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The Journey to a Genuine Life

Mentoring the Passage to Adulthood

Len Fleischer

As people who love children, our job is not to provide them with all the answers to life's questions, but to tune in, with them, to the marvels all around them and all the wonders within them.

More than 35 years ago, I was wandering the streets of Boulder, Colorado, looking for a job. I didn't have much of a resume: I was a college dropout, and had lived in a monastery in the Colorado mountains for the past three years. But I was hungry, and eager, and broke. As serendipity would have it, I was on a street corner when a friend drove up and told me that a building nearby was looking for employees, he had seen a sign. "For what?" I said. "I think it is a preschool," he replied. I didn't know a thing about teaching, but I liked kids, and necessity is the mother of invention. So I ventured forth.

The man who answered the door, the director of the preschool, asked me whether I had any experience. I began to stammer that I didn't, but was a quick learner, and the fact that I had been a journalism major before I dropped out of college had nothing to do with why I believed I could do a really good job.

He stopped me in mid-sentence. "You don't understand. I only hire people without experience." He laughed at the surprise he saw on my face. He went on, "I want people who work here to not have preconceived notions and theories about children. I want to know who they are, who they really are, and what they deeply care about. I want to know how that translates into who they are when they are with children. I want the children who come here to expand, not contract, their natural sense of wonder, and I hope the adults who will be with them don't have all the answers, but rather all the questions, all the wondering themselves about the mystery of the world."

I was stunned. I had never heard a potential employer talk like that. So I talked like that. I told him about myself, and I got the job.

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And that, as Frost (1916) says, "has made all the difference."

The marvelous experience of being with the children of Boulder Day Nursery changed my life. I went back to college because I was so intrigued — and entranced — with the wide open minds and hearts of these little ones. I still am. One of the great blessings of being around children on a regular basis is the possibility of bearing witness — in the kids and in ourselves — to the genuine wonder of being alive. I thought I had a robust spiritual practice in the monastery. Turned out it was nothing compared to what I experienced in the preschool.

My wife and I have a goddaughter, a five-year-old child by the name of Thupten. It is a Tibetan name that means blessing, and she certainly is. She was born 10 weeks premature, and weighed about two pounds when she was born. Her first days were a constant struggle of doctors and medical emergencies. She barely survived. So every day of her life is precious for her parents and those who love her. But she doesn't think that way, of course. She just loves being here because everything — and I mean everything — is so interesting. Sometimes a lot of things, all at the same time. But once in a while, she will become absolutely entranced with just one thing, just one precious thing, and the multisensory awareness of this young child will focus like a laser on the marvels of the world.

One day, we were with her when she was completely riveted, transfixed, by a woolly caterpillar inching its way up a tree. Just that. Happens all the time, in all kinds of places. You and I wouldn't give it much thought. We will smile, perhaps, when we see children pausing, in fascination, before we move on to that next thing. But watching Thupten watch the caterpillar, it was clear she was completely entranced with this little life as it made its way up the tree. I had no idea what she was thinking. It doesn't really matter. She was constructing her own story, her own meaning, and that connects with other stories and other meanings in the developing tapestry of her life.

The narrative that she is developing speaks deeply to her, separate from anything you or I might know or say about caterpillars. It is her soul story, not ours, and it is made of the moments where time and obligation and rational action and the needs of caregivers pause, allowing the magic of the world to show up in a child's deep awareness.

My work with children started with that remarkable preschool long ago, and my wondering about their wondering has never stopped. One of the working hypotheses I've developed over the years is that when children are born and begin to grow, their parents and their caregivers — that includes all of us — do something that can have lasting impact. We tell them, in so many different ways, you must fit into the world. Our world. My world. This is the way it works. Here are the rules. This is what is good, this is what is not so good. Here is what you should love, this is what you should fear. In essence we are handing them a guidebook — actually a rule book — of the world, *as we know it*.

Children, in the preschool years, are developing a script, a story they are telling themselves about the way things are. That script is, of course, heavily influenced by what the adults in their lives tell them. How could it be otherwise? I don't know what kids might bring to this life from other realms of knowing, but I do believe that they absorb, in deep and often unconscious ways, what we offer. They begin to develop a script, a story, a narrative about how it all works that they, for the most part, are not the author of.

That is what I want to focus on here. How, when, will we, can we, live our lives according to our emerging story, piecing together all the encounters with caterpillar and leaf, the night sky and the day world, the strange logic of our dream life and the singular and unique lives of our caregivers? Too often, it all gets dictated to, imposed on, and interpreted for the children. This is what caterpillars do. That is the way your grandmother is. Girls are sometimes bossy. Boys can be mean. This is the way to go. Be careful. Watch out.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. The survival of the species depends on the nurturance and mentoring of the young ones. It is *how* we mentor that makes so much difference. My work as a teacher, psychologist, and rite-of-passage guide with youth and adults suggests to me that the script hardens into a story, a way of doing and being that extends well into adult life; actually, until the day we die, for most of us. The script becomes a template: we live according to essentially automatic assumptions.

And as the assumptions become relatively automatic, the space for wonder wanes. Life becomes more formulaic. Mystery is something to be explained and decoded, as opposed to a rich immersion in a magical world, a world that is full of undefined truth. "Live the questions," Rilke famously advised. How do we do that when everything in the script we are handed tells us we need to find the right answers, to pass the test?

God Speaks to Us

God speaks to each of us as he makes us,
Then walks with us silently out of the night.
These are the words we dimly hear:
You, sent out beyond your recall,
Go to the limits of your longing.
Embody me.
Flare up like flame and make big shadows I can move in.
Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final.
Don't let yourself lose me.
Nearby is the country they call life.
You will know it by its seriousness.
Give me your hand.
—Rainer Maria Rilke

Rilke's poem (Barrows & Macy 1996) speaks to me of the critical importance, for those of us who love children and work for their future, to encourage all of it — the "beauty and the terror" — to be embodied in their experience of forming a healthy, authentic, soul-rooted identity, a life they can truly call their own.

Childhood innocence is nature's foundation for a soul-centered adult life. Our original openness serves as the seed for our sense of wonder. Our capacity for wonder sets the stage for the social authenticity we'll need in adolescence. This is because developing an authentic self necessitates that we wonder deeply about our ways of social belonging. All three of these qualities —innocence, wonder, and authenticity — provide the platform for the passage into soulful adulthood.

In a soulcentric approach to child development, the primary task of parents and teachers is to raise children who will grow into rooted adults, people who have discovered the gifts they were born to bring to the world. How can we do this? If that is our hope, if that is our intention, it has to start with us. It begins with our opening to nature and human nature, experiencing how our inner wilderness — our indigenous self — mirrors the outer wild, and how these natures that we live in are the deep wellsprings of our life.

In the middle childhood years — what Freud (1901) called the "latency period," suggesting that not much was going on — children are testing out the veracity of the life script that parents and teachers have offered them. As they move out from the family cocoon, children have a difficult time learning about the natural world and about real community when they tend to be isolated from both. Our schools essentially prepare young people to work within the cultural paradigm of commerce and industry. Schooling does not help children become fully themselves, belong to a place, create a meaningful life, and contribute to the health of the biosphere and the creation of a sustainable society (Plotkin 2008).

When a child comes to that threshold in life — usually in the pre-teen years — when the sense of belonging offered by the family of origin, however that might be, is no longer enough, the social world expands to the peer group, mediated by the heat of puberty. The hunger that adolescents carry for love and acceptance is projected onto others, and that radiance often does not shine back. This is the place in life where youth long to be "just like them," to have friends, to be popular, to not be alone. Often, the lonely ones lose their voice, and tell themselves they are not worthy. Often, the popular ones develop a voice of privilege and hierarchy, a false voice that doesn't consider the internal landscape, the inner wild. It is good enough to be thought of as cool, as acceptable in the eyes of others. That is what matters. Not the genuine voice of a youth emerging into Rilke's "beauty and terror."

This is the time when adults tend to grit their teeth and hope for the best … let's just close our eyes and hope that somehow these awkward, pimply, narcissistic, conformist 14 year olds will make it to 18 or 19 and figure out for themselves what it means to be an adult.

But if the journey is going to move from the social approval that is so desperately sought at 14 to the self approval in young adulthood that is so critical to the development of a genuine, authentic self, a unique identity, voice will be the key variable. The whole idea of adolescence, biologically, psychologically,

and spiritually, may be to listen to the many voices, the wildly disparate voices of identity and belonging, of yearning and meaning, of purpose and passion, and out of that chaos, emerge with a voice that carries with it the embodiment of who we really are.

People from the very beginning of human habitation on earth have known that the young cannot be expected to figure this out on their own, that they need to be heard and mentored and challenged and loved by their elders. They also have known that the adults who are welcoming the young into authentic adulthood, into a passionate, committed, purpose-driven life need to have done their own work. The newly opening young adult, tenderly trying out his or her wings, emerging from the cocoon, needs to be met by genuine grownups, part of a community that wants to hear their voice, and engage them in a lifetime dialogue about what is truly important.

We, of course, have very little of that in our culture. Childhood and adolescence is more than a chronological fact; many, perhaps most, of those with bigger bodies and multiple decades on them are still operating, psychospiritually, at the level of early adolescence, where social approval, as opposed to individual and social authenticity, has primacy.

