author discusses what he saw as the "unreal" nature of his having been charged with murder. He writes: "A woman judge was assigned to the case, and I remember having had a woman judge the first time I was taken away from my mother." When he was a child, Jarvis Jay Masters was a ward of the state; today, he lives on death row in San Quentin Prison.

In his present existential crisis, as he attempts to understand "what was going on with [him]," Masters offers the following analysis: "Looking back, I realize that it wasn't rage that motivated me, though I hid behind anger to avoid certain truths about my life. I remember once walking down the street, when I came across a tree growing in the pavement of a parking lot between cars. My first reaction was to look at it, study it, wonder. I thought, 'How is this possible?' But I wasn't in school, I'd never learn these things. I smashed the little tree because I knew I'd never go to school. There was no room for wonder in my life."

Reading Masters' book, especially this section, I couldn't help but think of the relevance of the author's words to the deeply committed and heartfelt work of so many good-faith educators. In particular, I was struck by the author's deep insight into the relationship between the presence or absence of wonder in a child's life and the presence or absence of the child's healthy growth and development. For those adults who work with children, one crucial implication of this insight is that, if adults do not value, honor, and nurture children's innate wondering, or imagining, they might harm or impede children's healthy growth and development. Concerning this particular point, as I thought of Masters' testimony and insight I recalled that, in the last issue of *Paths*, we profiled The Touchstone Center, which we described as a "unique and wonderfully exciting venture in child-centered, child-honoring learning." In this issue, we offer excerpts from some of the writings of Richard Lewis, the founder and director of The Touchstone Center, who has dedicated his efforts to honoring the connection between children's imagining and their healthy growth. Perhaps not so coincidentally, one set of excerpts that we offer here is from a beautiful, heartfelt book entitled *Living By Wonder: The Imaginative Life of Childhood*.

Another aspect of Masters' book that is both worthy of our attention and relevant to our concerns at *Paths*

has to do with the author's attempts to live a life (for Masters, this is a Buddhist life) of compassion and love in San Quentin. In following this path, Masters engages in actions that honor others without regard to the outcomes of these actions. In other words, he treats others with respect, compassion, and love because that is what he feels he must do, whether or not the others with whom he interacts seem "worthy" of his treatment of them, and whether or not his actions will produce desired outcomes. He honors others in the moment, because that is the only moment in which he can act and because, at any rate, he feels that honoring others in the moment is what he must do.

Sometimes, many of us who pursue paths of alternative education do so with the implicit, if not explicit, expectation that our paths will necessarily produce desired outcomes—students who are self-motivated, who desire to learn seemingly without limit, who aspire to live lives of good citizenship and compassion, and so on. And yet, we know that such is not the case for many alternative education students, though perhaps these students will blossom into "model" citizens and learners later in life (which is also true of many students involved in traditional schooling, of course). So why do we bother pursuing alternative, holistic educational paths, then? Why, like Masters, are we so committed to traveling on meaningful paths of living if we cannot be sure of the results of our actions and may not see the outcomes that we desire manifest themselves when and how we want them to occur?

We pay a steep price when we dishonor children; when we are unable to listen to others; and when, as parents, teachers, and community members, we fail to create safe places for children's creative, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth to flourish.

At the risk of sounding reductive, I would say that we pursue these paths because, ultimately, we know that we have no other choice if we want to help create a better world. More than one great spiritual teacher has tried to show us that we don't really have a choice between acting with kindness and acting without it, that we don't really have a choice between engaging in a meaningful practice of love and mindfulness and not engaging in such a practice. We must, they teach, live mindfully, treating others with kindness and love. To be sure, one might argue that, literally, we do have choices here. But if we want to have a world in which love, kindness, and compassion prevail, then we are obligated to choose a way of living that enables us to enact our best human characteristics—even if we have no guarantees that our desired outcomes will manifest. In short, we have no choice but to live well (in the Socratic sense) if we want to be and remain whole and authentic. This is why we choose holistic paths of educational practice: We desire to pursue and to help others pursue meaningful lives, because it is right that we do so, and even if and sometimes, perhaps, even because we cannot guarantee the outcomes of our endeavors.

Several times as I worked to prepare manuscripts for this issue, I was reminded of these teachings that help us to see how we might live meaningful lives of wholeness and heart. I was reminded of them when, for example, I read the article by Mark Kennedy, in which this noble teacher, who works with so many troubled youths, tells us why he continues to teach, despite the sometimes overwhelming obstacles facing him: "Because of those who still need me to help them discover their own inner resources, their own resiliency and courage. Because it's so gratifying to be a part of that discovery." As you'll see when you read his essay, not all of the stories involving the students with whom Mark works have happy endings. And yet, Mark continues to pursue a path of holistic, authentic, heart teaching, because that is what he must do, regardless of the outcomes of his efforts. There are no guarantees in life, but there are obligations. Teachers like

Mark, who teach from the heart, know this and act accordingly.

Living in the aftermath of September 11, we know that these are troubled, desperate times, which call for solutions that involve and promote respect and honor among persons and that are grounded in good-faith dialogue and holistic partnership. I was reminded of this point during my e-mail exchanges with Cecile Andrews, whose article on study circles we offer in this issue. Not long after September 11, Cecile wrote to me that "…the idea of study circles seems even more important today—we simply have to find a way to get people to talk with each other and learn to reflect." In her essay, she shows us that dialogue is a necessary condition for effective conflict resolution. If for no other reason than this, the formation of study circles is crucial now, since we live in a world that so often seems inhospitable to difference and discussion. We must remember that the cessation of dialogue is frequently the immediate precursor to acts of violence. Clearly, as Cecile teaches us, we need to talk with and listen to each other—not just tomorrow, but right now, in the present moment.

The importance of Cecile's article is far-reaching; we can incorporate the principles and practices that she discusses into the lives of our families, our communities, and our educational environments. But incorporating these principles and practices in educational settings will require, in many instances, a shift in thinking from one advocating top-down or bottom-up decision-making to one advocating partnership decision-making. We must become partners on the road to discovery and enlightenment. Ron Miller's interview with Riane Eisler and David Loye underscores this point, showing us that "partnership education" helps to pave the way for meaningful learning and respectful living. Indeed, not only does this method of decision-making empower everyone involved in particular teaching and learning situations; it also takes us well beyond the boundaries of our homes or schools. Embracing and enacting the notion of partnership, ultimately we see our interconnectedness to all others, including those who have harmed us and those whom we ourselves have harmed. This insight can help adults and children, teachers and students, strengthen their work in partnership, extending their efforts for the good of the community and of the world in order to help insure that the community be strong and that all persons—and the planet as a whole—be honored. We cannot guarantee the good outcomes of our efforts, but we can—and must—commit ourselves to making the efforts.

After September 11, none of us can simply go about our business as usual. We must enact our human capacity to love; we must act with kindness and compassion now so that we sow the seeds of a peaceful future, even if we have no guarantees that our seeds will bring forth the fruits of our desired efforts. We cannot know for sure whether or not our efforts will help to bring about desired results. But we have no choice in this matter. We must try to help.

In this regard, we must honor children because that is the right thing to do. We must model respectful living because, to do otherwise—on purpose, at least—is to live in bad faith. We must become partners in a dialogue of caring and love, or we risk living without authenticity. Using our ability to look deeply, we must try to understand the conditions of life that helped to shape the path of a death row inmate such as Jarvis Jay Masters, who tells us that, in his troubled youth, there was no room for wonder. Reading such testimony, we are reminded of the steep prices that we pay when we dishonor children; when we are unable to listen to others; and when, as parents, teachers, and community members, we fail to create safe places for children's creative, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth to flourish.

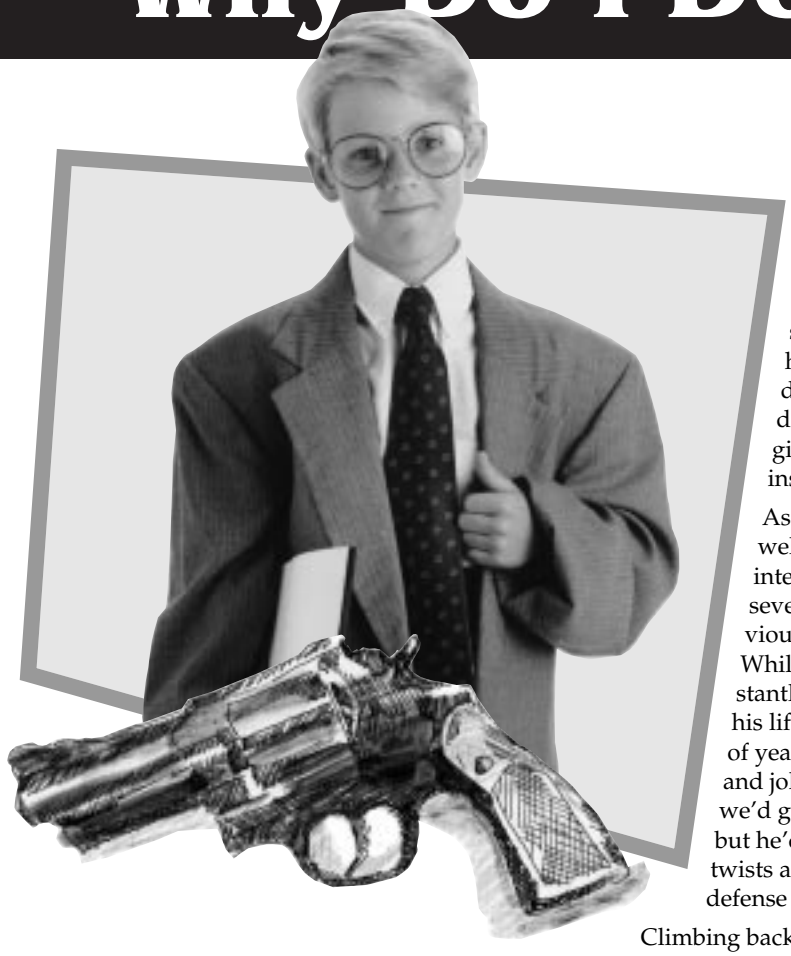
Though not a panacea of hope, holistic educational environments of all sorts can do much to offer both adults and children the chance to embrace that which is best in themselves and to honor that which is best in others. In this way, we who pursue such educational paths work for the creation of a healthy future by enacting a healthy present. In the process, we save our children—and ourselves. We help to create a world in which there are no San Quentins, no death rows, no "lost children" who, as Masters says of his fellow prisoners, are "surviving in rage and refuge from society," victims of childhood abuse, neglect, and anguish. We need to imagine a world in which all beings are happy and free—and then to enact our vision.

—Richard J. Prystowsky

A Day (Off) In the Life Of a Teacher

Why Do I Do This?

by Mark Kennedy



"Hey, Kennedy," I heard from across the parking lot while returning a video rental one weekend morning. Looking up, I saw one of my former alternative education students in shirt and tie, big smile in place. Exchanging pleasantries, I asked if he was going to college. "No, to church!" Well, I didn't mean right now, I almost blurted. But suddenly conscious of my own T-shirt and jeans, a dead giveaway I was missing religious services myself, instead I replied, "Oh, that's great."

As I waved to his mother in the car and wished him well, my thoughts returned to the reverie he had interrupted. I had been thinking of another student, a seventeen-year-old who'd been shot to death the previous week on his way to the neighborhood market. While at one time heavily involved in gangs and constantly in and out of juvenile hall, he had been getting his life together; I'd seen big changes in the last couple of years, and we'd become friends. He loved to laugh and joke, and had a perpetual Cheshire cat grin. When we'd go to the park for PE, some kids would play ball, but he'd want to wrestle and practice some martial arts twists and holds I was teaching him as part of a self-defense course, he joshing and grinning the whole time.

Climbing back into my car in the video parking lot, I thought of that grin: I knew it belied the tough exterior he'd spent so long perfecting. For so many gang kids, it seems a macho persona is the foundation upon which to build the facade they believe necessary to survive on the streets. But I knew that the real kid was the grinning one, the one underneath the street face, the one trying to outgrow his past, to emerge a healthy, caring adult. That emerging individual was the one I'd most often see. Like the time a few weeks before when he'd gotten me a card on my birthday — an action way outside the bounds of acceptable machismo. In fact he was so surprised at himself that he had to keep coming back to my desk all day to pick up that card — and grin.

As I pulled out of the parking lot and headed on to another errand (already busted, may as well make a day of it) I couldn't help juxtaposing the fates of these two young men I had cared so much about, had put so much into, had wanted so much for. While I don't want to

Mark Kennedy is currently an alternative education teacher with the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. He has also served as an acting principal, lead teacher, mentor teacher, master teacher, chair and visiting team member of many self-study and strategic planning focus groups and action teams, and has been a frequent presenter at professional meetings.

make too much of surface differences, I would like to share the slide show that ran through my head: The college student was white, while the murdered boy was Hispanic; the former was better at traditional schoolwork, while the latter was gifted in emotional and affective areas, that is, with people; the former had no family in prison, or even in gangs, while the latter had many in each. What they had in common was that both had been incarcerated as juveniles, and then been placed in my class of court adjudicated students. That is, they were both kids who'd lost their way. As I try to do with all the kids who arrive in my class, I had hoped to help them regain it.

My next thought was a selfish one: Why do I continue to do this job, battling the ignorance — one might even say the darkness — that so threatens our children, especially those whom we call "at-risk," those who have lost their way? Why stay and watch some be taken? (This murdered child was not the first — far from it.) With all the right degrees and certifications for school administration, with a résumé that includes much of the right experience, with a list of things in print, I could probably easily get promoted out of the classroom. Such a promotion would have the advantage of removing me one step from kids, and so act as a buffer against my sharing their pain. Paradoxically, the system would actually pay me more to take that step. Furthermore, this would stop the secret belief of friends and family that I'm underemployed as long as I'm "just a teacher" — and let's not be too quick or too loud in denying that that is exactly how the public sees it. Why then should I continue to teach? Why would anyone?

Why Continue to Teach?

For some reason, as I tried to marshal the reasons that I should continue to teach, the reasons not to continue leapt to mind. It's probably more than coincidental that these reasons are absolutely misunderstood by so many in the media and our legislative halls — what I call the Noisemakers — most of whom have probably not spent much time in a classroom since their own schooling. Their misperception that teachers are incompetent — having now become the general public perception — obviously has nothing to do with why I continue in this profession. But these negatives, it seems, first had to be eliminated before I could understand what motivates me to stay with this work.

First, it would be silly to continue for the money. As we noted, the further one is removed from kids, the better the money. For that matter, most teachers could probably make more selling computers or real estate — in fact, in the past I have done so. Second, the current environment of standards and standardized assessment, which is advanced by the "failing schools" platform of the Noisemakers, is certainly not friendly or supportive. We obviously live in a time when to some, "teacher" has become a dirty word, someone associated with the national disgrace in which education is held. Third, one would not continue to teach because the work is easy, even though a favorite myth of teacher-bashers is that teaching's a part-time job. As I drove away from the post office after mailing some bills and headed for the bank, sub points for each of these reasons began to click into place.

Not for the Money

I don't know of even an average teacher who does this for the money. All of the schemes floated by the Noisemakers purporting to "improve" education (read raise test scores) by offering teachers more money — merit pay, or incentive money, it's sometimes called — are offensive and misinformed. They imply that teachers will care more, work harder, and generally just (finally) do their jobs if offered more money. This sort of "solution" is what we educators get when we allow someone else to do our thinking for us. While I'm sure some in the Noisemaker crowd can be motivated — even manipulated — by greed, I don't think many teachers are cut from that cloth. Of course I want to make a decent living and be paid what I'm worth. But offering me a monetary incentive to raise test scores is ridiculous — it implies that I don't care enough now to educate children, but that I could be made to care if the price were right.

We don't need teachers who look like their students, we need teachers who look at their students— and truly see them.

A particularly noxious corollary to this line of reasoning is the teacher-signing bonus being offered in some places. The atmosphere has become so hostile for teachers that we can't get enough new ones or retain enough of the old ones, so some districts use the signing bonus as a recruiting tool. This makes me think of the Roman Empire. When the Germanic tribes began to pressure the frontiers of the Empire,

themselves being pressured by the Huns from the East, defending the borders became a huge expense. As the toll mounted, those Roman citizens who could afford to do so moved to the country (to their small *latifundia* or farms, which after the collapse of the Empire would become medieval manors) in order to avoid the increasing taxes required to protect the frontier.

With a sinking treasury, the army began to be paid only sporadically, and many career soldiers left the military. What to do? Hire German mercenaries who would settle for piecework instead of a career, who were not necessarily dedicated to the profession, who fought not for pride or out of a sense of duty, but for money. The result? The once mighty Roman army began to disintegrate, and the German tribes (bearing such names as Vandals and Berbers, or barbarians as they came to be called) began to flood the Empire. Eventually there were more Germans in the Roman army than Romans. These mercenaries just didn't have the dedication, training, or professionalism to keep their cousins out of the Empire. What would make us think a mercenary approach to education would produce significantly different results in the quest to recruit and retain a dedicated teaching force?

Teaching is a job, which is difficult at the best of times.

Not Because The Environment Is Friendly and Supportive

As education is discussed in the public arena, the call for "accountability" has become a cliché. When we hear someone use this term, we never hear an offer from the one doing the talking to be more accountable. Instead, we hear a demand for the accountability of someone else — namely, teachers and schools. This finger pointing makes clear the fact that the term "accountability" is used pejoratively to imply that teachers are turning in a sub-par performance, and thus that they deserve blame and shame. The public is meant to conclude that closer supervision — or, in Noisemaker parlance, "more accountability" — would make teachers do the jobs they are presumably now shirking.