One of the great gifts that mature parents, teachers, caregivers, mentors — all of us — can offer the young is the opportunity to be in relationship with that emerging voice, to ensure a container where it can be heard and mirrored and cherished. When that happens, young people can go about the critical life task of coming to terms with their story so far, leaving behind what they no longer need. They can, in the context of a community that encourages it, pick up the pen and set about the task of authoring their life, of writing the new chapters that will guide their life path, the rules for living with integrity with which they have wrestled with their elders. It is a process of initiation into what it truly means to be an adult, and it can only happen in relationship with already-initiated adults.

In modern American culture, adolescents initiate each other into what they think is genuine adulthood (Kimmel, 2008). Since the adult world is saying very little of value to youth about what it means to live a passionate, engaged adult life, young people are forced to figure it out for themselves (Fleischer, 2005). Hence, we have rising levels of mindless binge drinking, emotionless, friends-with-benefits sex, and a focus on consumerism and economic status. Why should they see it any other way? What are we as an adult culture offering them that espouses values of personal and communal integrity?

Michael Meade (1993) asserts, "If the fires that innately burn inside youth are not intentionally and lovingly added to the hearth of community, they will burn down the structures of culture, just to feel the warmth."

Bill Plotkin, author of *Nature and the Human Soul* (2008), writes that

> healthy adolescence holds our master key to both individual development and human evolution. Adolescence, at this time, is the locus of both our crisis and our opportunity. The crisis of adolescence and the crisis of our culture are two facets of the same impasse. Seizing the opportunity in one quickens the opportunity for the other. Once enough people embrace the true nature of adolescence — its promise and potential — Western culture will transform and again become life sustaining. To the extent that we don't know what adolescence is for, we don't know what humans are for.

I am teaching a class at Keene State College in New Hampshire for first year students called "Encountering Adulthood." It is an intensive "thinking and writing course," a cross-cultural study of how adults initiate their young into adulthood, with particular emphasis on modern American rites of passage. We look deeply at the markers of adulthood in American culture, and we make it personal: we learn from the inside out. This, after all, is where they are in their life, betwixt and between, no longer a child, not really an adult (Arnett 2004). They are in that liminal space where they are seeking an abiding identity that personifies who they are, can be, and want to be.

So I ask them, what is the culture telling them about what it means to be an adult? Where are the messages coming from, and who is offering them? After we study how cultures have, for thousands of years, consciously and intentionally initiated young people into an adult life of purpose and passion

(Blumenkrantz 1992; Mahdi, Foster, and Little 1987; Some 1993), I pose the question: how are you being guided, and by whom?

As you may expect, many of these responses are not encouraging: the adult world is not really showing up and the young are essentially initiating each other into what they think it means to be an adult.

At the same time, my experience with these young adults suggests that they want a lot more than that, more than the surface markers of adulthood. They particularly want the mentors to show up, the initiated adults who are living a life of integrity, generativity, and responsibility for emerging adults.

During the last presidential election, our Encountering Adulthood class was talking about the markers of adulthood, such as they are, in American culture. You can imagine what they said: alcohol, sex, driver's license, earning money to spend. I said, thinking that this was an election season, what about voting? They looked at me blankly. What about citizen participation, being part of your community, voicing what you care about for your country and for the world? I could tell I was not connecting.

I asked them if they, as emerging adults, wanted to be part of the big conversation going on, and for their voices to be heard. I asked how many of them were registered to vote. It was 3 out of 20. So we set about a whole project of learning about the voting process, what the candidates stood for, and most importantly, what *they* themselves stood for. On election day, we all walked over to the local polling place (New Hampshire has very accessible election laws, and college students can vote locally no matter where they live, and people can register on the day of the election) and voted as a group.

We then celebrated, knowing that something had shifted for us. Something about emerging voice. It was a lot more than registering and deciding whom they might vote for. They could articulate what they cared about, awaken strongly-held beliefs, imagine a future, and be taken seriously by their elders. They were moved by that.

When I was on sabbatical recently, I traveled coast-to-coast visiting visionaries (Blumenkrantz 1992; Elbot & Fulton 2008; Kessler 2000) who are attempting to bring ancient cultural wisdom about transition to authentic adulthood into the mainstream of schools and communities. For several years, I have been a wilderness-based rite-of-passage guide with adolescents and adults, and have witnessed extraordinary transformation of individuals in the crucible of nature. But of late, I have been feeling an urgency to see what can happen when ordinary communities in ordinary places take on the task of caring for the individual and collective soul of the rising generation.

Isn't it the case that everyone, however deeply it may be buried, has those same needs for connection, for meaning, for joy, for initiation and belonging into a loving and accepting community? Don't our children and their friends, the accepted and the alienated, deserve that?

What if schools made emotional literacy a centerpiece of their curriculum? What if the "soul of education" (Kessler 2000) was embodied in the classroom? What if the walls between the school and the community were taken down so that genuine intergenerational discourse could take place?

What if the American college experience was reframed as a time of initiation into healthy adulthood, as opposed to such pseudo-initiatory practices as binge drinking, which essentially invites an extended adolescence? How is it that we have what amounts to a culturally-sanctioned developmental arrest that undermines movement into an engaged and vibrant adulthood?

The answers to these questions, I believe, starts with loving and committed adults who recognize the crisis as well as the opportunity for youth, and are willing to show up and stick around. As cultures have understood for thousands of years, people who have been initiated into their own authentic adult life naturally tend to the needs and the mentoring of the community and the rising generation (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern 2002).

At Keene State College and in the Keene community, a diverse mix of adults are currently collaborating on a project that is looking anew at the college experience. We are taking a fresh look at how the staples of college life — orientation, academics, advising, living arrangements — can be re-imagined to truly engage students who are on the cusp of what can be an authentic adulthood. At the same time, potential mentors are learning from indigenous wisdom and experience that initiation into genuine

adulthood cannot happen without a community of already-initiated adults (Mahdi, Foster & Little 1987; Plotkin 2008; Some 1993).

One day during my sabbatical, I watched a group of adolescent students identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder engage in Council, an ancient form of Native American sacred communication (Zimmerman & Coyle 1996), as a prelude to academic initiatives. Their capacity to openly communicate their yearnings and their values exceeded the capacity of many "helping professionals." They were being given the opportunity by trusted and non-judging mentors to be real, and they took it.

That is all it takes to get the ball rolling, the heart moving. What is it we are willing to say to the young ones, as they journey, hopefully, to a genuine adult life of purpose and passion?

It is many years later for me, from that fateful day at the preschool in Colorado. I have a lot more experience than I once did. But for all my fascination, and my studies, and my theories, I have not figured kids out yet. Maybe that is the point. Perhaps less knowledge, and more wisdom — the wisdom of not knowing, Alan Watts (1968) would call it, the wisdom of not having the answers — is, in the end, an answer. Watching a child watch a caterpillar make its way can remind us that all these moments of wonder are sacred, and that the world is full of them, if we notice, pause, and stay present. Our job, ultimately, as people who love children, is to tune in, with them, to the marvels all around them and all the wonders within them, and thus become part of a larger story, an ancient story, the universe story.

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Is Children's Play Innate?

William Crain

When contemporary educators reduce playtime, they might be frustrating an innate need.

My wife, Ellen Crain, an emergency room pediatrician, tells me that young children play in the E.R. even when they are fairly sick. For example, young children with acute asthma nevertheless play with the toys in the waiting room or the equipment in the examining room. Ellen has been so impressed by the children's behavior that she wonders if the need to play is innate.

Ellen's question takes on urgency today. Education policy makers act as if play is frivolous — as if we needn't make room for it. Focusing on early academic instruction, schools have largely removed playtime from kindergartens (Miller & Almon 2009) and have often eliminated or reduced recess in the elementary school grades (Ginsburg 2007). But if play is, in fact, an innate need, we cannot simply deprive children of opportunities for it. To do so is somewhat like depriving children of water or sleep. When this happens, serious consequences follow.

In this brief article, I will review three lines of research that bear on the possibility that children have an innate need and urge to play. No one line of research is conclusive, but considered together they suggest that the possibility is a real one.

Our Mammalian Heritage

The first line of research comes from scientists who consider animal behavior from an evolutionary perspective. Researchers such as Marc Bekoff (Bekoff & Pierce 2009) and Jonathan Balcombe (2006) have observed that play is ubiquitous in mammals, especially in the young. It is present in young cats, dogs, chimpanzees, wolves, sheep, horses, goats, rats — every mammal that has been studied.

What's more, young animals' play seems quite spontaneous, springing from the animals' impulses. If you have observed kittens or puppies, I bet this has also been your impression. I was recently struck by the spontaneous play of a baby goat, Boomer, who

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was born on our farm animal sanctuary. Within ten days after he was born, Boomer was scampering about and performing jumping stunts. He climbed on rocks and tried jumping down forwards and backwards, spinning in different directions on his way down. When he ran about, he periodically leapt into the air and threw his legs out in new ways. All the while, his mother kept an eye on him from a short distance, but she never intervened. I never saw the other goats (all were adults) engage in such antics, so Boomer hadn't learned the behavior from them. He seemed inwardly motivated to try out acrobatic movements.

Scholars have entertained various hypotheses on the adaptive value of play. One key possibility is that play develops the capacity to improvise and therefore enables animals to handle unexpected events. If Boomer were to suddenly lose his footing on a hillside rock, or if he needed to jump to escape a predator, he wouldn't panic because he would have a number of acrobatic moves at his disposal (Spinka, Newberry, & Bekoff 2001).

What does all this have to do with human children? In evolutionary theory, the fact that play is found in all other mammals is highly significant. It suggests that the human urge to play didn't develop in our species' unique evolutionary or cultural history after we had branched off from other species. Rather, the urge to play, like much of our physical structure, is rooted in the ancestry we share with other mammals.

Moreover, play in human children probably has served a similar adaptive function, promoting the capacity to improvise. To be sure, human children don't just run, jump, and engage in physical play, like other young animals do. Human children also make use of symbolic fantasy, as when they use sticks to represent people and create imaginary scenarios. But the urge to improvise — and to create and to imagine — has undoubtedly helped our species survive, and it may be an evolutionary continuation of a similar drive in other young animals.

Consequences of Promoting or Thwarting Play

If the human child's play expresses an innate urge or need, we should see consequences of permitting, rather than frustrating it. Several studies suggest that preschool play enhances cognitive capacities such as problem solving and creativity, as well as the ability to see things from others' perspectives (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk, & Singer 2009; Taylor & Carlson 1997). Conversely, The American Academy of Pediatrics worries that children who are deprived of free play become depressed and stressed out (Ginsburg 2007). One study found that reduced recess is associated with classroom misbehavior (Barros, Silver, & Stein 2009). But more research is needed to establish links between play deprivation and emotional problems.

Evidence from the Holocaust

Additional evidence that play is innate comes from George Eisen's little-known (1988) account of children in the ghettos and concentration camps of the Holocaust. One might suppose that the children's hunger, fear, and anguish would have completely suppressed their desire to play, but this didn't happen. Summarizing the diaries and reports of Holocaust victims, Eisen (1988, 66) says, "Play burst forth spontaneously and uncontrollably without regard to the external situation." Lacking manufactured toys, the children made their own — out of mud, snow, rags, and pieces of wood. When a skeptical interviewer asked a girl how she could have played in Auschwitz, her face lit up and she said, "But I played! I played with nothing! With the snow! With the balls of snow!" (p. 72)

In the Lodz ghetto, children played games with cigarette boxes, which became treasured objects. One observer wrote, "Children's eyes beg for those boxes, children's hands reach out for them" (Eisen, 69). Hanna Levy-Haas, an inmate of the Bergen Belsen concentration camp, concluded that children's yearning for play is an "instinctual impulse." "I feel," she wrote, "it is an urge that springs from the soul of the children themselves" (pp. 60-61).

It seems quite possible, then, that the urge to play is just as innate in the human child as in other animals. If so, educational policy makers who ignore it ignore a fundamental and creative aspect of children's development.

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Quest for Wholeness

Spirituality in Teacher Education

Lisa Marie Tucker

Acknowledging and honoring the spiritual dimension in teacher education programs can provide both students and professors with more holistic, integrative approaches to come to more fully know and love not only their areas of specialization, but their peers, the world, and themselves.

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The word "spirituality" can evoke intense interest from some people and cause others to become defensive or physically recoil. Despite the charged nature of the word "spirituality," what is occurring on university campuses is the recognition that the spiritual dimension can contribute to learning in meaningful ways. Scott (1990, 16) asserts that what is called for is "our evolution toward a more integrative definition of knowledge, practice of research, and facilitation of student learning." Although the Latin root of university is *universus*, meaning "whole" or "one," suggesting a holistic paradigm for teaching and learning in postsecondary institutions, the dominant paradigm does not reflect this. For both professors and students, the dominant focus is objectivism and reductionism in both research and teaching. Parker Palmer (1998a, 17) argues that "although the academy claims to value multiple modes of knowing, it honors only one — an 'objective' way of knowing that takes us into the 'real' world by taking us 'out of ourselves.'" One wonders how one can come to fully understand a subject or a concept if one is metaphorically disembodied.

What is evident on university campuses is a paradigm shift from instruction to teaching and learning, with the goal of producing learning (Barr & Tagg 1995). The acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension in teaching and learning in the postsecondary context can contribute to honoring other modes of knowing by allowing students and teachers to engage the "real" world while remaining connected to their inner lives or "real" world; thus re-membering themselves.

I decided to become a teacher over 20 years ago to assist children in developing into their full potentials. I intuited on a deep level that the inner lives of the children that I worked with were important, and that it was incumbent upon me to provide them with

opportunities to engage their inner as well as their outer lives, including their spirits. The growth of the child's spirit can be compared to their physical growth, both of which are dependant on being fed and nurtured, and when young people are given opportunities to explore and express their spirituality, they thrive (Kessler 2000). I experienced great joy in working with children from grades one through three by observing their innate curiosity and freedom in exploring the world around them. I understood that they arrived at school each day as whole human beings in mind, body, and spirit, often with deep questions. What a lot of children soon begin to learn from the messages that they receive from the adults entrusted with their care is that these deep questions are not acknowledged or honored in the place called school.

This acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension is an integral part of my teaching philosophy which is grounded in holistic education. Holistic education is founded on the principle of wholeness. Ron Miller describes it in his "interview" with Koegel (2003, 14) as follows: "holistic education focuses on meaning, connection, and the search for wholeness." The holistic pedagogy still resonates deeply within me, in my current position as a faculty member in a teacher education program in an urban university in Western Canada.

Characteristics of Spirituality

Arriving at a definition of spirituality is somewhat like trying to describe love; one feels or knows what it is, yet articulating it is problematic at best. Due to its highly subjective nature, trying to define spirituality is complex, and although there are inherent difficulties in arriving at a consensus definition of spirituality, there are some common characteristics that many authors have identified. These include a search for meaning or a search for meaning and purpose; relatedness, connectedness, interconnectedness; relationship to a higher power; sacredness; transcendence; and self-knowledge.

Search for Meaning

In the literature on spirituality in education, the search for meaning is consistently identified as a central characteristic by most authors (Fish & Shelly 1988; Kessler 2000). Creating meaning from one's existence is of central importance to students in postsecondary institutions, because they are at pivotal points in their lives, often making the transition from late adolescence into adulthood. Most authors concurred, adding the element of search for purpose to the search for meaning (Fraser 2004; Harvey 2004; Howden 1992; Love & Talbot 1999; McGee, Nagel, & Moore 2003; J. Miller 2001; Rolph 1991).

Relatedness, Connectedness, and Interconnectedness

The second characteristic of spirituality as reported by numerous researchers is relatedness, connectedness, and interconnectedness of self, others, and a higher power (Chávez 2001; Fish & Shelly 1988; Harvey 2004; Lantieri 2001; Oldnall 1996; Yasuno 2004). Their assertion of the importance of relatedness is key, because humans are relational beings who depend on healthy connections with others, often for their very survival. Young people, in particular, desperately want to be seen and heard (Kessler 2000), which highlights the need for educators to facilitate the development of healthy relationships within their learning communities. If schools are to become healthy communities of learners, the foundation must be the development and nurturing of healthy relationships.

The importance of a connection to a higher power was also reported. The findings of the UCLA study on the spiritual life of students revealed that 74% of freshmen reported that they feel a "sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends my personal self" (Lindholm 2005). Although the reference to God or a Higher Power is not consistently evident in the literature, studies such as those administered at UCLA indicate that some students do identify with a presence or entity beyond themselves. What is not clear is how students define God or a Higher Power. The centrality of the connection between self, others, and a higher power illustrates the innate human drive for connectedness.

The levels of identified interconnectedness range from that between humans and a divine source, to that between humans and others, to a complete web of all beings including a Higher Power or God. I propose that on a physical level everything is intercon-

nected, but that it is important that the individual is conscious of these connections.

Relationship to a Higher Power

Third, the importance that students placed on their relationship to a higher power as being separate from connection to self or others was reported, even though some researchers did not include relationship of a higher power to self and others (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm 2006; Harvey 2004; Oldnall 1996; Ruiz 2005). Although not all students identify a connection to a higher power as being important to them, the feeling that one is connected to something outside of and beyond one's self can provide an anchor for many students.

Sacredness

Fourth, several authors identified sacredness as being a central characteristic of spirituality (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm 2006; Harvey 2004; Palmer 1998). What people identify as being sacred is quite personal, varying from reading a particular text, or having an experience in nature, to observing a piece of art or witnessing the birth of a baby. In essence, the sacred is found in whatever a person deems worthy of respect. In educational settings, acknowledging the sacred can add richness, depth, and relevance to students' learning experiences.

Transcendence

The fifth characteristic of spirituality found in the review of the literature is transcendence (Duff 2003; McGee, Nagel, & Moore 2003; Rolph 1991). The feelings associated with rising above one's normal mode of being, or of going beyond the boundaries of self are common themes in the literature on spirituality in education. People sometimes refer to experiences of transcendence as "a-ha moments" when clarity, connectedness, or insight occurs.

Self-Knowledge

The final characteristic of spirituality as gleaned from the review of the literature is self-knowledge (De Souza 2003; Duff 2003; Fraser 2004; Krishnamurti 1953; McGee, Nagel, & Moore 2003). By discovering and coming to know one's self, one is better able to relate to others and the world. Krishnamurti (1977, 97) believed that "ignorance is not the lack of knowledge but of self-knowing; without self-knowing there is no intelligence." In the context of education, self-knowledge may provide teachers and administrators with a balance to external knowledge, and contribute significantly to the formation of teachers, who will be faced with issues on a daily basis that require them to draw on their self-knowledge.

Connectedness and Interconnectedness To the Earth and the Cosmos

Throughout the literature review on spirituality in education, I consistently noted a characteristic that was minimally represented, but which I believe is an intrinsic component of spirituality: a connectedness and interconnectedness to the Earth and the Cosmos. Some authors noted the connection to the Earth in their descriptions of spirituality (Caine 2003; Fenwick, English, & Parsons 2001; Koegel 2003; J. Miller 2007; Rogers & Hill 2002), yet these represent a minority.