California, for example, has responded to this perceived need for teacher accountability by imposing 32 (that's right, 32!) standards for "excellence" in teaching.[1] This is in addition to the hundreds of content standards adopted for students. At first angered by the naiveté of such a measure, I admit that now it makes me smile. It is impossible for me to take seriously. But that's not true for everyone. This need-for-more-accountability-to-force-teachers-to-do-their-jobs line is humorous only for those of us already secure in our capabilities and calling.

For those who are just considering becoming teachers, this professional-standards document implies a lack of teacher professionalism, and can only cast a serious shadow on any preservice teacher's decision.

How widespread this finger pointing, what some might even call scapegoating, has become was illustrated in crystal-clear fashion for me recently as I listened to a local radio disc jockey. He offered the opinion that "Teachers should just do their jobs like other professionals — doctors and lawyers — and stop whining about it." He evidently missed a few differences, however, between those other professions and teaching. For example, doctors and lawyers can decide whom they will take on a case-by-case basis, and can charge more for more difficult cases. Should teachers then charge more for more difficult children? (If so, somebody owes me some money.) On the other hand, doctors and lawyers can turn down any clients they wish. Oh, boy — wouldn't that cause some conversations in the teacher's lounge? And for those really challenging cases they do take, those other professionals

may make a seven-figure income — not in a lifetime, but in a year — or even, on some occasions, per case! Are we willing to pay teachers seven figures for successfully dealing with the child no one else wants? Don't get me wrong. I don't want all the money and glitz sometimes associated with those other professions — but neither do I want to be compared with those professionals who do. Obviously, professions may vary significantly. Let's not allow Noisemakers to mix and match them to support their blame and shame platform.

Another contributor to the hostile environment for teachers is a subtle form of racism. I've loved Carlos Santana's music since first hearing *Black Magic Woman* when I was a college student in 1971. I'm glad he's finally gotten some recognition, and I enjoy his take on music and life, but I disagree with his stance that we need teachers who look like the students they teach. He has even made commercials for the NEA to recruit minority teachers on this basis (Green 2000). While this line of reasoning is well intentioned, it is off the mark. We don't need teachers who look like their students; we need teachers who look at their students — and truly see them. Greg Boyle, the noted Jesuit who has worked in East L.A. for many years, looks nothing like the teen gang members he works with. But he certainly sees them. Many cry when he tells them that while he doesn't have any children, he would be proud to call them his children (Freeman 1995). Seeing and listening to others is a form of validating them: "When someone listens, they communicate to us on a very deep level that we are valuable," (Ryan & Ryan 1992: 177). This validation has little to do with race. Would the murdered boy from my class have done better under a teacher with a Hispanic surname? I cringe to think that his tragedy could have been that easily averted.

Not Because The Work Is Easy

Besides the misunderstanding of some non-teachers about the place of money in our thinking; besides the hostile situation that has been created and is now the work environment for teachers; besides these things, the work itself is difficult. For example, I spend seven hours a day with adolescents whose lives are extremely chaotic and whose resources are extremely limited. It takes hours outside the school day for me to prepare and/or recover, both acade-

Because I can't find anything more rewarding than to work with kids...

mically and emotionally. And every teacher is in some way equally challenged.

This fact is intensified because the Noisemakers have also brought about legislation in the form of content standards that dictate a reductionistic body of material and skills to be taught. These are very traditional skills: Employment and life skills, such as punctuality, task-orientation, taking orders, and even penmanship; and very traditional knowledge, such as learning lists of abstracted facts (Miller 1992; Kennedy 2001). This traditional focus, however, represents only one aspect of being well-educated. Other signs of a well-educated person include an interest in and commitment to inquiry, a desire to explore, and, in general, an urge to engage in various open-ended pursuits that more authentically mirror the real world than do isolated skills and concepts (Kotulak 1996; Jones & Nimmo 1994). Further, none of the insistence that we teach traditional skills and knowledge takes into account the social, psychological, and physical needs kids often bring to class with them. Teaching is a job, which is difficult at the best of times. It is made more difficult in these very traditionally focused times.

Not Because "Children Are Our Future"

How many times have we heard that we need to invest in our children because they are our future? I think that this bit of sophistry objectifies kids. Their lives today are not about our future; children are human beings, too. "What I mean by this is that since students are usually not full-grown members of the human race, they are often treated as less than full-fledged members" (Kennedy 1994). That they are less empowered than adults does not mean that children are therefore less entitled. In fact, any advanced society would see it the other way around. Pearl Buck taught us that "the test of a civilization is in the way that it cares for its helpless members" (Princeton Language Institute 1993). Seeing children as our future means that we are failing the test. If today they are no more than our future, tomorrow will we merely become their past?

So, Why Teach?

As I pulled into the driveway after finishing the morning of errands and switched off the car, I realized that there are many reasons for me not to teach. Added together, these should provide enough of a disincentive to anyone who is seriously considering becoming a teacher. Why then do I continue to teach when it would be easier for me to make a living doing something else, something that would pay more, and be far more prestigious and socially acceptable? The answer I keep getting back is, "Because I can't find anything more rewarding than to work with kids, to see them begin to carve out swaths of light."

Why teach? Because of the student I saw that morning who graduated from high school and went on to college, showing resiliency and courage in overcoming part of his past. Because of the student I saw just the week before who had given me a birthday card, showing resiliency and courage in overcoming much of his past. Because of those who still need me to help them discover their own inner resources, their own resiliency and courage. Because it's so gratifying to be a part of that discovery. In spite of the Noisemakers and their solutions. In spite of 32 separate ways I must be on guard while still managing to meet kids' needs. In spite of hundreds of pages of legislation having become the new curriculum. Indeed, in spite of many enemies of education in high places, I continue to teach because of the kids. For their future. For their today. And *for mine.*

Note

1. The party line is that there are "only" six; but these are sub-bulleted for a total of 32. See http://www.cde.ca.gov

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HIGH NOON FOR HIGH STAKES

Alfie Kohn at Middlebury College

by Ed Barna

Ed Barna is a poet and freelance writer living in Brandon, Vermont.

Alfie Kohn came to Middlebury College on April 3, 2001 at the invitation of the school's teaching training program, at a time when the system of nationwide standardarized testing, passed later that year by Congress, was still a Republican agenda item. While in Middlebury, Kohn also met informally over lunch with area school administrators. Following an afternoon talk aimed at the would-be teachers, he gave a public lecture (and public discussion) in Mead Chapel, the college's largest space for public presentations.

When Alfie Kohn spoke at Middlebury College on the perils of punishment-and-reward teaching and high-stakes testing, his words echoed off more than the walls in the process of reaching me.

As a freelance newspaper reporter in a state small enough for a reporter to know many leading figures personally, I had followed debates over school funding, assessment, special education, curriculum revisions, bullying, and more. At one point, I even wrote a weekly education column for one daily paper, explaining trends, techniques, and terminology in the schools.

Before that, I had been a stay-at-home father, playing creativity games and singing folk songs and reading and philosophizing and fishing and meeting people of all ages with my pre-school son. Before that, as a young writer and the first park manager at Robert Frost Farm, in Derry, New Hampshire, I had been part of Poets-in-the-Schools, working in elementary and high schools during that successful program's formative and exploratory years.

Before that, at Harvard during the most confrontational years of the late Sixties, I had done the equivalent of an unofficial minor in developmental psychology, adding readings in people like Maslow, O'Neill, Laing, Watts, and Huxley to official offerings that emphasized more accepted theorists like Freud, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, and Skinner. And there was (and is) Zen meditation, which, although it has never earned any credits, has been more educational than all else combined.

Before that, in small, rural Otter Valley Union High School, the tight schedule had made it unavoidable to have both my parents as teachers. In my mother's biology class, we followed prescribed worksheets and took prescribed multiple choice tests. In my father's English classes — had him two years in a row — everyone knew it was possible to "get him going" telling stories or discussing things, and he hardly ever corrected my prose style in my writings. I averaged over 100 in my mother's class (there were extra credit questions) and won prizes in state science fairs, but it was my father's passion for literature and sense of life's meanings and mysteries that helped make me a poet.

Before that, had been graded school. Not elementary school, but graded school. No arts except band lessons. No guidance counselor. No special education. Only reading, writing, and arithmetic, at which I excelled, and a playground culture that glorified fighting, in which I was an outcast.

> *...perhaps the country's most outspoken critic of education's fixation on grades and test scores...*

So the ongoing tension between education's hard-liners and progressives was an old story to me, one that in college I could trace back even to the unending conflict in the Old Testament between those gravitating to the relaxed, sensual spirituality of the Fertile Crescent's agricultural tribes and the militaristic, exclusionary vehemence of the prophets intent on returning the Israelites to their basic, nomadic beliefs. What was new in the old debate was science, the testing and corroboration of ideas — a scientific fringe that had become an accepted institution and was now making steady progress in

resolving questions regarding the way humans functioned, or didn't. So I was keenly interested in finding out whether or not Kohn had anything beyond crafted anecdotes and tendentious rhetoric to back up a commitment to progressive education that was obvious even from the titles of his talks.

Indeed, he had plenty of findings to back up his fulminations. But in the end, I was just as impressed by his entire … well, call it personal energy. Here was a man in his 40s, the author of eight books, a veteran of appearances on all sorts of TV and radio shows, a road warrior *Time* had called "perhaps the country's most outspoken critic of education's fixation on grades and test scores" — and he looked like he was in his late 20s. The stress of public exposure that has whitened the hair of Presidents and brought music stars to early deaths from overdoses seemed to roll off him, or bypass him, or perhaps in Zen fashion go right through him. When he spoke about intrinsic motivation and education that follows true needs and interests, his body language and that indefinable essence some call "aura" spoke with him.

Nor was this the "charismatic" kind of energy that moves people to identify a movement with a messiah. In an age when totalitarianism's cult of personality seems to have been democratized as a culture of personalities (witness the way Warhol's 15 minutes remark has become eponymous), he didn't seem to care. It's hard to imagine either a think tank maven or movement heavy named "Alfie."

Perhaps that was one reason I hadn't previously heard of him. Others had: One Middlebury College teacher training student said she was delighted to have Kohn come and talk so personally to them, because in a few years he would probably be so famous that they couldn't get near him. An educational consultant and author of books on how to help children write poetry called him "the Thomas Jefferson of progressive education."

He spoke to three audiences that day. Over lunch, he talked with the Addison Central Supervisory Union's administrators and teachers, in a session closed to the press by the school district for the sake of a frank discussion. Later, Kohn e-mailed that the talks, starting with grades and then ranging widely based on questions, had gone well. Before his second talk, titled like his 1993 book *Punished By Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*, an area school administrator who had previously been with Addison Central told me he had seen Kohn twice at conferences. He remarked, "He's that good a speaker.… You can't leave without thinking about things he's said." Perhaps it wasn't any accident that soon after that free-ranging luncheon, Addison Central (Middlebury Union High School) teacher Michele Forman was chosen as the nation's Teacher of the Year.

In the afternoon, Kohn surprised me with another facet of his life's work: Prowess as a standup comic. Without making any phony attempts to slot in jokes and stories, he kept everyone's attention in part through a seemingly endless fund of witty and often self-deprecating remarks. Memories of high school debating came back: The very best debaters were like this, relaxed and affable and devastatingly funny when that was the best way of swaying audience and judges. Not that he lacked evidence and argumentation. On the debating circuit, this guy would have been a royal pain to encounter.

He immediately picked up on the fact that a lot of his listeners were students in the college's education program, there on assignment, twisting their tails by suggesting they do papers about the irony of being required to go to a lecture about giving students choices. From what followed, it would have been possible to compile a set of "Kohn's greatest hits" quotes, which certainly would have included the epigram "Punishments and rewards are two sides of the same coin — and a coin that doesn't buy very much."

> ***Punishments and rewards are two sides of the same coin—and a coin that doesn't buy very much.***

"We do not have the idea; it has us," Kohn said, starting with the way behaviorist concepts originated with Boris Friedrich Skinner had become so intertwined with many people's thinking in this country that they were no longer seen as theories. "The one who did all his research with rodents and pigeons, and wrote all his books about people — that B. F. Skinner." Kohn recalled taking a college Intro. to Psych. course from a Skinnerian, in which he was required to do an experiment getting a rat (starved to 80 percent of its normal body weight) to push a lever to get food. He almost flunked the course, he said, because he wrote his report from the rat's point of view.

Less well known, but one of the most replicated and corroborated findings in social psychology, is the way rewards fail to improve performance, Kohn went on. It was "contrary to hypothesis" in the first experiments. It was "counter-intuitive" to many people. But with groups of girls, boys, men, and women, it had been shown that, when given a complex task like solving a puzzle, the group promised a reward for doing so underperformed those who were simply requested to attempt the task.

The first such studies in the early 1960s, doctoral dissertations published in the same journal, one involving kids and one involving adults, met with "widespread apathy," he recalled. But when similar findings were reported in journals in the early 1970s, "social psychologists began to sit up and take notice." Janet Spence, at one point president of the American Psychological Association, wrote that "Rewards have effects that interfere with performance, for reasons we are only beginning to understand."

Those reasons, Kohn said, are as important as the general findings. But rather than go into a lecture about them, he had the audience break into whatever groupings they wanted to discuss and brainstorm and report back their ideas.

Living close to Middlebury College, I had reported on lectures there by all sorts of authorities, experts, and envisionaries. But this part of Kohn's talks didn't make it into any papers, because it just didn't fit the journalistic preconceptions. I couldn't give my considered opinion, which was that I had never seen anyone succeed as well in getting an audience involved in mutual brainstorming.

> ***...it has been shown that, when given a complex task like solving a puzzle, the group promised a reward for doing so underperformed those who were simply requested to attempt the task.***

When the group as a whole reconvened, we found that the theory that came out again and again in different forms, from undergraduates, teachers, and others, had to do with what Kohn later summed up as "intrinsic motivation": Motivation from within the individual, as opposed to "extrinsic" motivation, which is motivation coming from without, that is, motivation coming from sources external to the individual. "You're thinking of the end product, not of what you're doing," was one audience remark. Another was, "At the subconscious level, it's telling you that your behavior is not pleasurable in and of itself." Another: "If they have to bribe me to do this, it must be something I don't want to do."

This discussion was awakening old memories. Back before my child was born (pre-1980) and I was outvoted 2-1, my preference was not to have a TV in the house, as was the case when I was growing up (probably another factor in my becoming a writer). Friends told me there were great TV programs on, like Sesame Street. I watched it, and felt it was taking away from the inherent magic of words and books, jazzing things up in a way that would make it difficult for kids to learn later.

I will grant that Sesame Street is great television, for adults who can see all the wit and humor behind the animations and puppets. But from what I have since learned from the present debates over heroin treatment, about the way that drug destroys a person's ability to appreciate life's simpler pleasures by upping the threshholds in the brain's pleasure centers, I would maintain that for kids with normal households, the program has been a Faustian bargain.

When everyone else was done, Kohn went on with his analysis, pointing out other reasons that rewards, like the severe punishments handed out in much of American traditional family life, were not just useless, but were actually counterproductive.

There was a control issue lurking. The bigger the reward, the more any accomplishment becomes associated with the reward-giver, not the person earning it. "Human beings do not like being controlled," Kohn said. Students will say to themselves, in effect, "The person giving this reward is trying to manipulate me. I'm not in the driver's seat." And thus performance begins to suffer.

The effects of rewards on relationships were often devastating. "There's a lot of research showing that the most effective classrooms are those where kids are constantly learning with and from each other," Kohn said. But grades and goodies pitted one person against another, especially in those worst-case-scenario classrooms where "grading on the curve" meant that only a few would rise to the top. (Kohn's hit list: "The best word for this is 'immoral.'") The outcome of this system was described by educational researcher Philip Jackson, who said: "The central lesson of American elementary schools is how to be alone in crowds."

"Then people get to the workplace and managers complain that they can't work together," he said. Whether in the classroom or in the workplace, such a focus on evaluations and consequent rewards makes it very difficult for a student or worker to raise a hand and say, "I just don't get it" — especially if that person has been doing well.

Boy did that analysis hit home. After I had arrived in the town where I grew up in second grade, I rather quickly shot to the head of the class, earning, along with my excellent grades, all of the other kids' resentment. I never knew what a real friend was until I was in college, where all the old stereotypes got erased. Meanwhile, there were many times during my high school years, especially during my physics and math classes, when I felt that some fundamental, basic understanding was missing, and that I was just going through the motions without really knowing why. Probably lots of my classmates felt that way ALL the time. It was a nagging, gnawing feeling of phoniness, of massive cheating, that helped contribute to the gut knot of unbreakable anxiety that clenched into place every morning and, like the isolation, didn't go away until I was in college.

Kohn went on to talk about the third great detriment of relying on rewards: The way it kept teachers from looking into the causes of why things weren't going well. He took an example from his own life, one involving his toddler daughter ("It was much simpler when I didn't have a kid of my own," he averred.) Why wouldn't she stay in bed and go to sleep at bedtime?