My rationale for including the connection to the Earth and the Cosmos derives from my assertion that it is narcisstic of humans to think that, although we inhabit a living, breathing planet, we are somehow divorced from its very being. Furthermore, we are wired for connection to the Earth and the Cosmos, and as M. Tucker (1996, 3) describes Thomas Berry's work, "[Berry] calls for reinventing the human at the species level which implies moving from our cultural coding to recover our genetic coding of relatedness to the earth." One of the great tragedies of our technological, reductionistic, competitive, and consumeristic society is that this exclusive focus has metaphorically and literally ripped us from the fabric of our very being and our sustenance.

The spiritualities of indigenous peoples including the Maori in New Zealand (Fraser 2004) and the aboriginal peoples of Canada (Wilson & Wilson 1998) illuminate the connection to the earth and the cosmos. Fraser (2004, 92-93) describes the amalgamation of Christian and Maori beliefs in education in New Zealand, including the incorporation of Maori prayers to *Tangaroa* (god of the sea) and *Papatuanuku* (earth mother). Relational accountability is a principle of Aboriginal spirituality: the interreconnectivity of all life is valued, and all individual actions

are in relation to every living organism and must be honored (Wilson & Wilson 1998, 157). As we reconnect with the earth and the cosmos, we will begin the process of re-membering ourselves, and in doing so, create opportunities to re-member not only our institutions, but our world.

Based on the research of these scholars the characteristics of spirituality include a search for meaning and purpose; relatedness, connectedness and interconnectedness; a relationship to a higher power; sacredness; transcendence; self-knowledge, as well as my inclusion of a connectedness and an interconnectedness to the earth and the cosmos. These characteristics are not static, but rather take on significance in relation to one's level of awareness.

Spirituality and Religion

In any discussion on the topic of spirituality the question of whether or not one is talking about religion is inevitably raised. Researchers approach the relationship between spirituality and religion in many ways, from making a clear distinction between the two to describing ways in which they overlap. Many authors make a clear distinction between spirituality and religion (Bainbridge 2000; Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm 2006; Nash 2001). They differentiate between religion as following a religious tradition, and spirituality as focusing on an inner journey of growth (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm 2006). The distinction between an institutional structure and an individual experience is also noted. Tisdell (2003, 47) emphasizes that

> organizational religions have institutionalized components to them — written doctrine, codes of regulatory behavior, and organized communities of faith. Spirituality is more about how people make meaning through experience of wholeness, a perceived higher power, or higher purpose.

Those who differentiate between spirituality and religion regard spirituality as more personal and experiential than religion, which is institutional, public, and having shared beliefs. Bainbridge's (2000) study of 1,195 intending teachers, which was comprised of an open-ended questionnaire regarding their ideas on spirituality, revealed that most respondents made a distinction between religion and spirituality.

Other authors believe that spirituality and religion can be interrelated (Kessler 2000; Nash 2001; Webster 2004). Nash (2001, 7) says

> I believe the two terms actually represent two closely related perspectives — the institutional and the personal — on the same phenomenon, transcendence. In my usage, religion is what we do with others, spirituality is what we do within ourselves; the former is public faith, the latter is private faith.

There are people who identify themselves as being religious without belonging to a religious institution, and those who engage in a spiritual practice with others.

As spirituality is discussed in a postmodern context, while various academic disciplines continue to view it through a modern lens, confusion is bound to arise. In response to this confusion some researchers are offering a new postmodern lens through which to look at spirituality, and indeed they are describing it as a postmodern spirituality with new frameworks and language. Tacey (2002) describes how postmodern processes and the valuation of uncertainty have contributed to transforming modern assumptions, but that, due to the deep secularism of academia, spirituality and religion have not been transformed in the same way. In fact,

> the deconstruction of religion in theology has not, or not yet, had much impact on how religion and spirituality are viewed in the mainstream disciplines of sociology, history, philosophy, literature, or cultural studies. (Tacey 2002, 173)

What is important to note at this juncture is that fruitful, engaging dialogues about spirituality can only truly begin when a common language is developed. Only then can meaningful discussion and a paradigm shift begin to happen.

If engaging one's spirituality within educational settings can provide students with deep, integrative understandings of themselves, others, their subject areas, and the greater world, why is it excluded from most postsecondary educational environments?

Check Your Spirit at the Door:
Spirituality in Postsecondary Education

When professors and students enter their learning environments on a daily basis, they are covertly asked to check their spirits at the door. This de-spiritualized ethos is curious, considering the beginnings of postsecondary education in North America, which were predominantly influenced by models of religious education.

As a result of educational institutions' efforts to avoid religious indoctrination, on most university campuses, spirituality and religion have little, if any, voice. Within the context of postsecondary education, the prevalent paradigm is objectivism, which according to Palmer (1998a, 2), "treats the world as an object to be dissected and manipulated, a way of knowing that gives us power over the world." This dualistic epistemology, a legacy of Descartes, results in teachers and learners feeling disconnected, fragmented, and alienated from not only their studies, but from each other, the world, and ultimately themselves. Vestiges of colonialism are also present in academia, as Shahjahan (2005, 693) explains, "such positivist secular discourses are colonial in nature and have a long history of displacing non-dominant ways of knowing the world, especially spiritually." The effects of this exclusion of indigenous knowledges has an impact on teachers and students, and the academy is being called upon to recognize and validate other ways of knowing (Dei 2000; Shahjahan 2005).

The spiritual dimension is absent in most curricula in postsecondary settings, and students become quite adept at both learning and demonstrating their learning in fragmented ways. This fragmentation of organizational structures is well documented (J. Miller 2007; Palmer 1998; Scott 2002; Shahjahan 2005). If one engages the "real" world by being disconnected from self, perhaps that is what one ultimately comes to know: that learning is fragmented and that since the learner is not in relation to the subject, the learner ultimately does not matter. Although this fear of developing relationships between things and people is threatening to the academy, imagine how much deeper, richer, and complete our levels of understanding our areas of investigation could be if we engaged them with our whole selves.

Although there is often fear associated with acknowledging the spiritual dimension in postsecondary education (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm 2006; Nash 2001; Palmer 1998a), it is often more of an issue for the professoriate than for the student body. The findings of a UCLA comprehensive study entitled "Spirituality and the Professoriate," involved some 40,670 faculty at 421 colleges and universities. It described the disparity between what faculty believe and how they teach. They reported that four of five faculty identified themselves as being spiritual, and that more than two-thirds reported that they purposefully seek out opportunities for spiritual growth. Almost half of those surveyed described the integration of the spiritual dimension in their lives as being essential (Lindholm 2005). In order for students to be provided with opportunities in which to engage the spiritual dimension within the context of their academic studies, professors must also be given permission to acknowledge the spiritual dimension in their work.

Spirituality is not typically represented on the campuses of most North American universities, despite the overwhelming research that indicates that the student body has a deep hunger for the spiritual dimension in their lives (Kessler 2000; R. Miller 2001; Nash 2001; Rolph 1991; Scott 2002). The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California in Los Angeles carried out a study with 112,232 first-year students who attended 236 colleges and universities, to gauge the depth of this spiritual hunger. Eighty percent of the student body reported being interested in spirituality and feeling joy in relation to their spirituality, while half of them indicated that it is very important for them to seek spiritual growth opportunities. Furthermore, 80% of the students surveyed discussed religion/spirituality with others; over 75% of them believe in God; and 48% of the students surveyed expressed an expectation that their colleges and universities would help them develop spiritually (Lindholm 2005).

As evidenced in the literature review, students place great importance on spirituality, as they navigate through their academic studies and increasingly complex social issues. The acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension in postsecondary educa-

tional settings ultimately has the potential to contribute to re-membering fragmented institutions.

Spirituality in Teacher Education

"We teach who we are." Parker Palmer's (1998a) words are powerful, and challenge educators to examine their inner lives more closely. If we do teach who we are, what are we modeling for teachers in training? Do we model ways of being in the world that are holistic and integrative, or do we continue to adhere to educational approaches that are based on objectivism, reductionism, and fragmentation?

An examination of spirituality in teacher education revealed little support for acknowledging the spiritual dimension in teacher education programs (Borowski 2003; J. Miller 2000; Palmer 2003; Rogers & Hill 2002; Rolph 1991). The social context of teacher education impacts on expectations of both teachers and learners, often excluding the spiritual dimension. The technological, consummeristic, nature of society focuses on the external, material needs of people, to the detriment of their spiritual needs (Rolph 1991). This focus on externals results in disconnection and fragmentation in education as well. Ron Miller (2001, 31) states,

> our considerable powers of intellect have served primarily to disconnect us from the world. Modern systems of education have fed these powers well, training young people how to gain knowledge *over* the world, knowledge at the expense of feeling, information without wisdom, facts without moral discernment.

As knowledge becomes a commodity which one wields in the world rather than something that one comes to deeply know and love, it ultimately breeds dispassion. Yet within this societal context the spiritual dimension is invisibly omnipresent. Spirituality can be likened to the elephant in the middle of the room; everyone is aware of its presence, yet it is ignored, and Palmer (1998, 8) asserts that spirituality "is at the heart of every subject we teach, where it waits to be brought forth."

Fear of incorporating the spiritual dimension into teaching and learning environments does damage to both students and teachers, because an integral facet of their being is silenced. Although some professors are courageous enough to acknowledge the spiritual dimension in their teaching, many suffer in silence every day. Prospective teachers must be prepared to guide *their* students through their deep and sometimes perplexing questions, and this will best be accomplished by developing future teachers who more fully understand their inner lives.

Within conventional educational practices that focus on externally based knowledge, the idea of acknowledging the spiritual dimension in learning may be seen as a threat not only to educators and administrators, but to the very existence of the institution. Although the majority of teacher education programs use conventional approaches, holistic models are being incorporated by some teacher educators who focus on integrating the inner and outer lives of teachers in training (Borowski 2003). Despite the reluctance or fear of many to incorporate the spiritual dimension into their teaching, many educators do incorporate Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences and Goleman's (1995) research on emotional intelligence into their classrooms. Gardner has given consideration to the inclusion of existential intelligence, although he reported that it requires further evidence to determine whether or not it is an actual intelligence, and several researchers have identified spiritual intelligence as a separate intelligence (Hay & Nye 1998; Vaughan 2002; Zohar & Marshall 2000).

In light of the research on holistic education and spirituality in education, glimmers of hope exist for the eventual acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension in teacher education programs, which would provide teachers in training with opportunities to not only acquire solid foundational knowledge and skills, but a deeper understanding of who they are.

Implications

Teaching is a highly complex activity, and educators today are faced with a barrage of demands, and as Johnson (2005, 36) argues,

> in a world of Praxis exams, No Child Left Behind, standardized achievement tests, behavioral objectives, technical teaching, emotionless pedagogy, and standards-based education it often feels like a holistic philosophy and authentic teaching are not valued.

Professors who teach in teacher education programs are no less immune to these expectations, for they must deal with courses that are mandated by governments and program changes imposed by institutional leadership.

Thus far, the review of the literature has supported the importance of acknowledging the spiritual dimension in education. How, then, can the spiritual dimension be acknowledged and honored within the context of teacher education?

Rogers & Hill (2002, 288) maintain "that topics such as spirituality should be included as an integral part of the curriculum for undergraduate teacher education students." Although I agree with the latter part of their statement, I would not refer to spirituality as a topic to be included, but as a way of being, a disposition that must come from a deep place within the teacher. Two broad areas might be considered in order to shift from externally imposed educational practices to a balance between the outer and the inner worlds of students and teachers, and between the institutional and the individual levels. First, the institutional culture must begin to acknowledge other ways of knowing since an exclusive objectivist epistemology will only result in further fragmentation, and Scott (1990, 16) states that what is called for is "our evolution toward a more integrative definition of knowledge, practice of research, and facilitation of student learning." Indigenous knowledges must be acknowledged and honored as valid modes of knowing, in Dei's (2000, 119) words, "to achieve a genuine synthesis of all existing knowledges, the academy must work with the idea of multiple, collective and collaborative dimensions of knowledge." It is therefore incumbent upon administrators and policy makers to facilitate this paradigm shift towards more integrative, holistic learning.

Teacher education programs have the most inherent power and responsibility to affect the formation of teachers who will be charged with the responsibility of leading their future students. Our institutions must begin to support the development of teachers who will be equipped to respond to the spiritual needs of their students (Renteria 2001). Clearly, teacher educators must be supported by their administrators and each other to begin to acknowledge the spiritual dimension within the context of their academic work. What is required are teachers who embody wholeness in their classrooms, and as Palmer (1998, 10) emphasizes,

> teaching and learning, done well, are done not by disembodied intellects but by whole persons whose minds cannot be disconnected from feeling and spirit, from heart and soul. To teach as a whole person to the whole person is not to lose one's professionalism as a teacher but to take it to a deeper level.

Teacher education programs have the potential to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to become more of who they are through acknowledging the spiritual dimension.

Second, although the inclusion of spirituality into postsecondary contexts cannot be mandated by administration, individual professors can begin to acknowledge their inner lives in their academic work, and teach from their wholeness. I am not suggesting that educators jump on yet another "bandwagon," but I am inviting them to examine how they might begin to integrate their inner lives with their outer lives as teachers.

There are four recommendations that I offer to teachers as they begin acknowledging and honoring the spiritual dimension in their classrooms. First, since all of the identified characteristics of spirituality are about relationship, teachers must mindfully create safe, open, and caring environments in which relationships are acknowledged and honored. Authentic sharing on the part of both the teacher and the students begins to cultivate trust between class members, and in the process, community develops. At the beginning of each of my classes I incorporate a sharing time in which the students and I share significant events in our lives. I ease the students into this ritual, since many are not prepared for it, and gradually they become more comfortable sharing with the class, when they begin to realize that it is a safe place to do so. What I have observed as the term progresses is that the level of sharing deepens and students begin to share significant personal events, both joyful and sometimes quite tragic. This level of sharing not only allows the students and me to learn more about each other, but gives us an opportunity to develop and demonstrate compassion for one an-

other. Although this may seem like a trite activity, it has proven to be one of the most powerful strategies that I employ in my teaching. Although I rarely use the word "spirituality" in my teaching, the characteristics of spirituality identified in this paper begin to emerge as community develops, particularly the search for meaning and purpose, relatedness, connectedness, interconnectedness, and sacredness. They emerge through the kinds of experiences that the students share with the class and their increased levels of receptivity.

Second, moving from transmissive to transformative teaching approaches and providing students with a variety of learning modalities and opportunities to express their learning in non-traditional ways not only allows them to engage topics in powerful ways, but gives voice to the spiritual dimension. An example of using a non-traditional teaching mode is showing a slide of Raphael's *The School of Athens* to engage students in a discussion of Greek philosophers through a rich example of visual art. The arts in particular can arouse the imagination of students, assist them in constructing meaning, and facilitate the connection between the inner and outer worlds. Through opportunities to express learning in multiple modes, students are better equipped to engage topics cognitively, affectively, and even spiritually as well. Examples of this include a group of students who explored adolescent girls' body image through interpretive dance, or a student who illustrated a variety of philosophical orientations through the creation of a three dimensional art installation. Facilitating ways in which students can integrate multiple dimensions of learning provides students with opportunities to express deep understandings in ways that language alone cannot reach.

What is important to note is that most of the characteristics of spirituality identified in this paper are relational, and that the teacher must facilitate ways for students to enter into relationships and interrelationships with their subjects, their peers, themselves, and the world.

Third, making room for regular silence in the classroom allows both students and teachers to reflect and contemplate on their learning. This, of course, is counter to prevalent approaches which encourage teachers to keep students "busy" so that they do not have opportunities to engage in activities which can be negatively perceived. Silence allows us to reconnect with our inner terrain and our authentic self, which in turn facilitates a deeper level of engagement with concepts, ideas, and each other. For some students it may also be the only period of silence that they encounter in their day.

Fourth, it is nearly impossible to create an open, safe environment for students to explore the spiritual dimension if teachers are not cognizant of their own spirituality. This requires teachers to be more fully present in the classroom. In most teacher education programs the focus is on theory and practice, and as Miller (2007, 191) states, "teacher presence is often ignored in teacher education despite its importance." If we are to model a holistic, interconnected, relational way of being and knowing to students, we must work at embodying it. In practice this means that we listen deeply to students and that we are present to them. Having presence in the classroom also requires us to develop a practice or discipline such as meditation or yoga that helps us to become more mindful and aware. Looking at spirituality through this lens, the characteristics of relatedness, interconnectedness, sacredness, transcendence, and connectedness to the Earth and the Cosmos unfold in relation to one's level of awareness. From this perspective, spirituality can most succinctly be described as a disposition or a way of being. Rather than being externally motivated, it is an internal process which is then manifested through our words and actions, or our interactions with the external world. Spirituality is a deep experience of relationship between inner and outer worlds. The spiritual dimension is always present, but it is our awareness that makes it relevant to us. It is a gift hidden in plain sight.

The development of presence in teacher candidates can be accomplished by modeling it for them, and by inviting them to engage in contemplative practices like meditation or mindfulness training. When teacher candidates describe a memorable teacher, they are less likely to describe their effective use of wait time, and more likely to describe how much their teacher cared about them or exhibited patience while teaching a difficult concept. I recommend that teacher education programs be restructured to place as much emphasis on helping teacher

candidates develop qualities of master teachers as they do on the development of skills and techniques.

As we navigate these new waters, we must guard against spirituality in education becoming a new dogmatism. Ron Miller (2006, 9) asserts, "I would argue that it is the care and love that nourish human development, not the pedagogical ideology." Incorporating spirituality into teacher education as a new pedagogy is not required, nor should the teaching of spirituality be mandated. What is called for is an acknowledgment of the spiritual dimension that is already present in all that we do as teachers and learners. Acknowledging and honoring the spiritual dimension in teacher education programs has the potential to provide both students and professors with more holistic, integrative approaches to come to more fully know and love not only their areas of specialization, but their peers, the world, and themselves.

As teacher educators, if we are to acknowledge the spiritual dimension in our teaching, we must acknowledge and honor our inner lives, gain institutional support, and by embodying wholeness in our classrooms, give our students permission to acknowledge and honor their own spirituality. This important and ultimately transformative work must begin in the hearts of teachers.

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Living Ishly

The Arts as Mindful Spaces in the Identity Journeys of Young Children

Marni J. Binder and Sally Kotsopoulos

The arts can help children understand their own inner landscapes and validate their social and cultural ways of knowing.

Many years ago, there was a young boy who was in a Special Needs Behavioral class that was taught by the first author. He was very talented in drawing and painting. Artistic endeavors provided solace in his distraught world. He would often draw, paint, and cut and paste detailed pictures of trucks, action figures, and images of sports and games played in the playground. Through the visual arts, he revealed his inner landscape. Meaning-making evolved through drawing and painting.