Another audience brainstorming session turned up a host of possible reasons, the point being that the solu-

tion would be far different if the cause had to do with the daughter's being able to hear interesting things going on elsewhere in the house, or with her being worried about monsters under the bed, or with her having eaten too much. The behavior was a symptom, an epiphenomenon ("I had to use that word," Kohn joked), but to Skinner and all his unwitting followers, only the behavior counts. "If you can't see it, it doesn't exist," was the Skinnerian credo.

But what alternatives exist to using praise or disapproval to manipulate? "Say nothing" is a real alternative, Kohn pointed out. Pay attention: "You climbed the stairs! You did it!" Ask questions: "Why did you put these in your painting? You've never done that before." Show the effects of what the child has done, giving true feedback, not evaluation: Help with envisioning other possibilities, ways to go on from there, expanding on what happened.

"What these kids don't need is judgment, even positive judgment," Kohn said. About his daughter, he said, "I don't want her to become a praise junkie, which is the usual effect of marinating people in praise."

Classroom management should never be taught as a separate subject.

That last phrase called to mind some of the kids I had had to cope with when I was teaching one summer at a camp for the gifted, the same sorts of kids who had made my life as a substitute elementary teacher miserable a decade before. The bright-eyed, outspoken, Mickey-Mouse-grinning, how-can-I-helpers, irrepressible fountains of unfounded self-esteem, were a far greater challenge than plain old bad actors. Indeed, they seemed to have suffered some kind of terrible damage to their senses of self all the more dangerous for its being cloaked in reputations as Good Kids. Now, a decade later, Kohn was giving me a new context for this observation and for many others. He also dished out some good satire, such as summarizing the "Gooood BOY!" type rewards as "Here's a verbal doggie biscuit!"

He pointed out a fourth drawback to such short-term incentives: "when people do something to get a reward, they tend to avoid unnecessary risks." Like the rat in the Skinner maze trying to get its food, they will do the same thing over and over rather than explore and experiment. No way to grow.

Made me think of my own knowledge of computers, limited by constant freelance deadline pressure. Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will keep word-processing, because that's all I really know how to do.

The fifth reason, the one the attendees had started with, was summed up as follows: "They're not focusing on the task; they're focusing on the reward." The reality, shown in the workplace as well as in the schools, is that "the people who do the work extremely well are the ones who get a kick out of it."

"It's the kind of motivation, not the amount, that counts," Kohn said — referring to intrinsic versus extrinsic. "If you ever see a seminar on how to increase motivation, you should run in the other direction." He recalled a moment 20 years before when, as a ninth-grade teacher, he realized that his problems with "classroom discipline" couldn't be solved on those terms. If he had been forced to sit through "Meet Mr. Semicolon" and "Our Friend the Adverb," he would have been a troublemaker just like some of his students. "Classroom management should never be taught as a separate subject," he said.

One more experiment, from his home town of Cambridge: Having three groups try a cultured milk drink called kefir for the first time. One group was just given the kefir, another was praised for drinking it, and the third was given a financial reward for trying it. Which group gave the drink the best evaluation?

The financial reward group. "YES, rewards can buy temporary compliance," Kohn said. But a week later, the first group liked it as much or better, the second no longer wanted to try it, and the third said they couldn't stand the stuff. The sad thing, he said, is that so many people go through their childhood and adult years chasing rewards; then, "pretty soon you wake up and you're middle-aged, and you wonder what happened to your life."

"We need an engaging curriculum, a warm and personal curriculum, a caring curriculum, a growing kid curriculum," Kohn said, as time ran out and he had to wind up. Such a curriculum contrasts with the sort that Americans are increasingly getting; the latter was the subject of his evening talk and discussion, which focused on the perils of high-stakes testing.

This time, Kohn wasn't there just to analyze and discuss, but to sound an alarm as well. "I want to convince you of the urgency of the situation we face," he said. He called on his listeners to "double your activity against this juggernaut," because "we are facing an educational emergency in this country."

He noted that politicians, business leaders, and others who have little experience with education are saying that schools can be rated based on their test scores and that teachers' and administrators' careers ought to depend on those results. Legislatures are making school funding contingent on performance, as measured by the tests.

So naturally, people end up teaching to the test. Rewards and punishments work very well, in the short term. But education that grows to a complete understanding, and inspires a desire for more learning, suffers terribly, he said.

Kohn said that one of the best teaching ideas he ever saw involved getting each student in the class to

research some ordinary, taken-for-granted thing about her or his own community and then present her/his findings to everyone else. Baking, for instance: Just how did a baker go about making bread?

It's gone, he said. "Baking wasn't on the test."

In talking about standards, people often fail to distinguish between two kinds, which might be called "horizontal" and "vertical," Kohn said. An example of horizontal standards — a successful example — might be the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics saying in 1959 that a math curriculum should emphasize conceptual understanding and problem-solving, not memorized procedures and isolated facts. "I'm not necessarily opposed to everything that goes by the name of standards," Kohn said.

But the standards that are all the rage, at least among politicians and businesses seeking better-trained employees, are "vertical," he said. They push for higher scores, more achievement, things that on the surface seem reasonable for those who want schools to provide quality educations. Start-ing in 1983, when *A Nation At Risk* assailed schools (based on what is now known to be misleading information, Kohn contended), there has been a push for "accountability" and "raising the bar."

However, that approach is based on flawed assumptions about how children learn and how well current methods work, Kohn said. He quoted a Harvey Daniels summary of the prevailing attitude toward school improvement: "What we're doing is okay; we just need to do it harder, longer, stronger, louder, meaner, and we'll have a better country." But as early as 1964, education author and eventual home schooling proponent, John Holt was warning us that the main effect the push for so-called higher standards was that "children are too busy to think."

Kohn mentioned Susan Ohanian's work, which brought to mind a story I had done on that Vermont-based national activist's attempt to help an alternative school in Birmingham, Alabama. It seems that the regular high school bounced a large number of its students, mostly black, for supposed infractions of the law, just before test time — to raise the school's average, many suspected. One caring teacher started an alternative facility for these kids, which used a different approach and did very well; then he got bounced from his job. Ohanian was trying to organize a book drive to help the private school. I remember listening to her and thinking, "Weren't high stakes where they burned witches?"

Another point to consider: It isn't as though the tests are always realistic assessments of what students have learned from the curriculum, Kohn said. Typically, they are made artificially difficult so that not too many students get everything right. Probably many English teachers couldn't pass the math part of the New York or Massachusetts test without lots of preparation, he said — and "many state legislators couldn't pass ANY of the tests." He drew applause when he suggested that legislators' taking the tests be made a condition of their mandating them.

There are "five fatal flaws" in the tougher standards movement, Kohn said. First, the tougher standards activists get motivation wrong. Recapping some of what he had said in the afternoon, he went over the research showing the ill effects of having students focus on how they are doing rather than on what they are doing, and the way an emphasis on scores limits students' willingness to experiment and be challenged.

The tougher standards advocates get teaching wrong, too, Kohn said. Most of them want a "basic skills" approach that pours a body of knowledge down a student's throat, he said — an approach that might be considered outdated except that there has never been a time when it worked all that well. "The problem with standards is that they're standardized," he said.

Third, the standards movement gets evaluation wrong, he said. For one thing, some students test well. Those who don't test well get systematically underrated. And when the schools try to remedy this ostensible problem with simulated test-taking sessions, they steal time from real education.

The worst tests are the "norm-referenced" exams, on which any question that is answered by too many students gets taken off the test, replaced by another question that, the test givers hope, will not be answered correctly by so many students. The idea is for there always to be only a few top scores — which has the effect of making many hard-working students feel worse about themselves than they should feel.

Fourth, the movement gets school reform wrong. It's coercive, and unnecessarily specific about what should be taught. "'Accountability' usually turns out to be a code for tighter control over what happens in classrooms

> ***The problem with standards is they're standardized.***

by people who are not in classrooms," Kohn said, a danger that "has approximately the same effect on learning that a noose has on breathing."

Finally, the idea that harder is better leads to putting too much emphasis on a single criterion of difficulty, Kohn said. It's like saying, "if something isn't working very well, then insisting on more of the same will surely solve the problem."

"We have to join forces to oppose this monster," Kohn said, detailing ways that people could reach boards of education, legislators, school administrators, and others in relevant positions of authority. "Together we can make a difference."

I hope he's right. I remember when I was in school, compiling a record that by all the usual standards was outstanding. I longed for the chance to be trusted, to be given the time to just learn what I decided I needed to learn, at my own pace, and with my own digressions. Try as I might, I found that I could earn grades, credits, degrees — but not trust. In the end, I learned, school was something that happened to you because you were young. It was like having your body go through all those changes, or being bullied on the playground: It was something you suffered because you were small, that's all. And the only cure for it was to get older, put up with it, do your time. Then, finally, like not being spanked any more, the school would have its last shot at you and at last finally you would be TOO OLD for it.

But that's just the point. By then you are too old. Had it not been for the Sixties, which took me outside of my own culture both through science and spirituality, I would not have been educated at all, in any meaningful sense. Kohn was continuing the heritage of that era, and I was grateful to him.

I think my mother would have been critical of Kohn's approach as it related to lower-income schools, like the junior high where she taught in Miami just before she retired. In fact, during the question-answer sessions, the one strong critic of Kohn's views was a former Boston University professor who insisted that in the chaotic environments experienced by many inner-city kids, a structured school experience was very helpful. Mom got a special award at such a school, applauded by all those tough black dudes carrying sharpened Afro combs, for how well she reached those students. Like being their tough Mama, she told me — "I come to this classroom to teach math, and you are here to learn, so no nonsense."

Yes, to learn, but in a way that only emphasized Kohn's main points. When situations have not reached the point of breaking down, and the subject matter is not that clear-cut, that is NOT the approach to take — indeed, continuing along that path may bring on the breakdown.

When the dust had settled, what Kohn made me want to do most was read John Dewey, finally — a fellow Vermonter he mentioned more than once during the day's speaking engagements. I know Dewey believed in learning from experience, an idea he derived from his understanding of the way the Vermont agricultural way of life was an education in itself — sort of like Dorothy Canfield Fisher's book about the spoiled city girl who goes to a farm and finds herself unexpectedly growing up. John Dewey, forbearer of today's progressive educators. Never got to read him in any of my courses or outside of them.

It wasn't on any test.

Editor's Note: In the Winter 2000 issue of *Paths*, we published an interview with Alfie Kohn, conducted by Ron Miller, our Executive Editor. The interview is online at <www.great-ideas.org/Kohn.htm>. See page 46 for additional resources on Alfie Kohn.

Partnership Education

An Interview with Riane Eisler and David Loye

by Ron Miller

"Partnership Education" is a progressive, holistic, gender-balanced perspective on teaching and curriculum articulated by Riane Eisler in *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century* (2000: Westview Press). Eisler had already established herself as a leading thinker in the "new paradigm" or "cultural creative" literature with her 1987 book, *The Chalice and the Blade*, and a later work, *Sacred Pleasure*. She is also the author, with her husband, systems and evolutionary theorist David Loye, of *The Partnership Way*. The publication of *Tomorrow's Children* has been accompanied by the launching of a national network of educators attracted to the partnership philosophy. In September 2000, the Center for Partnership Studies in Tucson hosted a major conference where consultants were trained and work was begun on a companion guide to the book called *Partnership Education in Action*. This guide was recently published by CPS in collaboration with the Foundation for Educational Renewal (publisher of *Paths of Learning*). Both *Tomorrow's Children* and *Partnership Education in Action* are available from the Foundation (P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733; 800/639-4122).

Riane Eisler and David Loye were interviewed at the Tucson conference by Ron Miller, president of the Foundation for Educational Renewal and a leading historian and theorist of holistic education. He is the author of *What Are Schools For? Holistic Education in American Culture* and other books, including *Caring for New Life: Essays on Holistic Education*. Miller and Eisler are presently collaborating on a new book about educating for a culture of peace.

Ron Miller: Let's start this discussion by briefly defining what you mean by "Partnership Education."

Riane Eisler: We identify three elements. Partnership process involves how we learn and teach. It can be summed up as a partnership between the student and teacher, and encompasses many holistic methods, from child-centered education to peer teaching. Partnership structure describes the learning environment in physical, cultural, and social terms. It's quite complex; I don't advocate a laissez–faire environment, because all of us need some structure, we need some guidance, and teachers do have that responsibility. So it's a structure of linkings but also of sites of responsibility for getting things done — but power is used to empower rather than disempower others. Partnership content addresses what we are teaching. It attempts to include a social justice curriculum, offering young people a more complete and hopeful picture of what being human can mean: One where multiculturalism, gender balance, and social and environmental sensitivity aren't just add-ons but are integral to the entire learning tapestry.

Let's look at the humanities. So much of what has been known as the "humanities" has been a reflection of such a tiny, tiny minority of humanity. And so much of it has truly been anti-human. For example, we need to consider whether the philosophers we teach about actually ennoble the human spirit and take us to new possibilities, or are they apologists for a dominator way of living? The same thing with literature. I'm not proposing that we stop teaching, say, the *Iliad*, but let's look at why it is taught as a great work of epic literature. The opening, the moral dilemma is supposed to be whether a king or a warrior should have possession of a young slave woman. Never mind about her rights — her feelings, her humanity have no place in that moral dilemma, because she happens to be female. From the dominator lens, that's the moral dilemma. Shouldn't young people have another way of looking at it? From a partnership

lens it's a very different moral dilemma: What kind of way of relating does this reflect? What kind of society? What kind of view about the female half of humanity? And what kind of view about what human relations should be like?

Ron: I think it would be helpful if you'd describe in more detail what you mean by dominator and partnership models. Many of our readers may not have read Riane's work.

David Loye: The launch point was Riane's *The Chalice and the Blade*, which is out now in eighteen foreign editions with millions of readers. It's an entirely fresh, incisive perspective on human cultural evolution — 25,000 years incorporating the female as well as the male half, the prehistoric as well as the historic half — a true systems perspective, literally for the first time. The essential power of her models is that she did a broad-scale systems analysis of thousands of studies — archeology, anthropology, history — and found that there were three dimensions that characterized the dominator model. It didn't matter whether it's an industrial society or the Masai society in Africa or Khomeini's Iran; she found the same configuration of authoritarian structure, top-down control of everything. These societies stress ranking, a pecking order. She also found male dominance, gender inequality. And she also found invariably a correlate of high violence connected with it — violence and pain as methods of keeping this system together.

David Loye and Riane Eisler

Partnership Education is a progressive, holistic, gender-balanced perspective on teaching and curriculum.

Those are the three primary dimensions for the dominator model. By contrast, the partnership model has exactly the reverse: The stress is on linking rather than ranking; there is equality of genders, races — equality across the board. And although there is leadership, it's exercised through what she calls "hierarchies of actualization" rather than domination, of nurturing and empowering rather than controlling and suppressing others' full human potentials. It doesn't matter whether you're studying so-called primitive tribes or advanced countries such as the Scandinavian societies; there's a high correlation with peace instead of violence. There are peaceful methods of resolving conflict.

Riane: The partnership/dominator continuum has thirty years of research behind it, looking at the whole of our history, including our prehistory through fresh eyes. It looks at the whole of our humanity, both its male and female halves. This makes a huge difference. Most of the study of "man" has been just that, and then it's just elite men. My work also clearly shows the connections between our intimate relations, the so-called private sphere. Most of our education has not dealt with the private sphere of parent-child and gender relations, the relations that have such a profound effect on each one of us and on society at large.

Ron: This continuum of dominator on one side and partnership on the other has proven to be a very compelling model that people in education as well as other fields have found very useful in interpreting what's going on in their fields or places of work.

David: Yes, the key word is "continuum." For example, the problem we have with morality is that we're caught up in a mix of dominator morality and partnership morality. It's a hybrid that confuses us. The beauty of the models allows you to pull apart what is always mixed in life and be able to see what's going on much more clearly. My earlier books, such as *The Healing of a Nation* and *The Leadership Passion*, dealt with politics from the perspective of right versus left and conservative versus liberal. But in the work I am doing now on morality, I have found these models very useful. I distinguish between partnership moral sensitivity and dominator moral insensitivity — meaning a lack of empathy, a focus on punishment, often cruel punishment, being required to maintain rigid rankings of domination.

Applying Theory to Educational Practice

Ron: The educators and policymakers who always talk about "back to basics" and reading the "great books" — it would seem that they're embracing the dominator paradigm. They want the next generation to be steeped in the literature that promotes and celebrates it.

Riane: I'm so glad that you see this, because the struggle for our future is between these two ways of structuring relations in

everything about our society, from sexuality to spirituality, to our education and economics, from our intimate relations to international relations.

Ron: How widely has Partnership Education been adopted so far? Are there differences in how it would be practiced in a public school versus how someone in a charter or alternative school, or even at home, would apply it? Are there different models?

David: Not at this juncture. But the beauty of *Tomorrow's Children* is that it's written so that it can fit into any of these contexts. Where we are now is establishing the broad-based understanding of what Partnership Education is, and seeking for the various openings. We've done pilot studies in a few educational settings so far, such as Nova High School in Seattle and Rose Valley School near Philadelphia. We're also working with Prescott College (Arizona) and the California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco at the college level. We're just beginning to feel our way into what this whole area is.

Ron: The Center for Partnership Studies recently established a new network of Partnership Education Consultants. What is the purpose of this new project? Why did you feel the need to set it up?