It was the first time that the teacher recognized the impact of the arts, particularly the visual arts, on a child. A sense of ownership and individuality emerged in him and began to inform other areas of his learning. This story illustrates the importance of the arts in the inner and outer experiences of the child. Most significant, it challenges us to pay closer attention to the opportunities for learning through the visual arts.

For over 20 years the impact of the arts on this child has remained with the first author and helped foster an evolving holistic philosophy that has become an everyday learning reality in her classes. Over the years, many questions have emerged, and many concerns have arisen, especially now when a one-size-fits-all approach to education seems to have become the holy grail of pedagogy.

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Two of these questions are how educators can create mindful spaces in the classroom and how children can be empowered through artistic engagements that provide opportunities to explore and understand self and others.

Lantieri (2001) discusses the complexity of creating schools with spirit where the inner lives of all learners are nurtured through building a caring community. The creation of an interconnected caring community can transform the learning environment and enable children to bring the totality of their inner and outer lives to school. By bringing soul to education (Kessler 2000; Kessler 2005; Miller 2007), educators can begin to create what Miller (2006, 4) calls "timeless learning," where a holistic culture of deep understanding can be embodied through mindful spaces.

The arts help children to understand the world and publicly express the multitude of thoughts that embody their everyday lives (Binder 2004). It is an identity journey that begins when we are young. What is transforming for children is the understanding of their own inner landscapes where they can explore and validate their social and cultural ways of knowing. Creating these artistic mindful spaces provides children with empowering moments of presence. In discussing an education with soul, Irwin (2007, 1401) describes it as "an education filled with feeling completely alive, being at one with the universe while experiencing joy, compassion, mindfulness, and a sense of awe for the mystery that abounds."

My colleague Sally Kotsopoulos and I have observed children's awe and wonder while working on a research project with a group of kindergarten children. Through quilt work and poetry writing, we embarked on a collaborative journey that originally was intended to gain insight into children's self-understanding (or identity) through modes of expression that were different from traditional literacy practices. What also emerged was contextual validation of the arts as a powerful conduit for creating mindful spaces for learning.

Quilts

Quilts offer the opportunity to explore the creation of social text. (Ball 2008, 365)

The quilt project was based on the *Quilt of Belonging* conceived by Esther Bryan (2005) where 263 textile narratives were created to reflect the richness of Canada's cultural diversity, with a strong focus on our First Nations peoples. The concept was adapted as an assignment for undergraduate students in their fourth year of an Early Childhood Education program. Students created a quilt square using personal artifacts or mementos. This collage of symbols interconnected to create multimodal forms of expression. I-am-from and I-am-going poetry was written to complement the quilt square. A soundscape installation upon completion created a community of learners as students read their poem and laid the quilt square down to construct the larger quilt. Through this powerful construction of their identity texts, they began to explore a deeper structural understanding of their personal landscapes, enabling them to enter into the world of the child in meaningful ways.

The quilt creation provided individual and collective spaces for documentating personal narrative and social discourse. It offered the students a lens for thinking about the world, understanding relationships and exploring identity through an alternative form of meaning-making. This embodied the possibility of resituating identity within representational expression (Albers & Harste 2007; Pahl 2007). Cummins (2004, 91) discusses identity text as a way to express a sense of ownership through the creation of contextual pieces "which can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations of multimodal form."

Our work with kindergartners evolved out of the work with these university students. The senior author was invited to create a project with a junior and senior Kindergarten class. This cooperative endeavor began with 12 students, their teacher, and Sally Kotsopoulos, Manager of the Early Learning Centre. We framed the project around the concepts of images, process, and identities.

Images

Individuals see themselves reflected in images in ways they may not see themselves reflected in words. (Kendrick & McKay 2004, 122)

Children's conceptions of identity are rarely present in exploring their visual narratives. Freire (1987, 35) calls the "word universe" a place where experi-

ences expressed are not those of the teacher, hence creating an authenticity in the learning space. For young children, this word universe also includes their visual universe. Through the creation of pictorial representations, a child is empowered to express a personal story or experience. This opens "conversational channels at the personal and interpersonal levels, breathing interactive life into the tableaux of a child's meaning-making" (Binder 2004, 38).

The children in this program engaged in a wide variety of artistic activities. Our aims were to deepen the artistic endeavors that took place, provide a variety of different experiences, and to encourage the children to make connections to their learning encounters. Once a week for nine weeks, the children were immersed in an array of open-ended visual art experiences that connected to their understanding of self and others.

The concept of images became the metaphor for how the children entered into their artwork, discussions, responses, and eventual shared understanding. Their visual representations of objects that were personally important to them took on new meaning at different stages of the project and reflected how they negotiated the different forms of expression. Nicholas Paley (cited in Thompson 2008, 901) "suggests that children act as *bricoleurs*, improvising with materials given to them within a particular environment to create new meaning."

Each session began and ended with a story. Four books in particular represented an emerging thread, the imagination, that wove its way through the project. Each of these books touched the inner landscape of the children as they related to the part of the story that spoke to them.

Willy the Dreamer by Anthony Browne (2000) embodied the imaginary and real dreams that we all have. Through whimsical illustrations and text, the intersection of past, present, and future is depicted. The children were captivated by the images and humor. A discussion later ensued around dreams, which one child described as "stories in your mind." This started a conversation about the imagination. It showed what Herbert Kohl (1996, ix) describes as the "the possibilities of things — the counterfactual world of supposing and imaginings — making it possible for children to stretch themselves beyond their everyday realities and confront experience with the question 'what if.'"

Frederick by Leo Lionni (1973) embodied what Herbert Read (1956) believed to be essential for primary education: play, imagination, creativity, and aesthetics. This timeless story is about Frederick, a little mouse who embraced imagery and poetics while his friends prepared for the winter. When food ran out and the winter days were cold and long, Frederick warmed their hearts and minds with his words and visualization.

Vincent's Colors by Vincent Van Gogh (2005), a visually beautiful book joins the words of the artist to his brother, with his paintings. This book particularly resonated with the children because they were familiar with the artist and he had a special place in the classroom. This enhanced the aesthetic engagements through an imaginative curriculum advocated by Greene (1995), Eisner (1998), and Egan (2005).

Ish by Peter Reynolds (2004) allowed for the exploration of authenticity, validating what the children could create, and reinforced the idea of it being "OK" to represent objects in their own way. *Ish* is the story of a young boy who after his brother laughs at his drawing, crumples it up and stops. But his sister secretly had created a gallery of many crumpled drawings. When he says his drawing of a vase does not look real, she responds by saying it looks "vase-ish." This revelation is liberating for the boy and he begins to create ish-drawings, paintings, and poetry. "Ish" represents the heart of creativity and the artistic process.

Throughout the project, these four books connected to the work the children did and provided the incubation period necessary for the creative process to unfold. The spirit of the images and text became embedded in the visual and verbal narrative of their quilt squares and poetry. "These deeply personal and mindful engagements, cultivate[d] a wealth of creative and imaginative activities in the classroom" (Binder 2008, 122) and represented what is possible when image and text intersect.

Processes

Step by Step!
(Student, Junior Kindergarten)

Eleanor Duckworth (1996, 1) considered the having of wonderful ideas "the essence of pedagogy." For young children to have the space to have these wonderful ideas, they need to be given time to engage in a process that embellishes the heart of the learning experience. The concept of process provided the opportunity and became an important theme throughout the project.

Over the course of nine weeks, the children engaged in activities that broke down the overall process, as one child called it, "step by step." They worked on the following concepts: why they were special, painting, things of importance (their artifacts), planning the quilt square, creating the square, I-am poetry, and the final soundscape installation. The creative process that children can enter into was observed: the importance of preparation, incubation, inspiration, and verification (Kessler 2000; Neville 2005). Neville's (2005, 149) image of "catching the light" illustrates the significance of this process with the children as they embarked on their identity journey.

We began with a discussion about why each child was special. By focusing on this deeply personal domain, the children were moved from the inner to the outer considerations of what was important to them. This idea of importance segued into their things of importance which in some cases were people or pets. This session provided openings for all children to contribute and as Sally stated "honored the quiet participant in the process," empowering those who might have been overpowered by others in group discussions to feel a sense of validation. One child in particular stated that he was special because he was a hero. When asked why, the child replied: "I am a hero because I help my mommy and daddy." This began the change observed in this particular child during the project, which Palmer (1993, 73) refers to as hospitality in the learning space where we receive "each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas with openness and care."

Painting allowed for a pure kinesthetic experience that allowed the children to play with color, texture, space, and form. Using paint sponges with primary colors allowed for an incubation process of thought with aesthetic inspiration. The children were not only obviously engaged in the joy of the activity but there was a rhythm, flow, and focus that occurred as they discovered new colors and chatted excitedly with each other. They painted on the floor, which provided them with a larger palette to explore.

The notion of representation was an initial obstacle as the children encountered some difficulty in understanding how they would transfer these "real" objects onto a small quilt square. The concept of representation and interpretation took some explanation.But once they understood, the children were then able to transfer from the "real" to more figurative understanding. A passage from *Vincent's Colors* helped.

> Teacher: I want to ask you something. Even though he is painting real things do you think he is actually showing things that are real?
>
> Child: No.
>
> T: Or is he showing you how they make you feel?
>
> C: How they make you feel.
>
> T: So, do you have to show something exactly the way it is?
>
> C: No.
>
> T: So when we are representing things on our quilt, does it have to look exactly the way it does in real life?
>
> C: Nooo.
>
> T: Ohhh, so that helps, doesn't it? Vincent is helping us sort out the problems.

This aspect of the process reshaped the reflective praxis for us as the significance of being mindful of each step along the way became evident. During ongoing discussions Sally shared her observations from many years in the field in terms of two opposing streams of thought in early childhood education: art as a craft project with a high level of uniformity and art as exploratory, open-ended, with no product expectation. Neither approaches occurred in the process; however, we saw remnants of the second attitude when several children expressed initially that they wouldn't be able to make something for their square.

From the planning of the practice piece to creating the actual quilt square, the children were offered an alternative way of learning. It is often heard that young children have short attention spans and there is a tendency to move quickly from activity to activ-

ity. Providing a process validated the capacity for these young children to concentrate for long periods of time. The act of creating and authorship courted meaningful moments of engagement. It also allowed for the surprises that can arise from being immersed in an experience that captures that mind, body, and soul of learning.

The use of a step-by-step process allowed the adults in the room to support the children mindfully. As a result of recognizing each step as important and validating the children's engagement, the project carried deep meaning and understanding for all involved. Below is an excerpt from a transcription early on with one of our reluctant artists.

> Teacher: What were you thinking about bringing in?
>
> Child: A race car.
>
> T: So the first picture you're going to draw is going be a big race car. Would that be a better way to draw your race car? Side ways like that.
>
> C: Hmmm
>
> T: So can you spend time on your red race car first? Then we'll move onto the next one, so take your time, I know you don't always really like to do drawings and it really bothers you, but you did such a great job on that painting. Remember discovering green and blue and all those incredible colors? So do the best you can. You know make the wheels; see if you can add some detail. Take your time to do it. Oh good, good. Those are really neat.
>
> C: I can do it.

Identities

Children's expression through visual text is a reflection on their experiences, their knowledge, and what they want to reveal about themselves. (Ahn & Filipento 2007, 280)

Currently in education the curriculum approach is one that is predominantly text-driven and standardized where a one-size-fits-all approach seems to be the pedagogical ideal. In early teaching years it often happens that teachers focus more on readiness skills than on building environments that recognize the importance of positive learning experiences and practices that support the prior knowledge children bring with them to school (Goodman & Martens 2007; Gee 2001). Understanding the identity texts (Cummins 2004) of children provides a socially constructed lens of understanding but also enables reflection and potential for transforming educational practices by engaging in modes of artistic expression other than traditional literacy forms of print.

The quilt project empowered the children. By exploring who they were and what was important in their lives, the children began their identity journeys. We observed significant shifts in their relationships to themselves, others, and the world around them. The concept of identity became interwoven with the process the children navigated through.

Several areas of importance were revealed: self-confidence, voice, and the development of a group I-to-we dynamic. Self-confidence manifested in a number of ways. Children who were more passive and often slid into the background found strength through the aesthetic process of creating their art. By visually representing who they were provided a safe environment for taking risks. One child began to use her full name again early in the project. She continued to feel validated and was empowered to express herself in group discussions and with her peers. Her thoughtfulness during the project enabled us to see that by the end she had internalized the concept of process.

Another child who had said that he did not know how to draw found his voice by creating his visual narrative and having his work honored throughout the process. Just "being with" this child opened up his conversational channels and he began to make his thoughts public.

Another child who had excellent writing skills initially represented her ideas only in writing instead of drawing or painting. Her perception of what literacy was or should be was framed by what she thought the adults would want. Her understanding began to shift to the importance of visually representing who she was through her artifacts of importance. This realization showed itself through her excitement by creating quilts.

The children invested their identities in the visual narratives they created. Childhood artifacts were situated in their representational choices in meaningful ways. From Wally-E, pets, trucks, a "blankie," a seahorse and shell, each child mindfully selected what they wanted to reveal through their distinct voices. Their poems combined the literal and the metaphorical, as the following two examples illustrate:

I am Wall-E who compacts garbage.
I am my dragon who flies away.
I am a cat who jumps on my table.
I am a boy who takes care of his pets.

I am a snowflake that floats and melts.
I am a shell at the bottom of the sea.
I am a rock who lives at the beach.
I am a girl who likes purple and pink.

Hart (2004, 42-43) discusses the importance of path, community, inner silence, intention, ceremony, and metaphor in opening and creating the contemplative mind in classrooms. For young children these are the mindful spaces that can be opened in the learning environment. It is where we observed that the "I-to-we" occurs. At the beginning of the project, the children were focused on *their own* objects of important, the artifacts that were special to them. Halfway through the project, a dynamic shift occurred. A community ethos took over as the children shifted from their things of importance to the quilt itself. Interactions between the children took on a different feel as they became more engaged with each other and the work they were to co-create.

Steiner discussed the cultivation of the young child's spirit that occurred through the sensual world of color, organic form, and appreciation of beauty. It was through the manipulation of color that "the child's soul life will become more sensitive and pliable" (1996, 117). His belief in the arts as the basis for the growth of the child supports how pictorial representations honor the significance of visual voice; the lived experience of how and what a child thinks. The quilt project let an organic authenticity emerge, as well as growth, respect, and understanding of how the children shared their identity spaces mindfully.

Living Ishly

Ramon felt light and energized. Thinking ishly allowed his ideas to flow freely. He began to draw what he felt — loose lines. Quickly springing out. Without worry. (Reynolds 2004, 19)

The completion of the quilt and poetry empowered the children and crystallized the essence of the experience. Creating mindful spaces gave the children permission to explore the imagination and creative process, enhancing their ability to internalize what was involved in "step by step." Observed through the nine weeks was a deepening of existing relationships between the children, their teacher, and the world around them. This became apparent in the empathy that was developing between many of the children.

Shared experiences empowered the children to tell their stories. Their voices found a space and place through visual representations. The qualities of everyday meaningmaking were embodied in their visual narratives. Through the connection between image and text, the identity journey of these children took on new meaning for the adults in the room.

When the first author shared *her* things of importance, she presented a Vincent Van Gogh finger puppet. As she attempted to explain why the artist was important, one child said, "He makes you feel paintish!" This reflects the words of Kessler (2000, 171) who offers the importance of honoring "our students' search for what *they* believe gives meaning and integrity to their lives, and how they can connect to what is most precious for them." For the adults involved, a new lens to observe the children was provided that deepened our understanding of how children enter their lived experiences and enabled us to co-create mindful spaces for all to enter.

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Curiosity in Contemporary American Education

Necole J. Fabris

It is time to reconsider the low value that teacher training programs and local institutional practices place on nurturing and encouraging curiosity, passion, and risk-taking in the classroom.

People who have changed our world for the better have shared one common trait: curiosity. From Marie Curie and Thomas Edison to Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, all inventors and innovators have possessed insatiable intellectual curiosity. Not surprisingly, curiosity is considered highly important in education today. Noted education scholar David Beswick (2000, 3) of the Centre for Applied Educational Research at the University of Melbourne, Australia, defines curiosity as "a process of creating, maintaining, and resolving conceptual conflicts." This definition correlates to the "Learning and Innovation Skills" identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Adopted by fourteen states, this initiative emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to be lifelong, self-reliant learners who "teach themselves" and who will never tire of their quest to learn (Beswick 2000; 21st Century Learning Skills 2000, 11).

Although there have been countless educational attempts to foster curiosity in students, teacher preparation programs seem to place little emphasis on teachers being curious individuals themselves. Most teacher preparation programs focus upon classroom management and atmosphere, assessment, and differentiation. Although these skills are important for an educator's success in the classroom, they address behaviors that are specific to the delivery of content material and skills to the student, but neglect the importance of the teacher's investment in, and passion for, the skills and material that they teach. If a teacher, the primary facilitator of a child's interaction with curricular material, is not passionate about her own learning, she cannot be very effective in inspiring curiosity. If educational institutions truly wish to prepare students for the 21st century workplace, colleges must create teacher preparation programs that inherently nurture curiosity; school districts must

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choose teacher candidates who demonstrate not only a passion to teach, but also a passion to learn; and school administrators must allow teachers the flexibility and security to take creative risks in their teaching (21st Century Learning Skills 2007).

One barrier to the cultivation of teacher curiosity is the narrowness of most teacher preparation programs. A liberal arts program, in contrast, exposes undergraduates to a wide range of concepts, histories, and skills so that when students graduate, they are knowledgeable, well-rounded thinkers who can function in any number of capacities. Yet most teacher preparation programs tend to be much narrower in scope. Once a student elects to major in education, most of the coursework focuses upon classroom management, curriculum design, differentiation, and effective lesson plan implementation. Individuals in such programs are rather limited in their flexibility to take courses that might be interesting but not directly related to their teacher preparation or intended content area. However, an important component in nurturing curiosity is allowing students to interact with a wide range of subjects so that they may make connections between different areas and understand the broader contexts of information.

For example, problem-solving skills developed in a calculus course can be translated to rigging theatrical equipment. Historical and cultural understandings of the 19th Century can help contextualize literature written during that time. These interdisciplinary connections are exactly what teachers want *their* students to make, but the programs that "prepare" educators for teaching do not emphasize such learning experiences in their structure and requirements (Beswick 2000; Romano & Simonyi 2006).