David: The public response to *The Chalice and the Blade* has been the driving intellectual force, as well as the driving emotional and spiritual force, behind the growth of the Center for Partnership Studies. Our book *The Partnership Way*, published by Holistic Education Press, has been used by churches, by school groups, by adult education groups, and has helped spread this new perspective on human development. This led to the formation of centers for partnership education in various places; we experimented with a number of different educational forms. We spent time searching many social action groups for the lever — what is the lever of change? — and running into a lot of frustration and difficulties. Finally Riane decided to tie into education, to work with educators to apply her model. We financed the pilot tests in schools that I mentioned. Then, her book *Tomorrow's Children* led to the idea of a partnership education consultants program to serve as the bridge from the book to the educational community and the wider community.

Ron: What is it about education that makes it the lever that you were seeking?

David: It's so obvious when it finally sinks in. I'm a student of social activism as a psychologist, a sociologist, a systems scientist, and an evolution theorist, and you look at all these methods — political intervention, media intervention, whatever the point of intervention — all these organizations have got to be built from scratch. You've got to find funding for them and wrestle with organizational problems. So much of social action dies just in the organizational difficulty. Education is an institution already out there. It's already financed. It already has an infrastructure. It puts in place the central, most powerful tool for evolutionary change that there is.

A Change In Public Schooling?

Ron: Education activists, even going back 200 years, have been working to change public schooling, to make it more responsive to human needs, more toward what we call holistic values, and many have given up. They've started alternative schools, or they teach their children at home or directly in the community. So you're placing your bet on a horse that many of us have already given up on.

David: Here's what I see. Holistic education has been obviously peripheralized by what we call the dominator paradigm, by the dominator education establishment. Riane's cultural transformation theory is critically important in providing a new perspective. The feminist thrust in modern times is so essential in moving forward the expansion of human consciousness, but time and time again it was peripheralized. The system created a feminist ghetto by confining it to women's studies programs and so forth — the system peripheralized it to blunt the message, to blunt the power. Riane's book had the ability to cross the barrier between female and male readers, with quite possibly even a greater readership among men. This is among men who themselves feel peripheralized or diminished by the system. *The Chalice and the Blade* was the one book that most of them could wholeheartedly embrace, that they felt comfortable with, that broke out of the feminist ghetto, and broke into the mainstream.

For example, Riane once got a call from a man just ecstatic about her book. She chatted with him a bit, and he said he wanted to bring her to Germany to talk. He turned out to be the Chairman of Volkswagen! He had her come over to try to shift the company from a dominator to a partnership direction. Within the establishment, there are these people who want to transcend the dominator model. We're very hopeful that we can move forward what is actually holistic education under this particular umbrella or orientation.

Moral Education

Ron: David, I've come across references to your work in the holistic education literature. What have you been working on, yourself, that is related to what we're calling "holistic" or "partnership" education?

David: My primary interest for the past fifteen years has been moral evolution because I feel that our species is at a juncture where we must rebuild a moral discourse, we must relearn what moral sensitivity is. We need to recapture this rudder — a lot of people refer to it as spirituality. Every major visionary in the spiritual tradition — Jesus, Guatama [Buddha], the Dalai Lama — emphasizes that you must consider moral evolution as part of spiritual evolution. You cannot just go off into so-called spiritual experience. You're forgetting the social context. You're forgetting the need for political intervention. You're forgetting the need for

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A new book, *Partnership Education in Action*, is now available. Visit <www.great-ideas.org/parteduc.htm> or phone 1-800-639-4122 for more information.

educational intervention. That's been a central weakness, in my view, of the so-called New Age spiritual movement. Liberals get anxious about the word "moral" because it's been co-opted by the right wing in an arrogant way: "Our way is moral and you are just creatures of sin, evil," etc. But the scientific worldview was established without values. So the twentieth century was one of people wandering, lost, rudderless, open to Hitlers, open to Stalins, open to all kinds of wars, open to drugs, open to environmental disaster.

Ron: And because of the dominance of the scientific worldview, moral values have largely been left out of our education system....

David: The educational system has this horrible bind: How do you maintain the separation of church and state, and how do you keep the church from getting its grasp again, how do you preserve the great advances of democracy? The teaching of values, of morality and character, since it's been shoved out of science into the hands of religion, then the educator feels, "Gosh, we can't touch that." Consequently, schools have failed to adequately address the problem of character building. You can't leave it up to television. So I see a major task in education: How are we going to rebuild moral development, legitimately?

Most of the study of "man" has been just that, and then it's just elite men.

Ron: It seems to me that this approach you're calling Partnership Education is a very coherent and well planned effort to bring moral purpose back to education.

Riane: We're beginning to hear more about the importance of a "fourth R" in education — relationships. But the question is what kinds of relationships. We've all been taught relationships. But not necessarily for caring relationships. Partnership Education is education for caring — caring for self, for others, and for our Mother Earth.

David: Particularly, I feel that what I call Darwin's "lost theory" fits into it so well. It's a shocker to discover that Darwin's actual theory of human evolution, which was shoved outside of the dominant paradigm for a hundred years, was actually saying that the "selfish gene" is not the driver of human evolution; he was saying quite clearly that moral sensitivity is the centrally most important thing driving human evolution forward because it gives us a rudder. The Partnership Education approach is beautifully calculated to cultivate this moral sensitivity.

The Future of Partnership Education

Ron: How do you see a Partnership Education movement unfolding over the coming months? Do you imagine that people who are looking for something different in education will discover what you're doing through *Tomorrow's Children* and then come to Partnership Education Consultants to actually put this approach into practice, or are the ideas in the book seeds that anyone can take into her or his own work and adapt in his or her own way?

David: I see it in a lot of different ways. One is readers applying the book's ideas to their own situation. We have a website, www.partnershipway.org, that is visited by people from all over the world. We'll be marketing more of our educational materials over the website. And of course, any healthy social movement depends on word of mouth. That's the primary way.

Ron: One of the characteristics of alternative education movements is that people tend to find a movement or a cluster of ideas, or a charismatic figure like Rudolf Steiner or Maria Montessori, and they identify with that one model; they say that that's the solution they're looking for. Is Partnership Education going to be grasped by people in that way also? Or is this something that people from many different points of view might be able to use and adapt?

Riane: I don't see how anybody can use Partnership Education mindlessly if she/he has read my work. If you look at *Tomorrow's Children*, it is clear that unlike Dewey, unlike Montessori, I'm not claiming a particular method, but drawing from many earlier methods. Throughout the book, again and again, you'll find citations to both earlier and contemporary approaches. Yes, Partnership Education provides a new integrative framework for progressive education, and offers original ideas and approaches, but I don't hold myself out as being the person who has all the answers — though I have some very definite opinions, and a lot of passion about them. While I have touched people through my books, at the same time I think it's very important that it not be known as Riane Eisler's method — the "Eisler Method." No, it's the partnership approach and it's an integrated approach, not just a method.

David: I see Partnership Education very much in the tradition of Pestalozzi, Herbart, John Dewey, Montessori. As far as I'm concerned, this is the latest flowering of this central tradition of what really should be "education." Take Rudolf Steiner. My grandson is in a Waldorf school. It has some tremendous insights; it also has some limitations that were Steiner's limitations. I think you can probably say this of all methods, including our method at some later point. The beauty of it right now is that Riane's work is so broad and so all-embracing. Bringing the so-called other half of humanity, the female perspective, back into this discourse, is so central. She's got a truly broad, holistic sense in her model. That gives a lot of room for other voices. This approach is bigger than Riane or me. It's hooked into the evolution of the species, I think. It's in tune with our particular challenge at this time.

Partnership Education's Unique Contribution

Ron: What is specifically new in Partnership Education? If it's the latest flowering of the holistic tradition, what are you adding to the tradition that hasn't been present?

David: There are many things, such as the new analytical lens of the partnership/domination continuum, which is an essential tool

for our times of so much confusion. Another thing is the deepest and widest implications of the women's movement — a greater sense of nurturance, of caring, of tenderness. Centrally, a greater resonance to the full story, the full spectrum of our evolution. This is the key to Partnership Education. Dewey, for example, was a philosopher of evolution, but his limitations were those of practically every male thinker I can think of. The partnership approach transcends the male thinkers because they cannot escape their particular power paradigm, no matter how enlightened it is.

Riane: Partnership Education adds a conceptual framework that I hope can unite, and show the commonalities, the underlying threads, in holistic and progressive approaches. At the same time, by using the lenses of the partnership/dominator continuum, there is a sorting that is not possible using the earlier approaches.

Ron: If there is any danger of this approach becoming hardened into a method, it's in the content side, where you say there is a need for a particular curriculum — you say we do need to talk about certain things. That's one thing that Dewey and many of the progressive theorists didn't prescribe; they left those decisions to the educator. That's been called an "emergent" curriculum, where you let the relationships between the students and teachers determine the curriculum.

Riane: I don't think having a specific content would harden the approach. Quite the contrary. I think it is essential at this point that we not only examine how we teach, or the kind of social and cultural environment that we provide, but that we also look at what we teach. Obviously, different narratives, different stories have a profound effect upon how we perceive ourselves as human beings, how we perceive our society, how we perceive our possibilities. If that were all that Partnership Education does, to provide examples of a partnership-oriented curriculum (and that's what I do, provide examples), it would be good. But I want young people to have access to the analytical lens of the dominator/partnership continuum, to evaluate both some of the conventional narratives and some of the newer narratives that I'm proposing. It's their choice.

So we're talking about new narratives, but also taking another look at old narratives. I think it's very important that we show young people that there is another perspective. I want kids, and all of us, to see alternative narratives, like those that I propose about looking at evolution not just in terms of one or another species surviving, but the movement toward caring, the evolution of love. I think that's so important for young people to know.

To see how Partnership concepts can be put into action in schools, see the following two articles from *Partnership Education in Action*. Additional resources can be found on page 48.

Partnership Teaching: Our Own Growth

by Sarah Pirtle

We have the opportunity to participate directly in cultural transformation within the very culture we create in our own classrooms and in all the places we encourage the growth of children. Partnership Education involves self-reflection. Partnership skills are not acquired by learning someone else's approach; they are inherently located inside, available to be developed.

Attuning Ourselves to Partnership

Partnership classrooms and schools are created by people who want to embody partnership values in themselves. As we become more conscious of the values we want to transmit to our students, as we become more self-reflective about our classrooms and ourselves, every one of us can help develop partnership learning communities.

Like a seed holding the pattern of an evolving plant, communities need people who hold the pattern of partnership in the way they live, think, and interact. The phrase, "holding environment," gives an apt image; it is a phrase from D. W. Winnicott that is articulated by Robert Kegan in his book *The Evolving Self*. Kegan says, "Your own sense of wholeness or lack of it, is in large part a function of how your own current embeddedness culture is holding you." (Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 116) The adults who set up the "holding environment" in a classroom can hold young people in partnership and embody a commitment to partnership.

Commitment is the key word here. None of us will be perfect. None of us will act in a partnership mode all the time. But we can all become more attuned to partnership, and the capacity for partnership skills is inherently located inside of us, available to be tapped and developed.

Here are three tools of attuning ourselves to partnership.

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Tool One: Encourage Your Own Independent Thinking About Partnership

Partnership is a force that we observe, describe, and participate in. It's not a new method that could later become dated. It's fundamental. If we approached partnership in a dominator mindset, we might get into arguments about the best words to use to describe it, or the best methods to teach it, or who is more of a partner than whom. To approach partnership within a partnership paradigm, we have to deal with dynamic knowledge.

We have different ways of describing this fundamental force of partnership and the lack of that force. What words and phrases best describe for you the concept of partnership? What words or phrases best describe domination? How do you glean what is meant by these concepts? Which of your intelligences help you experience what they mean — is it a kinesthetic sense? Is it linguistic? Is it pictorial? And, how do your senses inform you that what is going on around you feels like partnership or feels like domination?

All educators will not use the same words for these phenomena. It is important to hear each other's way of expressing the partnership/dominator lenses and feel the dynamic interplay of this variety.

Tool Two: Take Up the Challenge Of Partnership Growth

By inviting yourself to become more knowledgeable about partnership, you are inviting personal change. Thinking about partnership is like shining a spotlight that helps us better see old territory, as well as new vistas we did not see before.

The places where domination occur become more visible — this might be in your school building, or in family relationships, or your own ways of teaching and interacting. You walk into the school library and notice that most of the covers of a well-respected social studies magazine for children feature wars, making it seem as if these are the most important and noteworthy events in history. You walk into the staff room and hear put-downs embedded in jokes. You remind your own children about chores and feel that your voice sounds like a drill sergeant's bark.

A minor earthquake can result as what was unseen becomes seen, but this awareness of imbalance is the seed for positive change. We're trying to walk our talk. We're trying to declare an outbreak of peace inside us and in our classrooms. The impediments and difficulties will surface as part of this intention for growth. It doesn't mean we are hypocrites or insincere in our intentions. It's part of the process of increasing consciousness. It's helpful to find friends or colleagues who can talk with you about your perceptions and efforts.

New vistas are also visible. The encouraging words of a family member ring with greater resonance. We watch a friend skillfully assert boundaries and mentally file away her phrases and her attitude of "being yes while saying no." We find ourselves valuing the commitment of staff members in our building with deeper appreciation. In these and other ways we see the moments of dedication and caring more clearly as well.

Tool Three: Ask Questions

We can develop an inner tuning fork of what domination and partnership feel like, look like, sound like. Learning how to live inside partnership is a dynamic process. The crux of locating the inner tuning fork of partnership is through asking questions.

Partnership Process

When am I dominating when I could instead be holding, developing, or guiding?
How can I hold this group in partnership values?
How can I structure this activity so that many voices can contribute?
How can I provide examples and then move back and allow the child's unique creativity to come forward?
How can I coordinate the rhythms of many people in a manner that is mutually enhancing?
What other questions would you ask?

The Oops Method

A simple partnership process to introduce is to say the phrase, "oops," when a social mistake occurs. "Oops" takes off the onus of blame and shame, takes responsibility, and encourages social learning. It mixes the key ingredients of compassion and accountability.

I learned the phrase "mistaken behavior" from Daniel Gartrell, author of *A Guidance Approach for the Encouraging Classroom* (New York, Delmar, 1998). He suggests we look at children's unsuccessful attempts at negotiating social situations as mistakes rather than as "misbehavior." Here's how I described it for early childhood educators:

"Misbehavior assumes that children are willful and want to do something wrong. If instead we see children as active learners, we assist them in developing social skills, just as they learn new speaking or writing skills, without being punished as wrongdoers when they have difficulty." (*Linking Up!*, Educators for Social Responsibility: 1998, p. 22)

The "oops" method works in Junior High and High School and with adults, too. When our dominator training comes to the fore, the use of the word "oops" can diffuse the situation and direct attention to change.

The Dalai Lama says that peace develops one person at a time through the internal transformation of individuals. Teachers encourage this transformation when they use guidance rather than punishment in the classroom. This helps students build self-control and take self-responsibility.

Teaching The Oops Method: Grades K-6th

There are many ways to implement a plan of social agreements which accents self-responsibility and awareness of others. You are invited to make revisions in this wording so that you have words that best express how you want to hold students in agreements of mutual respect. After having revised models for teaching social skills for different settings over many years, here is a framework I devised recently as a K-6th grade music teacher at the New Hingham School in Massachusetts.

This is a Safe Zone

1. Every person here is a good person.
2. Our job in this room is to work together.
3. We are part of a group. We think about what the whole group needs.
4. If we make a mistake in our behavior, we fix it. Our job is to realize what the mistake is and learn how to change.
5. If someone else makes a mistake, it helps if we don't laugh.

We respect: each other's space
each person's feelings
ourselves
everyone in the room
the materials we use

The students provided the name, the "Oops" method. The way it worked is that when someone made a social mistake — such as yelling, hitting, pushing, throwing — I as teacher or another student would say, "Oops." It acknowledged the situation and clarified that they had to change it. As needed, I might add — "How can you fix this?" If the mistaken behavior continued without effort at self-responsibility, I handed the student an "Oops" form where they reflected in writing. The form asked questions, including "What was the mistake?" and "What will you do differently next time?" so that they could identify not only what they did that was a mistake but also how they could change or fix it.

Snapshot:

A fourth grader who had difficulty controlling her impulses was part of a group quietly listing to storytelling after lunch. Each person was able to use a piece of modeling clay during the story as a way to focus. When she felt finished with the clay, instead of waiting until the story was complete and placing it back in the container in the center of the circle as was the usual procedure, suddenly she threw it from a distance. The simple word, "Oops," gave her a clear message reinforcing the expectations for the group without placing shame. She walked forward, picked up the clay, and placed it carefully. Ten days later, after hearing the phrase used many times both by adults guiding children and adults owning their own mistakes, the phrase became internalized for her. The same girl caught herself racing around while the rest were gathering to focus at a meeting, noticed, and said, "Oops."

Discovering Nonviolence: Discussing Partnership Process

Grade level: 5th - 12th

> "Undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence."
>
> —*Gandhi*

1. Explain to the students, in your own words, that there is a dynamic relationship between caring for ourselves and caring for others. It can happen at the same time. It's both/and rather than either/or. We practice self-respect within a context of community-respect. These aren't dialectically opposed — caring for ourselves and caring for the whole — because as humans we are encoded for mutual respect. Part of what we teach in our classrooms is how to listen to oneself while at the same time being responsible for the effects on others of our behavior and our choices.

2. Talk about the reality of the unseen by reflecting upon the action of gravity. Ask students either to imagine or actually to hold something in one hand and drop it into the other. Discuss: Is gravity real if we can't see it? Establish an understanding that there are forces we can't see which, even though they are invisible forces, are essential. These forces help all life on earth.

3. One of the other unseen forces was articulated by the peacemaker Gandhi in India. He named it Satyagraha (pronounced saht-yah-grah-ha). This means truthforce, but a combination of truth and love, or truthful love.

Gandhi believed that the strongest thing in the world, in the universe even, is this truthful love. Tell students about nonviolence, Gandhi's way of communicating to the British colonial government when it did things that hurt the people of India. Gandhi was insisting on mutual respect. Explain that he believed that people are held in a bond of mutual caring and love.

4. Engage in creating classroom agreements as an experiment in truthforce. Talk together: "When someone forgets or uses means that hurt others, by speaking truthfully we insist that they return to this common bond of caring. In our classroom we are doing experiments using truthforce. We will set up our classroom agreements using this truthforce to hold us as a caring community."

Professional Partnership: Nonviolent Communication

Teachers will inevitably be different from each other, and we can use these differences as a basis for linking with each other or as a basis for ranking, judgment, and separation. We may hold different assumptions about how children learn, we value different parts of the curriculum, we have different personal styles. To teach effectively, we have to begin from our own strengths. However, since our culture is imbued with dominator social structures, many schools are places that aren't fed by collegial respect and partnership. This is not rooted in an intent to harm so much as inexperience with partnership or habitual entrainment to domination. Just as when one child in a classroom is mistreated by others, no child can truly feel safe, each staff person isn't socially safe to be themselves and teach at their best in an atmosphere where differences are a source of social stratification rather than appreciated and expected.

A key component of any work in becoming a partnership staff, is learning how to disagree and communicate constructively. Having not grown up in schools ourselves where we learned how to disagree in a friendly way, where we felt safe to go directly to the person we disagree with rather than talk behind their back, it's hard for us to create a new climate. One contribution that Partnership Education can make is to lead trainings for principals in how to set up partnership norms and processes in their building among all staff members.

In some schools teachers overtly or covertly speak disparagingly of others and the culture of that particular staff is to accept or even expect put-downs. As a school examines its culture, the pattern of using humor can be revealing. When we use humor to indirectly raise problems and conflicts, does it help lead into constructive communication or just vent emotions without communication? Do the jokes increase a feeling of community or are indirect messages of conflict or censure delivered through jokes and innuendoes? Do some jokes carry the punch of zingers rather than the fun of friendly joking banter?

Humor can also be a healing force. In a university class for teachers working on their Master's degree, participants used levity when anyone spoke from a "ranking" mindset. Humorously, the teachers called out the reminder, "linking, linking," when a joke felt too sharp.

Anecdote: Nonviolent Communication

Partnership Process Skills: Address conflicts directly.
Look for common ground.

Trainers within a peace education organization had a disagreement. The organization had a standard procedure for teaching conflict resolution in elementary schools. A book was about to be published for early childhood. Early childhood trainers within the organization had independently discovered that the standard wording didn't work as well in younger settings and weren't finding it developmentally appropriate. What method would be presented in the new book?

Dominator choices abounded: Challenging each other argumentatively at staff meetings. Covertly speaking behind people's backs. Excessively praise methods publicly while privately denegrating them. Personalizing: Attacking the person instead of the problem — "he/she always goes off on his/her own," "never listens to me."

Instead, the organization took a partnership direction: Two early childhood educators requested that people involved meet together and collaboratively create a framework that made sense for the early childhood age group. They decided that they liked the purpose of each step in the elementary model but wanted to redo the wording to be more useable by younger children. The educators who worked with younger children reported on the wording that they actually used. Each set of words were listed, compared, and then revised by everyone. The framework was published under the names of all people present at the meeting.

Partnership Questions

Here are questions that a staff can use to examine current school climate and build partnership. A comfortable method for staff reflection needs to avoid putting people on the spot. A several stage process

includes these steps: (a) empower a small group to amend and add to this list, (b) hand out the questions for everyone to look at individually in advance, and (c) set up a time to take suggestions for new agreements and new methods of operating that will be mutually respectful.

- When we disagree with someone on the staff, what do we do now? What do we want to do? What might make it difficult to talk directly? How can we help direct constructive communication to happen?
- How do we use humor to communicate? Do we use jokes that stereotype each other? Do we use humor to indirectly communicate what we feel we can't say directly?
- Are all staff members included in social functions? Do people hear about social functions through the same methods? Are dates, locations, and activities selected with input from everyone?
- Are there more ways that the valuing of custodial, clerical, and cafeteria staff can be communicated?
- Are staff differently regarded due to ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?

Interventions can be made by individuals. They can speak up when put-downs occur, just as one would intervene in a racist or sexist remark modeling partnership, or step in to help relations with all members of the staff. Intervention will be strongest when a whole school staff can articulate together that they are committed to functioning together as partners — and use the "oops" method when they make a mistake.

Co-Creators of Knowledge

In Partnership Education all people — students, staff, other educators — are recognized as contributors to the growth and learning. We are invited to value and share with each other our struggles, our experiments, our "oops," and our realizations. As we nurture our own partnership voices, we use the parts of ourselves that are fluid, receptive, and creative. We are invited into ever-deepening self-knowledge. People of every age, young people and teachers alike, are important seeds holding the essence of partnership. As we approach teaching itself as an art, we become participants in evolving growth.

Partnership School Council

by Sarah Pirtle

Grade level: 1st - 12th

Overview: Involve students in helping to govern the school using a systems view of human social interaction. Teach students a partnership structure for helping to coordinate the community. Empower classes to discuss important social issues, to give feedback on areas where change is needed, to notice unconstructive behavior, and to help make plans for changes.

Goals: To formalize a structure whereby students give input and set a tone for the whole community.
To understand a systems view of community functioning.

Procedure:

1. Talk as a staff about what a partnership method of governance is and how it is modeled on life systems:

   Myth: Partnership means anything goes, laissez-faire, a tyranny of structurelessness.

   Actual definition: Partnership means order. Just as the pattern of a healthy plant is established by a seed, the shared goals and purposes of the school community are the seed around which an orderly structure is based. The human organism operates through complex coordination of cells and organs. Each cell has its own vitality and clear boundaries while at the same time it works in partnership within the community of all the cells of the body. Likewise, each person in a partnership structure is responsible for maintaining their own behavior and integrity as well as being responsible for helping to maintain the integrity of the whole.

   Learning: Teachers are well aware of the number of students for whom it is difficult to be in charge of themselves or to perceive themselves as part of a group. Nonetheless, using this systems model is an effective way (a) to diagnose how to help with the problem areas in a community, (b) to set up training in responsibility, and (c) to structure governance.

2. Within this model, the way to maintain a healthy system is to have a coordinated method for receiving feedback and responding to feedback so that the whole community can flourish. Establish a School Council as a mechanism for student feedback and as an avenue for developing student responsibility. However, instead of electing certain students as representatives who are already considered the positive leaders, include all students in rotation, working in pairs, so that they get practice in being accountable. Two members of each classroom attend a weekly student meeting with the principal or counselor. If the group will be too large, work with half the school at a time. Every student at some point in the school year gets to represent their classroom at the School Council meeting.

Suggested format: On Monday the principal sends each classroom one or two questions to discuss. These are on the agenda of the meeting. Every class has four days to make time to discuss these issues. Sample question — "What can we do about the problem of people throwing our metal silverware into the trash can at lunch?" Although the discussion may generate many different ideas, each classroom must pare down their feedback to 1-3 statements.

Each classroom on their job chart rotation includes the jobs "representative" and "assistant representative." These students attend together. The representative is responsible for reading out loud the feedback that their classroom is giving, and also brings back any announcements from the meeting and reads them to the class. The assistant watches, and the next week they become the representative and fulfill those same duties. On Thursday afternoon, representatives attend the School Council meeting for half an hour. On Friday they report back to their class what happened at the meeting. Each class makes their own plan of what they will do if reps are absent for illness.

Some issues will be simple reports, such as, "Does your class want to make a presentation at the holiday assembly, and if so, how many minutes do you need?" Such a matter could be handled at a staff meeting, but by using it as a School Council issue, student understanding of community is increased. Other issues may be on the agenda for several weeks, each time getting closer to a school consensus on what changes to try.

Example: Bus-related issues. Each week the classrooms discuss a portion of the problem.

Week 1 — What problems are occurring when people in your class board buses? Tell actions without using specific names of students.

Week 2 — Does your class like the current method for choosing seats on the bus? If not, can you think of other ways that seats could be chosen?

Week 3 — What problems during the bus ride have people encountered?

Week 4 — What are your suggestions for changing problems during the bus ride?

Week 5 — Here is the suggested bus monitor plan we have developed. Are there any changes you would like to make?

3. Staff Involvement:

   a. Agenda: Staff will be more involved and included if they are able to have input on what will be part of the School Council agenda. The principal could propose the next week's agenda to the staff the week before students address it.

   b. Uniform policies: Make sure that staff agree that no student will be excluded from the rotation. This means that no matter what a student's behavior has been like on a given week, if the job chart says they are the representative that week, they are responsible for carrying out their duties as class representative. This way each student has a chance to develop their skills in leadership, responsibility, and communication.

   c. Staff Inclusion: Talk about a way for staff themselves to be representatives on the School Council. Staff who aren't classroom teachers — custodians, cafeteria workers, guidance counselors, librarian, special education teachers — can figure out a method for attending during agenda items germane to them or as part of a regular rotation.

4. Use a bulletin board to share information from School Council. One image is that each classroom is one circle all linked to a central hub. Spokespeople who represent each class go into the center circle, like spokes of a wheel. Show this graphically to reinforce the idea that we are like cells in one body.

5. Apply this basic method — a few people are delegated to discuss a problem that affects the larger group — to other situations. Set up ways for people to give feedback when there is a problem, and establish avenues for this feedback to be regarded and taken into account.

Examples:

- All the classes who have recess together can address a chronic problem at kickball by having representives meet at the start of recess to compare plans from their classrooms.
- Small groups within a classroom can discuss a problem on behalf of the whole. For instance, if there are problems that occur during music class, randomly draw three names and ask those students to meet with you to discuss ideas for how to improve the situation.

6. Continue to become more informed on the systems model of developing social responsibility. The belief in operation here is that to maintain order and strengthen healthy behavior we need to engage students in practicing it. The goal is to return healthy functioning to the system of the school by showing how to give appropriate feedback, by raising awareness of community, and by actually practicing responsibility.

Some teachers may express concern that empowering students means encouraging them to push for whatever they wish without respect for others. Clarify that we aren't empowering them for them to dominate, we are requiring them to be part of an orderly community where they are empowered to be part of democracy. Empowerment in a systems model means empowering to contribute to the healthy functioning of the whole. In fact, we are telling students: You are part of this group, and what you do impacts all of us.

In every school, systems of accountability are strained by students who chronically exhibit mistaken behavior. A partnership model also holds them accountable. They are seen as having strong unmet needs. The goal is to engage these students in perceiving and owning: What is it you really need right now? What is the best way to get those needs met? Including them rather than excluding them from participation in School Council is part of entraining them into being responsible for their actions.

STUDY CIRCLES

Education for Our Times

by Cecile Andrews

IN 1893, a man from Sweden named Oscar Olsson visited America. Oscar Olsson was searching for a form of education that would transform his society—a country of great poverty and extreme gaps between the rich and the poor. Olsson wanted a method that would help create a democracy concerned about justice and liberty by allowing people to educate themselves.

He found what he was looking for in the United States—a form of education that would one day be referred to as "education by the people, for the people, and of the people." It was a form of education called the study circle, a concept that went on to transform Sweden but was forgotten about in the United States. Today, though, it returns to America—once again to transform a society.

Olsson found what he was looking for in an unlikely place—the study circles sponsored by the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. What had begun in Chautauqua, New York in the 1870s as a training program for Sunday school teachers expanded into a broad middle class program of nonformal education. By 1915 the Chautauqua movement was sponsoring fifteen thousand study circles in their program called "colleges for one's home."

Study circles became even more important in Sweden. Study circles have been credited with helping create a country that is more committed to the well-being of people and the planet than almost any other country in the world. Today, two-thirds of Swedish adults have been in study circles at some time in their lives, with a third of the adult population involved in any given year. Study circles in Sweden are used to explore every possible issue, with the government using them to help create an informed citizenry. Indeed, Sweden has been called a "study circle democracy."

And now, study circles are coming home. Many, many groups in the United States have seen the wisdom of a form of education based on democracy, participation, and equality—a way of educating that allows people to educate themselves, free themselves from the rules and regulations of institutionalized education, free themselves to express and discover their own truths.

Study Circles and Voluntary Simplicity

The idea of study circles had always intrigued me, and in my position as a community college administrator in charge of continuing education courses, I had often tried to get study circle projects going. But they just didn't catch on. And then, one day I read a story about study circles, which listed the phone number of an organization called the Study Circles Resource Center in Pomfret, Connecticut. I called them immediately.

Cecile Andrews is the author of *The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life* (HarperCollins, 1997). A former community college administrator, she now works with the non-profit Seeds of Simplicity teaching classes and workshops on the subjects of simplicity and community education for social change. At present she is a visiting scholar at Stanford University.

For me, this was the beginning of a transformational experience. In 1989 a man had come to me wanting to offer a workshop based on Duane Elgin's book, *Voluntary Simplicity*. It was a book (and a subject) I had been fascinated with for years, so I said yes immediately. But in the end, only 4 people signed up and the workshop had to be cancelled.

But then, after contacting the Study Circles Resource Center, I decided to offer the workshop again. This time—with the same amount of publicity—175 people showed up! Why? I think it was, at least in part, because I gave them a chance to get involved in study circles, a setting where they could talk about what is important to them, what matters, how they could create a society based on concern for the well-being of people and the planet.

Why did study circles catch on with the subject of Simplicity? I believe that study circles are a natural expression of the concept of Voluntary Simplicity. To me, Simplicity is "the examined life" richly lived. It's asking ourselves questions about what's important and what matters. As our lives have become increasingly frenetic and our environment teeters on the brink of collapse, people are drawn to the age-old concept of Simplicity because it calls for a reexamination of our values and behaviors. Study circles give people a way to reexamine their lives.

Study circles give people a way to reexamine their lives.

In Simplicity study circles we examine our behaviors, asking about the consequences of our behavior for the quality of our own lives, for the greater community, and for the planet. We are discovering that our extreme preoccupation with increasing wealth, consumerism, and status is not only destroying people's lives but also destroying the environment. Our out-of-control consumer society is using up resources and polluting all of life.

Since 1992, Simplicity study circles have spread around the country and have developed in countries around the world, including England, Canada, Australia, India, and Sweden.

Folk Education

But it wasn't only the Swedish study circle that influenced me. It was also an approach to adult learning called folk education that was developed in Denmark—another country committed to the welfare of the Earth and her people. Again, Danish historians give credit for their progressive policies to a system of educating adults in which the adults were not treated as empty vessels to be filled with information. Folk education was, and continues to be, a form of education focused on learning from the people what they need, a form of education that views the common person as a source of wisdom.

In fact, my favorite story about Folk Education involves Myles Horton, the founder of Highlander Center, the educational center located in Tennessee, that has been a dynamic force for social change since its founding in the thirties. Not many people know that a few months before Rosa Parks performed her history-changing act, she had been at Highlander. Rosa Parks herself credited Highlander with catapulting her into history.

Myles Horton, who died only a few years ago, had grown up in the Appalachian hills and for many years searched for a way to help his people out of their poverty. He searched in many places, but in the thirties he went to Denmark to study their folk schools and had an epiphany: As he wrote in his journal on Christmas night in 1931: "I can't sleep, but there are dreams. What you must do is go back, get a simple place, move in and you are there. The situation is there. You start with this and let it grow. You know your goal. It will build its own structure and take its own form. You can go to school all your life, you'll never figure it out because you are trying to get an answer that can only come from the people in the life situation" (p. 55, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography* by Myles Horton).

Horton went home and started Highlander. In the thirties he worked with the unions, and gradually began to work in Civil Rights. Rosa Parks was one of the people who came to Highlander along with others like Martin Luther King and Eleanor Roosevelt.

I tell this story because I want people to realize the potential of this approach to education. We are not only trying to change individual lives, but trying to change society as well. I believe that the

Editor's Note

In Paths 8 *(Spring 2001), we published an interview with Cecile Andrews, author of the widely influential book* The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life *and an experienced "leaderless leader" of study circles. This article elaborates upon some of the crucial concepts that she had discussed in the interview. As we were preparing for this issue's publication, the awful tragedy of September 11 occurred. My e-mail exchanges with Cecile subsequent to the terror of that day included the following post of hers, which I think speaks directly and poignantly to the important immediacy of the work in which she has been engaged—and which has engaged her—in recent years:*

"To me, the idea of study circles seems even more important today—we simply have to find a way to get people to talk with each other and learn to reflect. We can try to teach it to the kids but I don't think they'll learn it unless the adults learn it first. Besides, we might not have time. A group of us are meeting at my house tomorrow night to see if we can start conversations in cafés where people just listen to each other talk about such basic questions as "What are your fears?" "What are your hopes?" A variation on the study circle. Anyway, all this is really scary, isn't it?"

Indeed, it is. Perhaps, though, with the help of persons such as Cecile, we can begin to learn how to have the sorts of conversations and dialogues that will help us to build caring, loving communities.

two changes must happen together. As people change their individual lives, they become involved and inspired and ultimately commit to the larger issue of social change. They realize that it is a basic human need to want to make a difference, and that you cannot experience the joys of community unless you try to work for the common good.

Others have come to this concept of adult learning for social change through the work of Paulo Friere, and certainly he has influenced me as well—in particular, Friere said that you cannot import ideas from another culture. You must rediscover the concepts yourself and find how they are expressed in your own culture.

My particular challenge was how to use—with the middle-class—methods designed for the poor and the oppressed. I realized that I had to help people see that oppression takes many forms—certainly our commercial society is oppressing people by trying to turn citizens into consumers. While our consumer culture doubly oppresses the poor, I knew that it was not my role to advocate that poor people simplify their lives. My role is to help middle-class people understand that their unhappiness is linked to the social injustice in the greater society, to see the roots of social justice within the concept of Simplicity— as Gandhi said, "Live simply so that others can simply live." My role, as I see it, is to help people become critical thinkers about our American preoccupation with affluence, helping them see that the god of greed destroys their own lives as well as harming the greater good—that no one is or can be aloof from the common good.

> Live simply so that others can simply live.
> —Gandhi

Developing Simplicity Study Circles

So, as I worked on my book, *The Circle of Simplicity*, I led dozens of simplicity study circles. I knew my theories, but I also knew I had to see what would work—what would keep people involved and excited. I found that there were different issues in working with a middle-class group than in working with a poor group. Whereas poor people have been made to feel that they don't know much, middle-class people often feel that they have all the answers and nothing to learn from anyone else.

And so, when I first started with people in the circles, I discovered that their tendency was to recreate the atmosphere of the college classroom, with people becoming competitive and argumentative. Instead of thinking together in a collegial fashion, people were competing to prove they were right and others wrong. Instead of listening to each other, people spent their time trying to perfect their argument so that they could use it as a hammer to bash others.

I wasn't surprised, because I had often experienced this tendency—particularly when my husband and I, in search of community, joined a book discussion group. We quickly discovered that it seemed to be a dysfunctional discussion group! People were so competitive that we would go home each evening feeling drained and dejected. In the adversarial atmosphere we felt stupid and thought that everyone else was stupid.

That's not the way to create community! When you leave a discussion group you should feel excited and renewed, on top of the world, loving every single intelligent wonderful person in the group! But that's not what we had experienced.

But I realized that this was something endemic to our middle-class American culture. We had been taught only to debate and argue and try to win. So I set about trying to figure out how to create a group in which people experienced joy instead of resentment, community instead of competition and alienation. I knew I had to change the structure and not just give some ground rules. Too often I had seen lists of rules on how to conduct a group—rules telling people not to argue, to listen, to speak openly. But we don't tell little children to be careful: "Don't touch that vase! You might break it!" We remove the vase. We change the environment. So I knew I had to change the actual structure of the group experience if I wanted people to create community, to feel that they were recognized and accepted for themselves.

Small and Leaderless

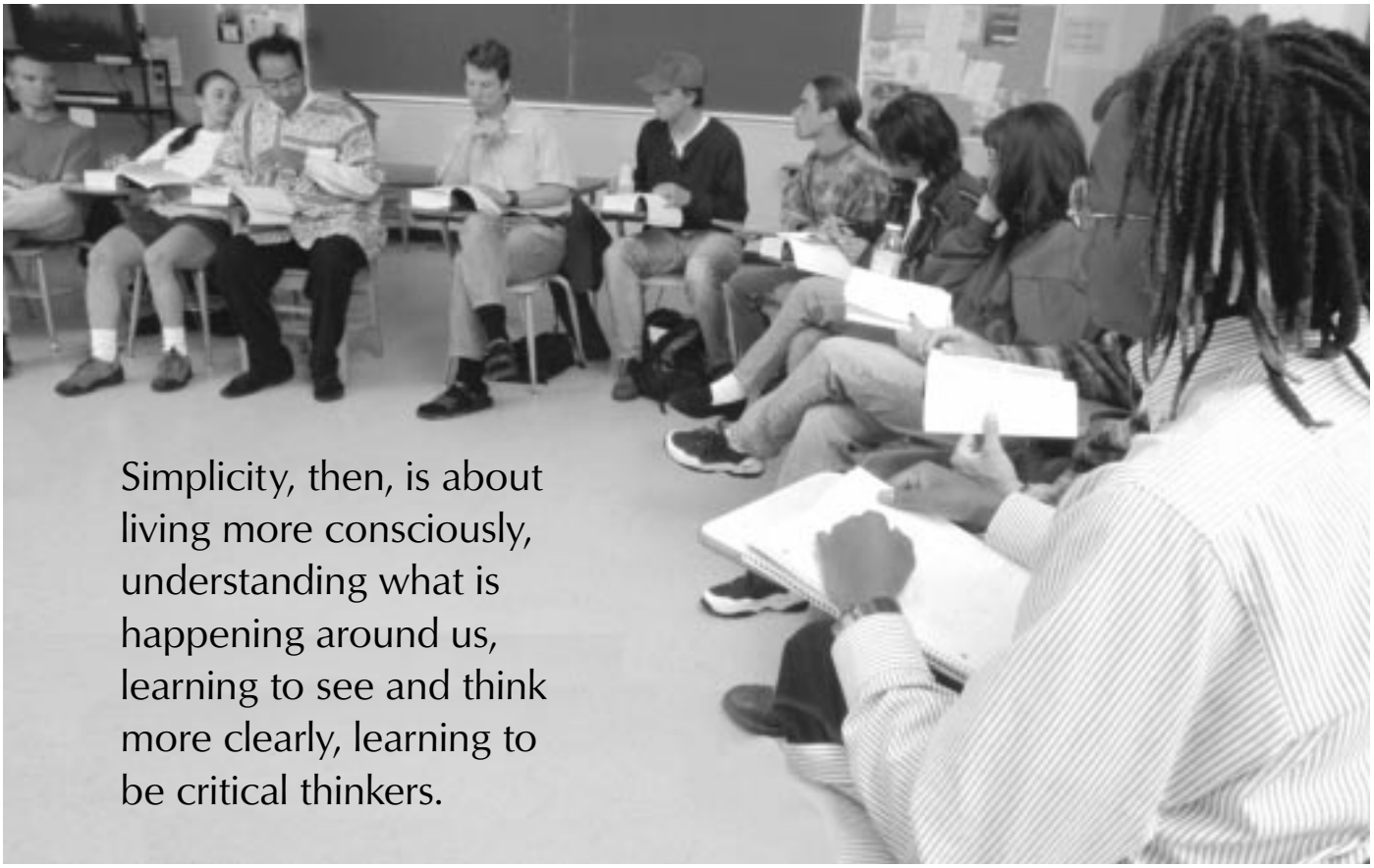
The first thing I did was to make the group small and leaderless. Too often the leader of a group becomes a police officer, trying to get the talkers to shut up and the quiet ones to speak up. (With neither group appreciating those efforts!) I wanted the group to operate without a leader, to have everyone responsible and involved. So the group had to be small; I found that 6-8 members worked best. If the group is any bigger, people don't get a chance to be listened to. Small and leaderless makes the experience intimate and real.

To further eliminate the need for a leader, I created a detailed format so that the people could lead themselves. There is always a "coordinator" to get things started, but I tried to create a format that would easily allow people to run the discussions themselves.

The Personal Story

To reduce the competitiveness of the "classroom-like environment," I decided that instead of discussing an article or an idea, we would focus on the personal story. People would tell their own story in response to a basic question—a question everyone could answer from her or his own experience. For instance, in the session on community, instead of asking how the experts define community, I asked people this question: "When in your life have you experienced community?" Everyone has a story. No one competes when she's telling her story. In fact, you end up hearing your own story over and over and those thoughts that you were unable to admit—even to yourself—come flowing to the surface. Others' stories affirm your experience. You aren't crazy. Others feel as you do.

I realized of course, that when people tell their own story and learn to listen to others' stories, they are learning to discover their own truths, to trust their own judgment—the only way people can resist the manipulation of the consumer society. People unlearn their blind acceptance of the ideas of the experts and authorities, and they learn to think for themselves, finding their values in their own experiences. People begin to shed the second-hand ideas they've been exposed to from the



dominant society and develop their own personal philosophy; they learn to understand that their true best interests lie in harmony with community and with nature, and they learn to resist manipulation by the corporate society.

The Personal Is Political

But the purpose of the Simplicity study circle is not only to change people's lives, but to change society. We can learn from the early women's movement that the personal is political. We need to link what is happening in our own lives to what is happening in society. Too often we blame ourselves for problems, not realizing the forces of the larger culture. Simplicity, then, is about living more consciously, understanding what is happening around us, learning to see and think more clearly, learning to be critical thinkers.

We do this best with other people. Alone, we can get trapped in our own minds and often don't see what is happening. But in Simplicity circles, everyone brings a piece of the puzzle. People share what they have read and thought about. Thinking becomes a cooperative instead of a competitive activity, and everyone becomes more enlivened and enlightened. So, if the topic that evening is about community, first you talk about your own experiences of community and then you talk about the forces in society that undermine community. Here's where the ideas and energies really start to flow. Everyone has examples from his own life and from his reading.

People begin by discussing the specific problem, then begin to discuss the causes of the problem, and then begin to think about how the problem can be solved. For instance, take the example of community and cars. People know from first-hand experience that cars undermine community. They talk about their hours on the road, sitting alone in their car. Then someone else remembers an article he or she had read about how car manufacturers undermined mass transit. Then, maybe a couple decides to get active in a new idea they've heard about—car sharing. Or another person might decide to get active in political efforts for mass transit.

And so, when people start to connect the personal and political, they begin to learn to look for connections between problems and to find more effective solutions. This kind of "connected" thinking is very exciting. Not only are you connecting with each other, but also you are connecting ideas together. But this can be a danger point in the circle, too. People can get so excited that they start competing for airtime. Once again, I knew I needed a structural change.

The "Circle" Method Of Conversation

So we developed the "circle" method of talking—passing a timer around and giving each person 3 minutes—and people began to sit back and relax and listen to each other because they knew their turn would come. Somehow, taking turns undermines competitiveness. (You can use a watch, but an egg timer seems to work best because it's so visible. After a while, the three-minute limit just becomes automatic.)

Taking Small, Concrete Actions and Engaging in Group Reflection

And finally, the last part of the format involves action. When people act, they change! So people go around the circle and announce what action they will take that week. In the discussion on community, people will tend to come up with vague

ideas: "I'm going to start being more friendly," "I'm going to start talking with my neighbors," etc. That usually doesn't work. It has to be something small and concrete and doable. For instance, one man announced that, as a way to get to know his neighbors, he would borrow some sugar from one of them.

Such action makes for real, concrete, personal change. Let's say that your circle meets on Wednesday night and on Tuesday night you remember that you haven't borrowed the sugar. Normally, you might try to find a way to wiggle out of your commitment, telling yourself, perhaps, that your idea was really stupid and that you don't really want to get to know that weird looking person next door anyway. But because you know that people will be waiting to hear how your action turned out, you go next door and knock.

Well, maybe your plan goes well and maybe it doesn't. Maybe the neighbor welcomes you, or maybe he looks at you as if you were crazy. But you know that when you report to your study circle, someone will commiserate. You know someone will say, "That happened to me, too!" And you won't feel so bad. Maybe you'll try again. Or, someone will say, "Why don't you try...?" In this kind of setting, people share their positive experiences and suggestions as well as commiserating with each other.

Maybe all of this will lead to a discussion of why it's so hard to approach our neighbors, or of why, in general, people are so suspicious. And perhaps this discussion in turn will lead to a conversation about how we have come to value money more than people and how our attachment to materialism pervades our whole society. And then maybe people will talk about how we can change this value structure, how we can build a society that encourages community. Action leads to reflection, which leads to further action.

These strategies—using the personal story, linking the personal to the political, and engaging in concrete action/reflection—can lead to broad change. First there is primarily personal change. But research in Sweden has found that no matter what subject people study in a circle, even if it's just art history or learning to speak a language, they all come out more concerned about and involved in civil society. The process of talking with people in an open and relaxed way, thinking together about the community, experiencing the camaraderie of kindred spirits, changes us and makes us more concerned about the common good.

So, here are two age-old approaches to social change melded into one—Voluntary Simplicity and the study circle. People have always known that a society committed only to the selfish pursuit of personal gain is on a suicide course. And at the heart of any revolution has always been the small group, where people catch fire and become involved in that great human venture of individual and social change.

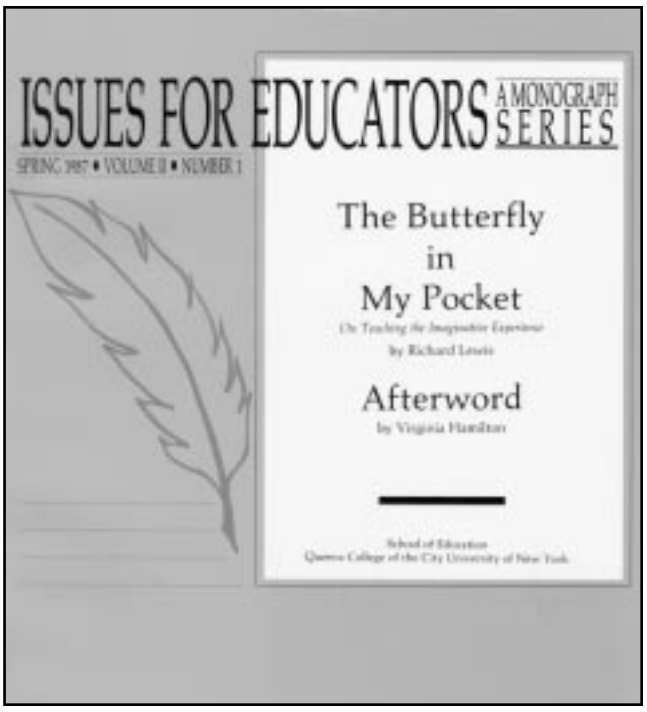
Appropriately, I end, then, with the words of Margaret Mead, words that more and more people are beginning to know: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

See page 47 for information on Learning Circles.

Living By Wonder, Working With Love

by Richard Lewis

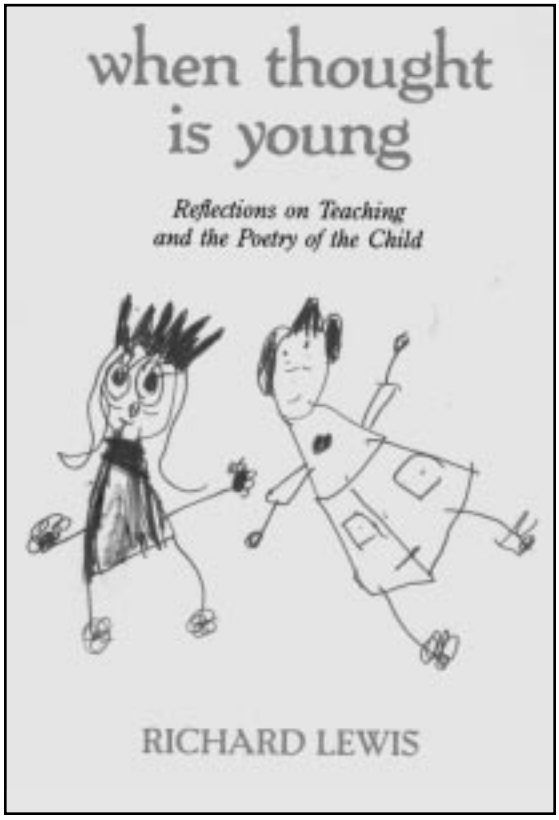
Editor's Note: *In the last issue of* Paths, *we published an article by Richard Lewis, the Founder and Director of The Touchstone Center, an educational enterprise located in New York City, whose engaging — and engagingly creative — educational endeavors have touched the lives of many teachers, students, and parents. Below, we present to you, by way of a follow-up to his article, a few excerpts from some of Lewis's writings. These excerpts will allow you to glimpse the rich world of imagination, creativity, love, and wholeness that inspires the Center's work. We hope that, after reading these excerpts, you will have a better understanding of how and why the Center has been so successful at encouraging persons of all ages to find the individual sources and expressions of their imaginative abilities.*These first two excerpts are taken from *The Butterfly in My Pocket: On Teaching the Imaginative Experience*, reprinted with permission from Issues for Educators: A monograph Series, Spring 1987. Volume II, Number I.



What is essential, initially, is that we cultivate a positive attitude toward the imaginative life within ourselves. To do so, we must let go of one of the sacred dictums of Western thought — that only the process of thinking that is *logical* can adequately serve our purposes as learners. Like Alice in Wonderland, we must pass through the looking glass and be comfortable with the reasonings of a more fluid way of perceiving the world. Not necessarily with a *nonsensical* stance, but with one whereby our senses and our thoughts are at play again.

The imaginative conversation begins when children become aware of the images within themselves and of the fluidity of thought that is possible once those images speak. Trust is the key. Such speaking can only happen if we trust the imaginative abilities of the children enough so that they, in turn, trust us to convey what they are imagining. The imaginative conversation thus is a *shared* language, in which the speaker and listener, in ourselves and children, are willing to trust the venturings into the unknown.

The next three excerpts are taken from When Thought is Young: Reflections on Teaching and the Poetry of the Child *and are reprinted with permission from New Rivers Press, 1992.*



The simplest point of attraction, a speck of dust, a shadow, a hand, a single thread, a ring — these can become for children beginnings of immense proportions. They see them as having a history, a past, a nature peculiar to themselves as "things." They care about their origins, their "whyness," the "how" of their creation. The child's seriousness about these things takes us in and past dreams, routing us into thinking that moves with intuition, with images revolving in a free-floating world, with feeling extending itself often to perceptions formed in a time far from our own. And the further the child gets into these things, the greater her excitement, as if she senses the extent of her wisdom, the meaning of her knowledge, the closeness with which she, without warning to any of us, quietly finds who and what she is — revealing that special relationship between herself and the things of the world that is the secret of her being.

To the child the power of the poetic, the power of the mythic, is a deeply physical presence entering through her and around her. The child does not simply imagine these powers, she becomes the powers themselves, asking them to be the source of her whole being.

Our imagining is surely a physical act. We can no longer think of the imagination as something peculiarly "mind," enclosed within the confines of menta1 activity. Imagining is the possibility which turns my whole body around from where it might be standing, transforms it to some "otherness," and causes the rhythms of my breathing to change as I fulfill the extent of what I imagine.

The next two excerpts are chapters in Living By Wonder: The Imaginative Life of Childhood, *reprinted with permission from Parabola Books and Touchstone Center Publications, 1998.*

The Story the Child Keeps

There are some children who carry their stories so close to them that they can hardly stop talking; there are some who carry their stories so close to them that they can hardly speak. Some become restless and impatient as they listen to another's story because their own stories are struggling to emerge. And some children, their stories still hidden from their view, do not always understand what a story is and does.

In a classroom in New York City not long ago, a child was frightened by a story I told about a tree that could listen and, with its ever-changing leaves, talk to us. At first, Joel did not want to believe what I was saying — I was challenging a reality he had carefully fashioned. Then one day, when he realized how the story could allow him the life of his own imagination without asking him to forfeit everything he knew of this world, he wrote:

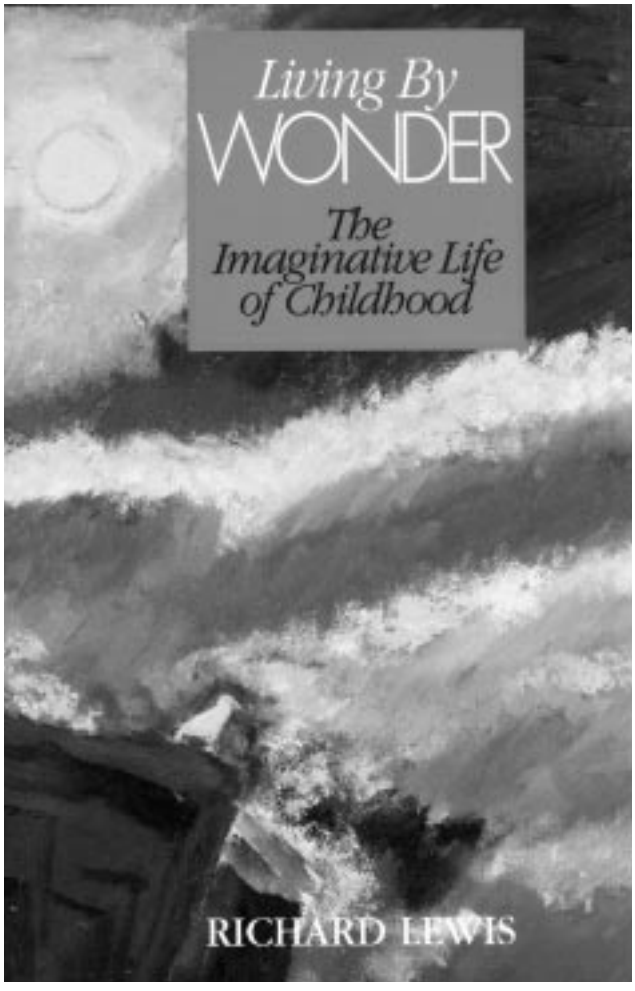
It's amazing how the wind moves the trees.
It moves my mind also.
When I look at a tree
I feel brave and bold.
When the wind blows through the trees,
The trees whistle in tune
For beautiful music.
As I listen, I smile.

Another child, Michelle, in a classroom in a different part of the city, was all acceptance as I told her class a story about a magic flower that could become all the colors of the sky. She received my telling of the flower's story without any trace of doubt, her open face responding to every gesture of the story. One day, she took one of us aside and confided her reaction to this kind of story. "When you imagine things … they start to grow," she said. "If you love them, they love you back. When you have an imaginary flower, it grows in your mind and you can dream it always. And no one can take that away from you."

In both instances, the children begin to see the mind as more than a mechanical operation for correct answers. They sense our inward ability to understand who we are as well as the nature of the world we inhabit. The "imaginary flower" Michelle speaks of has the organic properties of a growing flower; and we can dream it into being. From inside ourselves, we grasp and create the story of this flower or any flower. Because it is we who are dreaming this story, it becomes ours forever.

For many children, there is little opportunity to express realizations like those of Michelle and Joel. An entire childhood can pass without ever realizing an inward life. What is often experienced by these children is a one-dimensional self, eager to survive but ill-equipped to use the imagining self as part of that survival. How often we hear of children whose daily routine is made up of attending classes in which little attention is paid to the welfare of their inner lives. After school, they go home and sink despondently in front of television sets that whir away into the night. The television set has become a mythmaker for children in our culture; the television set has become a substitute storyteller.

What myths does television teach children? Much of what they see is advertising. Children, like the adults in our culture, want the things that are advertised. An awareness of pleasure that can be obtained by experiences or events like stories — which are not quite "things" — is absent from many children's lives.



Furthermore, much of what they see in between advertisements has to do with violence and death. Imagine the effect. One of the most subtle and difficult parts of childhood is the realization that to be alive, we also have to die. A culture such as ours, in which violent death has become a predominant fixture, instills a despair in children. One might ask if any of these children were ever read to by a parent, teacher, or other caring adult, or if there was any effort to help the children get closer to the stories they are telling themselves and would like to tell us, no matter how awkward they may seem to our adult ears.

Over the years, I have been able to work with children who were not aware of their own inner lives, and consequently, of the stories within them. I am struck by certain similarities in the way these children perceive themselves and the world around them. Excessively afraid, they exhibit hostility to their peers and to adults. Their fear expresses a lack of connection to the inner self and to an outward community. This inability to move comfortably between different temporal and spatial experiences is expressed by a dogged realism: Things can only be what they should be, not what they could become. These children are caught in an arid rigidity where imagination is suspect. Rigidity of thought is reinforced by our societal distrust of the usefulness of imagination. Not until the children are given a chance to slow down and sink into themselves — by someone who encourages listening in the child — is renewed response in the child brought into being. I am startled when we ask children to reflect on a simple object, to imagine what it feels like to be that object and to write a story from its standpoint. This small story — by a nine-year-old boy imagining he was a typewriter — slowed the author down just enough to be amazed by how much he could hear of himself inside the story of an object:

> Every now and then somebody sticks a piece of paper in Me. I don't get one thing that is I don't see why they keep clicking Me and turning My noise and changing My best color. Every time they are done with me they would always take the paper out of me. And there is one thing wrong with Me that I do not get. I keep on hitting Me.

By imagining himself as an object, the child uncovered the sense that something important had gone wrong in his world. What he wrote was not a metaphor by an adult to explain his problem to him, but rather, his own story from his sense of meaning.

Adults need to make it clear to each student that he or she has the tool with which to create meaning. That tool is the imagination. Once children recognize the imagination as something powerful within themselves, they live more fully.

Most children listen to other stories when they become conscious of their own, when they understand that what they have to tell is equally pertinent to the world as the treasure house of stories that have preceded them. Making children aware of their own stories is as easy as engaging them in conversations about how they feel, what happened on the way to school, or what they talked about when they last saw their grandparents. Because we tend, in our highly accelerated culture, to distance ourselves from the details of everyday experience, stories of daily events seem insignificant. As we allow less time for conversing, it isn't surprising that children find it difficult to savor stories passed from one person to another. Instead, we are captivated more by large-screen cinematic dramas, underlined with music and fast-action editing.

To counter this, I once asked a group of children to look, for a period of days, for the stories that lie just outside their apartment windows. Tony, who was then eleven years old, wrote a series of daily entries called "From My Window," from which these two excerpts are taken:

> Tuesday: I see only two bags of garbage and about 20 pigeons. I see a boy looking out of a window. Then the mother comes and tells him to do something. I see that the sky is cloudy and it looks like it's going to rain. I see that a lot of smoke is coming out of our chimney. I see no lights are on and I see pigeons on our window. I see it is not maybe going to be a good day.
>
> Friday: I see pigeons flying around in circles around and around. I see people having a Birthday party and that the people are having a cake and taking pictures then they dance then they see as the person opens the presents. The person is a lady. She gets towels, perfume, powder, earrings. I think it is her husband who gives her the ring because they kiss then some go little by little.

When Tony read his "story" to the rest of the class, I remembered how, in my own childhood, I would spend hours staring out my apartment window. Like Tony, I saw from this secret vantage point a world unfolding before me — a story, if you will, that was constructed by my imagination. I remember the delight on Tony's face when I explained that the story he wrote was one that he had made. Unlike stories that come from television, this story was coming from him — his observations and understanding. Though this is obvious to us, children are not sure they have the ability to see and construct something uniquely their own. Added to this is their lack of faith in their own imagining. When children realize that they not only have the gift to see inwardly but to take their inward vision, transpose it into a story, and share it with others, extraordinary growth can occur.

One child, when asked where his stories come from, said, "When I make up a story, it comes from the corner of my eye." Perhaps this is how we all find our stories — extending our imagining self through the corners of our eyes. What we see and hear is the person we are and feel ourselves to be. It is the play of imagination which leads to a sense of the unknown, to images and thoughts not yet envisioned. Because of the premium put on pragmatic thought — on how much we "know" as opposed to what remains "unknown" — children are afraid to imagine. The imagination itself becomes another unknown. What better way to confront this dilemma than literally to make the unknown a part of our story — as this child in speaking about where stories come from:

> The earth got its stories from listening to other planets. And they got their stories from the stars. And they got their stories from the sun. The sun got its stories from the darkness, and the darkness got its stories from making them up.

What a pleasure it is for children to know that they are the source of this "making up," and to observe concurrently that throughout all of nature, things begin and can become something else. A story is simply about what happens. If so, stories are everywhere, both inside and outside of ourselves. When Joel said, "It's amazing how the wind moves the trees. It moves my mind also," he was speaking to all of us about the story that each of us keeps. Within everyone, child or adult, an elegant narrative of a story exists between ourselves and the life around.

That story is a place of possibility in which we take part in a world that enhances, enlivens and offers us something with which we can identity. Through that identification, we grow. We become more than we are. We learn how to get from here to there. Though a story may challenge what we already believe about our world, ultimately, it is through stories that spirit is nurtured.

In a time when children can easily lose the birthright of imagination, we must find new ways to help children to the sources of the stories they urgently wish to tell. Each time they speak their stories, they establish once again the fertility and importance of their imagining selves.

> My imagination is a nuisance and a help. Whenever I try to figure something out my mind just goes off and I'm in another world, but somehow the story in my mind answers my questions.
>
> *—Justin, Age 9*

Emily's Tree

Imagination and The Soul of Learning

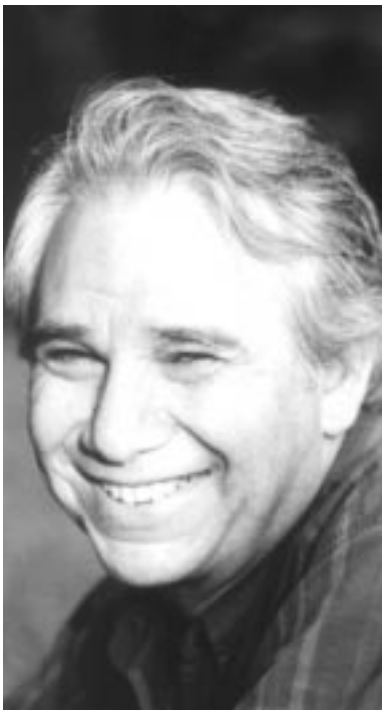
For some time now I've kept a pencil picture on my desk of a tree drawn by Emily, a ten-year-old I worked with in a public school in New York City. After many years, I still remember how, with great concentration and effort, her thin shoulders bent over the top of her desk, she carefully made her drawing.

Drawing was important to Emily because, despite great personal hardships, she needed to make things — particularly with words and images. Luckily she discovered that by making poems and pictures, she could express what she was feeling. She also discovered that drawing was not something school had time for. When I first met Emily, her only pictures and poetry were secretly pushed into the lower part of her desk along with crumpled papers of long-forgotten homework assignments.

Like many children, Emily's interest in making things was not unusual. Like most children she enjoyed playing. From earliest childhood, she assumed that one way to make sense of things was to play them out, to change things until a pattern emerged that was pleasing — even if no one understood what she was playing at. Knowing Emily, I'm sure she was comforted by the textures and shapes of small things: the fresh rush of air when she opened a window, the scraping sound of her teeth as she ate a piece of bread, the lightness she felt in her arms after it had stopped raining. To her, these were signals, messages conveyed to herself that she was alive.

Emily never wanted to share or speak about her feelings in school. In her mind, school was a place to perform what she had been asked to know. Yes, she was learning — but only in isolation from herself. Her imagining, the pleasure she found in making things, she did in secret somewhere else.

I recall, long before I worked with Emily, how a group of children in another school once challenged me on the "imagination." "But Richard," they vehemently



Richard Lewis

protested, “it won’t get you into college or get you good grades.” I stood my ground and explained why they need to imagine, how the imagination is what we are, and how without it we don’t know ourselves or each other. By the end, I don’t think the youngsters accepted what I was saying. I worried that the children had been indoctrinated with a point of view which denied them access to a quality of life, of living.

Why is this form of knowing so difficult to bring into mainstream learning? Why must Emily and those questioning youngsters hide what they feel? Why has education, despite its concern for the mechanics of literacy and computation, too frequently made the recipients of its teachings incapable of relating to what is alive and meaningful in themselves?

One way to view these questions is to look back at how Emily made her tree. The “concentration,” the power of imagination to focus many thoughts and feelings into a single image of a tree. The tree, initially within Emily, becomes a tree outside of her. The imaginative skills at work are not to be marginalized, for they are our human desire to link us to what we are.

The imagination as a consolidator is not to be confused with a more common view of the imagination as an illusionary process, or (as some would have it) as “making believe.” The former is a process through which we create a perceptual bond between ourselves and everything outside of ourselves. This perceptual bonding is a biological activity in the same way the eye, the tongue, the ear, the nose, and the fingers enable us to see, to taste, to hear, to smell, and to feel. Without imagination, it would be impossible to experience the infinite qualities of our senses. Imagination is an organic process stamping processes with the same individuality as do our finger-prints or the modulations of our voices.

By making her tree, Emily was activating the biological impetus of her imagination. She was fulfilling an instinctive need to project one’s inner imagery onto some outer object. The need to say what I see, feel, want to know or don’t know, is a biological necessity as much as eating, loving, and the act of breathing. Whether we speak with musical sounds, bodily movements, written words, spoken voices, or visual images, we are linking ourselves to the first imprint, the first significant gesture made by human life to speak and be known consciously.

Last year, in the same school Emily went to, I worked with Jose, another ten-year-old, who in a moment of attentiveness and concentration, looked at pictures he had just painted of the sky and told me what he saw:

The wind is pushing
the sky
through you.
…..
One sky is like being in it
so this sky is a nice sky
to the family that is in my heart.

I imagine that it will always be there.
…..
When you spin around
and spin around
it looks like

you’re flying
with the sky.
…..
When it rains
there’s a smooth wind by you.

The wind loves its body.
…..

I was reminded how, as imaginers, as biological beings, we too interact, interchange, fuse, and penetrate the ever changing processes of nature. We feel in the deepest part of our imagination, as did Jose, the sky moving through and flying with us, and the wind as a body loving itself.

Are the electrically charged pulsations of thoughts like the immense energy the wind propels itself with? Is the mind's circuitry like the intricate network of forces in the smallest particles of living matter? Might our imagining be a mirror of what we observe in nature — the shaping of the world around us? Can we view the imagination not as an abstract appendage, but as a primary source of consciousness, capable, as Jose was, of perceiving "the family that is in my heart" where the sky "will always be"?

If we revise our understanding of the imagination so that it is the basis of learning, we will look at Emily's tree differently. By the outward realization of her inward image of a tree, she produced a spark, a filament of energy, which made her a participant in her life. She made a bridge of the imaginative act to a portion of a sky that can be brought to her heart, not as an abstraction or metaphor, but as the physical reality of her aliveness.

If we are to educate the young to value only the final products of their learning, we have lost the soul of what learning is: a never-ending means to understand the unique sense of life each of us inwardly has been offered. The making of a tree by Emily may not be a whole curriculum, but it is a choice to retain the energy that makes up our inner world.

And finally, we return once more to When Thought Is Young.

Thinking, once again, about some of the children I am working with now in many of those overcrowded public school classrooms — often with little support for the childhood they are so quickly passing through — I can hear their passionate responses to our asking them to come back to their "beginnings," to the point where their language, play, imagining, and creating are the unquestionable givens of their aliveness. I can also hear that wonderful chant, when some children had read or performed an original poem or story, or shared a painting or a puppet they had made, that simple exclamation of affirming what is possible in them — and in us as well — clenching their hands and rising to their feet, saying, "Yes, Yes!"

Poems

"In the Beginning"

I wasn't
sweet,
at ten.

I was
surly,
disagreeable,
uncooperative,
like Scott.

Perhaps
defiance
can be
inherited.

Perhaps
it's my
fault
he's so
argumentative.

I've
actively
engaged
Scott's
squabbling
like he's
the sibling
I never had.

Last night
I pulled
out Scott's
astrological
chart, looking
at the elements
which guide him,
only to find
the suprising
statement,
"Not much fire."

Incredulous,
I'm wondering
if all Scott's
storming is
really a
surplus of
hot air.

What I've
mistaken
as a
blazing fire
might simply
be the
passing
of a
blustery
wind ~~~
harmless and
short-lived
if unimpeded.

I have too
much fire.
Fire enough
for three
of us, but
"Not much
air," my
chart says.

What does
this mean?

Scott's
constant
gusting
fans the
embers
of my
fire,
igniting
the
brittle
sticks
until
the
raging
cannot
be
ignored.

We need
some
water,
here.

Somewhere
between
Scott's
billowing
and my
smoldering

we need
to find
a calm
oasis.

A healing
place
where we
can be
together
peaceably

as we
were
in
the
beginning ~~~

for Scott

by Lori McCray

"Mother of the Wind"

When I
was a
child

playing
tag
with
the
wind

did
you
know
that
someday

I would
be your
mother?

When I
made it
to the
summit
of
Mount
Khatadin,

the wild
wind
whipping
me like
a leaf

was your
face
in the
beauty
which
took my
breath
away?

When I
sat
beside
the
ocean,

a young
woman

disillusioned,

were you
the
gentle
breeze

who
tenderly
kissed
my
face?

That first
evening I
walked
with your
father
through
the
shadows
of the
graveyard

did you
blow
chilly
so he
would
pull me
close
to him?

Laboring
for air
as I
gave
birth
to you

was your
smile of
recognition

a reminder
that we
have been
together

for as
long
as
time
remembers?

Editor's Note: In previous issues of Paths *we have published the poems of Lori McCray, much of whose work deals with her relationship to or feelings about her son, Scott. Recently, she submitted a new, very moving poem, entitled "In the Beginning," which she wrote on the occasion of Scott's tenth birthday. After reading this poem, I asked Lori if she would consider writing a poem that speaks to the notion that Scott was already present even before she gave birth to him. Not long afterward, in response to my request, Lori submitted the poem "Mother of the Wind," which, along with "In the Beginning," we present to you. If after reading these poems you feel inspired to create your own poetic explorations of the roots, dynamics, and various manifestations of family love, please feel free to send us your work so that we can consider sharing it with your fellow readers.*

Lori McCray is a mother, writer, musician, teacher, runner, and gardener. She and her husband Doug are enjoying evenings without homework as Scott embarks on his first year at the Sudbury Valley School.

Learning More About Alfie Kohn and Standardized Testing

by Robin Ann Martin

The Alfie Kohn Organization and Books by Kohn
For persons wanting to learn more about the work of Alfie Kohn along with his research and philosophy against standardized testing, the best resource is:

> Alfie Kohn Organization, http://www.alfiekohn.org — a simple and well organized website with resources about teaching, parenting, and managing with many articles and a summary of lecture topics, as well as a list of Kohn's scheduled lectures. The section on "Standards and Testing" provides a nice list of volunteer state coordinators for persons wanting to be more active in opposing the "tougher standards" movement to save schools.

As described on this website: "Alfie Kohn writes and speaks widely on human behavior, education, and social theory. Of his eight books, the best known are *Punished By Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes* (1993), *NO CONTEST: The Case Against Competition* (1986), and *The Schools Our Children Deserve: Moving Beyond Traditional Classrooms and "Tougher Standards"* (1999). His most recent book is *The Case Against Standardized Testing: Raising the Scores, Ruining the Schools (2000)*."

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

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

One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational Standards, by Susan Ohanian (Heinemann, 1999).

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

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

Other Paths of Learning Guides about Standardized Testing
For anyone wanting to learn more about all this testing hoopla, or needing evidence to show your school boards, here are two online action guides on these and related topics:

> http://www.PathsOfLearning.net/archives/testing2000.html
> http://www.PathsOfLearning.net/archives/test2001.html

Visit the Great Ideas in Education Website at http://www.great-ideas.org

Learning Circles: Like Simplicity Circles, Only Different

by Robin Ann Martin

Learning Circles are small study groups of parents and teachers who are interested in taking a closer look at what education is all about. Each Learning Circle meets once or twice each month, sets its own schedule, and decides on its topics of focus.

Perhaps you have a vague feeling that things are not as open or caring in your schools as they could be. Perhaps you have a sense that nature, rather than TV, should be a more integral part of your child's daily life, and you want to consider ways for changing your lifestyle to make it so. Perhaps you have heard about rites of passages for youth, and would like to talk with other families who are also thinking about integrating such ideas into their family practices.

Learning Circles can provide opportunities for parents, students, educators and other interested community members to:

- Inquire into and become aware of the widening array of educational options for helping students grow and learn in ever more empowering ways.
- Determine steps to ensure your children's success in school and beyond.
- Enliven your imagination by reading about innovative schools that exist elsewhere, and that fit with the needs and the constraints facing your own community.
- Create open forums to decrease the separation felt between the "education experts" (teachers) and "child experts" (parents and/or counselors), so that we begin to create communities where there are no experts, only people working together to come up with real solutions.
- Prepare to take action for co-creating learning environments that are more in harmony with your personal and community values.

These informal, participatory "Circles" offer regular and open forums customized to the specific values of each circle's members. Circle sizes vary from 4 to 15 members, depending on the number of local participants who wish to join. Learning Circles provide a forum where you can meet with like-minded members to engage in further reflection, dialogue, and action around education. Circles are free and meet as often as your group elects to meet.

Support for Learning Circles is offered by the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools and the Paths of Learning Resource Center, whose members, readers, and colleagues have been thinking and acting "outside the box" for many years. To access the initial stages of this support that tells more about how to find or create a Learning Circle in your community, visit our web site at <**http://www.PathsofLearning.net/circles.cfm**>.

This web site is designed as a starting point for individuals or groups who want to get in touch with each other. It is still in the early stages of formation, so there aren't a plethora of groups established as yet; however, the ideas for getting started may help ground or unite a small group in your community who were already leaning in this direction. The site also provides ideas to clarify what is involved for participants, as well as strategies to help groups get started. Or, if you already have a similar type of gathering that meets regularly within your community or organization to reflect on such issues, you may join "Learning Circles" as an affiliate group.

For information on *Symplicity Circles*, visit <www.cecileandrews.com> or <www.simplicitycircles.com>.

Partnership Education

by Robin Ann Martin

Resources from the Center for Partnership Studies

The Center for Partnership Studies (CPS) was founded by Riane Eisler and David Loye and is dedicated to restoring the Earth and renewing communities. CPS aims to create dialogues that work toward social and economic inventions based on partnership.

One of CPS's major programs is the *Partnership Education Program* (PEP), dedicated to changing our educational system to meet the needs of today's youth. PEP's education services and materials include training and workshops designed to fit individual needs, assessment tools, consultations and coaching assistance, and a training of trainers program. Web site: http://www. partnershipway.org/pep/home.htm

Some core books for coming to understand this philosophy and practice through living, learning, and educating include:

Tomorrow's Children: Partnership Education for the 21st Century — builds upon Eisler's research in archeology, psychology, and biology that led to her theory of cultural transformation described in the bestseller *The Chalice and the Blade*. Here, Eisler argues that the creation of a humane, democratic "partnership" society will depend upon our making profound changes in how we educate our young people. She explains that we need to provide a supportive, caring, learning environment as well as a holistic, inspiring curriculum to enable students to face the challenges of a complex and too often violent world. (Westview Press/Perseus Books, 2000) http://www.great-ideas.org/4186.htm

Partnership Education in Action — a companion guide to *Tomorrow's Children*, designed for teachers, administrators, and homeschoolers. It offers a wealth of creative ideas for implementing the three core components of Partnership Education — process, content, and structure — whether in the classroom, school, or the home. It contains examples of lesson plans, curricula, and models for designing both. This is a hands-on manual written in simple, accessible form by educators. (Foundation for Educational Renewal, 2001) http://www.great-ideas.org/parteduc.htm

The Partnership Way: New Tools for Living and Learning, by both Riane Eisler and David Loye. They provide exercises, charts, and other resources that show how women and men can "rewrite" their life scripts with alternatives to domination, manipulation, and violence. This seems to be a core book for understanding and experimenting with the "Partnership" philosophy in one's own life. (Holistic Education Press, 1998) http://www.great-ideas.org/partner.htm

As of January 2002, CPS is directed by Colleen Moynihan, whom you can contact for more information by e-mail at center@partnershipway.org or by phone at (520) 546-0176. Many other books, articles, audios, and videos are available on the CPS web site: http://www.partnershipway.org/

More about Eisler and Loye

Brief biographical summaries of David Loye and Riane Tennenhaus Eisler can be found on the CPS web site at:

- http://www.partnershipway.org/html/subpages/loye.htm (David)
- http://www.partnershipway.org/html/subpages/eisler.htm (Riane)

To learn more about Eisler, her book *The Gate* provides an autobiographical account of her life (iUniverse Press, 1999). There is also an entire book of conversations with Eisler and Loye, by Mathew Callahan called *Sex, Death, & the Angry Young Man: Conversations With Riane Eisler & David Loye* (Times Change Press, 1993).

Works in Related Fields

Although Eisler's work may be the only one of its particular kind, there are many works in new and growing fields related to her research. Here are a few references that I found on the Internet, which seem quite intriguing. These are a bit scholarly in nature, but if you'd like to dig deeper into some of the broader frameworks for history and philosophy from which Eisler's work emerges, these could be useful places to begin.

Feminist History of Philosophy, by Charlotte Witt, University of New Hampshire (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2000) — a full online text with many good references. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-femhist/

Ethnohistory, a scholarly journal edited by Neil L. Whitehead (the Duke Press). In the free online sample issue, you can read about violence from "ethnohistorical perspectives." http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/eth/

Archeology of Gender, Feminist Archeology, Women in Prehistory and Women in Archeology — a syllabus compiled by Kelley Hays-Gilpin (January, 1995) from Northen Arizona's Women's Studies Program. http://www.nau.edu/~wst/access/wpa1995.html

Anita Smith's Feminist Bibliography (from State University of New York at Buffalo's Department of Anthropology). http://wings.buffalo.edu/anthropology/Documents/fembib.txt

For additional readings about Partnership Studies in particular, see also <http://www.partnershipway.org/html/books.htm>. If you would like more action ideas to supplement these resources, we invite you to visit our Online Action Guides, at http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm, where you can more easily link to the referenced books and web sites as well. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about "Partnership" studies, just call 1-800-639-4122.

Directory of Resources for Educational Alternatives

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

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

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

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

American Homeschool Association
Post Office Box 3142
Palmer, Alaska 99645-3142
http://www.americanhomeschoolassociation.org
AHA@americanhomeschoolassociation.org

AHA is a service organization created in 1995 to network homeschoolers on a national level and to provide news and information about homeschooling relevant to any concerned parent, media writer, academic researcher, education professional, or homeschooler. Current AHA services include a free online discussion list (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AHA-Discussion) providing news, information, networking, and resources; a special discussion list for homeschoolers interested in working with public libraries; a free email newsletter (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AHA-Newsletter); and a website providing categorized links to the most helpful and informative pages of homeschooling information on the Internet. These include interviews with leading authors and advocates of homeschooling, a "history of homeschooling" series, and numerous resource pages. There are no membership fees, and no fees to use any of these services.

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.

ASCD Systems Thinking/Chaos Theory Network
(a special interest group of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)
www.haven.net/patterns/
Contact: Barbara Vogl — bvogl@cruzio.com

The knowledge gained through the "New Sciences" (General Systems Theory, Cybernetics, Evolutionary Biology, Quantum Mechanics, Field Theory, Complexity and the Science of Dynamical Systems/Chaos Theory) has shifted our world view from an object-oriented, machine-like universe to a living web-like universe. The purpose of PATTERNS, the network publication, is to bring 'new scientists' and educators together to clarify the everyday relevance of these new sciences and to link them to a deeply felt motivating vision that brings head, heart and soul together into a new pattern of wholeness. An understanding of this fundamental shift in orientation is particularly important for educators who are the designers of learning environments influencing future generations.

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 *Paths 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 221540
Sacramento, CA 95822-8540
(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

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.ties-edu.org

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*).

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.

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 based in Prescott as well as external undergraduate and graduate programs.

The Self-Education Foundation
POB 30790, Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 235-4379)
www.selfeducation.org

The Self-Education Foundation funds communities initiating their own education. It gives small grants/awards to groups working across cultures and disciplines to build more resources for self-education, including independent media, inspired homeschooling/unschooling groups, self-educating prisoners, student-led school reform, and others. Publishes pamphlets and a newsletter to facilitate networking. For more information contact info@selfeducation.org .

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.

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

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

Dear Paths/Dear Readers

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.

*In our July issue, we published Bernard Nebel's response to Dan Greenberg's article "Learning for the 21st Century" (*Paths of Learning 7*), along with Greenberg's reply to Nebel's letter. Below, we are reprinting Dr. Nebel's follow-up letter to us and inviting you, our readers, to join the discussion by sending us your thoughts on the matters at stake here.*

Dear Paths of Learning:

This letter is a continuation of the debate between Dr. Greenberg and myself regarding the merits of teaching facts to elementary level children. Dr. Greenberg originally stated (*Paths of Learning*, Jan. 2001, p. 46) that there is "virtually unanimous agreement" among a broad diversity of educators that "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 took issue with this concept and Dr. Greenberg vigorously criticized what I said. (*Paths of Learning*, Summer 200l, pp. 64-66.)

Actually, much of the clash between Dr. Greenberg and myself boils down to a matter of semantics. For example, Dr. Greenberg agrees that people "need to learn a bunch of stuff in order to do something" and that the bulk of that "stuff" is known to be factual "beyond all reasonable doubt." I chose to call this "stuff" basic; Dr Greenberg would have me use "trivial." So be it.

I am also in total agreement with Dr. Greenberg when he says, "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." Putting children in neat rows and prescribing that they should learn at 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, etc, can be deadly.

However, I believe that there is a middle ground between this sort of rigid prescription and Dr. Greenberg's admonition of leaving it entirely to the "natural abilities of all children to make all the observations and do all the pondering that they need without the help of [anyone]."

I see several problems with this totally "leave-alone" approach. First, innate curiosity notwithstanding, it is obvious that there are countless things that a child will not observe unless they are presented with opportunities to do so, seeing the protozoa in a drop of pond water for example. Second, the initial observations all of us make tend to be superficial, even to the point of being erroneous, unless we are brought to look again more closely. How many children, or adults either, look at the finer parts of a flower for example, and find the "baby tomato" (ovary) within a tomato flower, and so on? Yet, I find that most children are excited to see these details.

A third problem is that the human intellect, wonderful as it is, is prone to jump to naïve conclusions that further investigations/observations prove to be quite erroneous. How else do we explain the misconceptions of old, the sun orbiting around the earth for example (and perhaps misconceptions we still hold)?

A fourth problem is that many youth do not automatically know what they are really interested in. How many people relate experiences to the effect: I didn't know what I wanted to do until I took a course in ___, met a person who ___, or some other more or less serendipitous occasion, and I found myself suddenly inspired.

Given these factors, I believe that we do have a role to play in teaching children. The three major aspects of this role are: 1) finding opportunities such that children can observe the broadest range of things, 2) through questioning and availability

of hand lenses, etc., inviting children to look more closely, 3) through Socratic questioning (if that, then what?) bringing children to consider the meaning, functions, implications, and so on of what they observe and tie it into a broader framework of rational understanding.

The thrust of my book, *Nebel's Elementary Education*, now available through www.pressforlearning.com (note change of publisher) highlights these three roles. As may be seen on the website, the book is organized around seven continuous themes that together embrace all the major areas of academic learning. Each theme describes a sequence of experiential activities, that may occur naturally or that children may be guided into, and a routine of Socratic questioning such that children will gradually develop a broad, integrated, framework of understanding. Each theme is open-ended and open-sided so that a student can pursue it to any depth or breadth they may desire. Further, aspects of each theme can be pursued, or allowed to lapse for a time, according to interests of the students, current events, weather, season, and so on that may make pursuit of one theme more pertinent than that of another. For example the occurrence of an earthquake makes an appropriate time to consider the phenomenon of plate tectonics.

Far from undercutting students' ability to learn on their own, my experience is that this approach aimed at exercising their observational and reasoning skills enhances it considerably. By the way, my credentials include a Ph.D. from Duke University (1965), a career teaching environmental science at the college level, and a life-long avocation working with younger children.

Sincerely,
Bernard J. Nebel, Ph.D.

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

"The simplest point of attraction, a speck of dust, a shadow, a hand, a single thread, a ring—these can become for children beginnings of immense proportions."

— Richard Lewis (see page 41)