Another contributing factor to the relative lack of creativity in teacher education training programs lies in common attitudes toward alternate certification programs. Some states provide alternate certification programs that enable individuals who hold bachelor's degrees to obtain provisional teaching certificates. The certificate candidate completes coursework to meet the requirements for a standard certification during his/her first year of teaching, which allows individuals with strong content area experience and knowledge to become certified teachers through an accelerated program. However, it is not uncommon for school districts to limit consideration of such "alternate route" candidates because of their lack of teaching experience, regardless of the extent of their content knowledge. True, such candidates need more than content knowledge to teach. Yet, while they must be provided with the tools and strategies for effective teaching and classroom management, it is rather shortsighted to ignore an entire pool of individuals who are so passionate about their fields of expertise that they wish to share this passion with children and adolescents (National Center for Alternate Certification 2008).

Moreover, hiring "alternative route" teachers has the potential for long-term positive impact on both the depth of knowledge shared with students and the professional reputation of teachers. Quite simply, teachers who have more knowledge, and who are provided with the tools to convey that content knowledge to students effectively, will provide students with a more comprehensive educational experience. Also, if highly skilled and knowledgeable individuals become teachers, the knowledge base of the teacher force as a whole grows. If the knowledge base increases, it is quite likely that public respect for teachers as skilled professionals would also increase. (National Center for Alternate Certification 2008).

The relationship between administrators and new teachers also plays a role in hindering the development of both student and teacher curiosity. When new teachers arrive in a school district, they are under greater scrutiny than their tenured peers. Without the security of tenure, they often feel that they must not deviate too much from the teaching behaviors and styles of their colleagues, rather than explore different and potentially more effective teaching strategies and approaches. New teachers tend to be so concerned with meeting all of the curricular requirements that they are often reluctant to follow the nonlinear path that student inquisitiveness tends to take. If a teacher demonstrates that he is not willing to explore his students' questions, those students are less likely to ask questions about their learning in the future. Essentially, without a school climate conducive to teacher and student risk-taking and inquiry, curiosity cannot be nurtured (Romano & Simonyi 2006, 2).

If schools are to fully and effectively produce students who are intrinsically motivated to learn and

explore, there must be a clear paradigmatic shift in the expectations of teachers, and corresponding shifts both in the programs that prepare them for teaching and the attitudes of school districts to nontraditionally trained teacher candidates. Primarily, undergraduate teacher preparation programs must allow — if not require — a broader range of courses to provide their students with multiple academic vantage points and numerous opportunities to make connections between disciplines. These programs should provide the flexibility for undergraduates to study outside their intended area of teaching, and even outside their intended country of employment, to provide broader context and depth to their teaching (Romano & Simonyi 2006).

Consortium for Overseas Teaching (COST)

One example of such broadening of program structure can be found at Ohio University. Ohio University is an active member of the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching (COST), an association that places education students in foreign countries to complete their student teaching requirement. Ohio University's COST membership reflects a structural reconsideration of traditional teacher preparation programs. Rosalie Romano, an associate professor and COST coordinator at Ohio University, contends that teacher preparation programs in the United States "aim to support the development of teachers who are knowledgeable in their discipline, have acquired depth of pedagogical knowledge and experience, and are 'highly qualified' to teach in our nation's classrooms." Yet she questions, "Is this enough?" (Romano & Simonyi 2006, 3).

Romano asserts that the ability to construct meaningful learning experiences for students depends on the teacher's attitude toward teaching and learning and the teacher's ability to draw from many experiences and perspectives to create such learning experiences. By allowing teacher preparation students to fulfill their student teaching requirement overseas, Ohio University provides student teachers with a rich opportunity to broaden their perspectives within a global context. Clearly, student teachers in such fields as history, geography, and world cultures would benefit from the understandings gained from teaching in another country. However, teachers in other areas would benefit from such a program as well. As former COST teacher Stacy Simonyi noted, the COST experience broadened her knowledge about teaching and increased her confidence as an educator. This broader knowledge and increased confidence further nurtured her own curiosity, all of which she noted as "prerequisites for engaging lessons and teaching." These "prerequisites" can benefit teachers of all levels and content areas (Romano & Simonyi 2006, 7).

Simonyi's connections between broader knowledge, increased confidence, heightened curiosity, and effective instruction allowed her to take more risks in her teaching. Risk taking is another student behavior that educators wish to foster. In order for teachers to truly nurture student curiosity in the classroom, they must create the climate and security that allow students to take risks. However, with risk taking, specific results cannot be guaranteed, and teachers must be comfortable with a degree of uncertainty. Moreover, they must recognize that in order for student's curiosity to be piqued, learning experiences must organically integrate student interests with content material, and not necessarily cling to the linear path envisioned by the teacher. Essentially, teachers must be curious enough about how their students' learning will progress to allow for the natural progression of that learning.

School administrators must also encourage teachers to take creative risks and play more of a supportive mentor role with faculty members than an authoritative "boss" role. Administrators should orient professional development sessions to allow for more collegial interactions among faculty and staff. These collegial interactions would provide teachers with a forum to discuss the effectiveness of lessons and how these lessons might be reorganized or augmented to improve learning. All in all, when educators embrace student exploration with all of its uncertainties, and when school administrators embrace teacher innovation and risk taking, the educational process from planning to implementation to reflection becomes intrinsically motivational for everyone.

A teacher's job is to inspire students to think, ponder, and reflect. An effective teacher rewards critical thinking, lauds students who push their learning outside the confines of the school walls and desig-

nated curricula, encourages students to ask questions, and helps *them* to find the answers. Such a teacher would need to be an inherently curious person and intrinsically motivated by the processes of teaching and learning.

It is a rather ambitious endeavor to redefine the characteristics of strong teachers, revise teacher preparation programs to allow for more interdisciplinary studies, reorient school administrators to the potential of candidates from alternate certification programs, and allow teachers the professional flexibility and safety to take risks in their teaching. However, this endeavor is essential if educators are to prepare students for the 21st century workplace. There is little doubt that such a paradigmatic shift will evoke criticism and resistance from those who might be intimidated by the degree of uncertainty inherent in nonlinear educational experiences. Yet to be stagnant is detrimental to our country's societal, cultural, and political development. Nurturing curiosity in the classroom will help develop the Leonardo DaVincis and the Margaret Meads of the future.

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Everyday Courage in the Midst of Standardization in Schools

Frank Pignatelli

There are many ways to respond to school standardization, one of which might be to prepare students for the exams while preserving alternative spaces that sustain and nourish our practices as progressive educators.

In *The Plague* by Albert Camus, the physician, Dr. Rieux, chooses to fight the plague overcoming the town of Oran and alleviate the suffering borne by his fellow man. Yet Rieux realizes that there can be no assurances that what he does will make a difference. He is aware that statistical studies of previous plagues predict an inevitable rising, plateauing, and ebbing of casualties. But he believes he must do what he can. Through his actions, Rieux demonstrates resolve tempered by modesty and common decency. Camus here provides us with a way of understanding courage. Courageous acts bearing ethical import express an alertness to what endangers well-being, steadiness, and the yearning to shape a personally meaningful life.

The kind of courage Camus portrayed in Dr. Reiux is also informed by a sense of the tragic. If the suffering of the other is the starting point of the ethical relation, holding a tragic sense of life reminds us of the inevitability of suffering, for the plague is sure to return at some point. One can acknowledge this but still refuse to cast this inevitability in fatalistic terms. As Burbules (1990, 471) puts it,

> By maintaining the tragic sense, we admit to ourselves and to those engaged with us in an activity the inherent difficulties and uncertainties of our efforts — which may in fact bind us together more strongly, inspire more persistent and conscientious effort, and help us maintain a more realistic appraisal of the worth of what we are trying to accomplish.

Camus speaks to a kind of courage that needs to inform our work as educators. If valued and cultivated, it has a chance of reckoning with practices justified by the ethos of standardization so prevalent in

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our schools. Similar to the plague in Oran, the ubiquity of standardization tempts the educator to regard this condition as normal and predictable, something to be witnessed and suffered with resignation. High-stakes testing, tightly scripted curricula, fixed blocks of instructional time, and all the associated practices and policies that drive toward uniformity and sameness regardless of interest, need, and the best judgment of educators situated in specific contexts present a danger and cause suffering.

One can choose to act in the midst of this, and not acting is a choice too. Given the degree of standardization in place in our public schools — particularly those serving poor and working class communities — an educator's commitment to democratic schooling is tested. This troubling condition raises a formidable challenge to exercise what Dewey aptly referred to as an educator's moral and intellectual maturity around matters such as curriculum design, student assessment, scheduling, and school governance. At present, the role school plays in the formation of an engaged, thoughtful citizenry is trivialized and treated as superficial.

Fundamentally, what it means to be morally accountable to one's self, colleagues, and students and their families is too often framed in the abstract, depersonalized language of test scores and the degree of conformity to mandates established beyond the purview of a school's stakeholders. This has the effect of alienating — or, worse, absolving — the educators who face and work with each other on a daily basis from a collective sense of moral agency.

One could take a radical position on eradicating the suffering caused by standardization. Educators could decide, for example, not to give the tests. Parents and students could choose, as some have, to boycott the tests. But this position holds substantial risk for the school, the educators and, most importantly, the children and families and could easily result in having fewer options and exacting even more suffering. Further, the extremeness of this form of resistance could lead to resignation, cynicism, and an ever-diminishing belief in one's ability to actually make a difference in the face of pressures that emanate far beyond the reach and control of a school community. In either case, moral steadiness is put at risk.

Conversely, one could concentrate most of one's efforts in preparation for the test to assure greater levels of mastery across the school population. But unquestioning compliance risks enlarging the surface of vulnerability, embeds further the harm wrought by a regime of standardized testing, and shifts the meaning and value of schooling to severely limited, questionable ends. Radical positions in either direction tend to generate equally extreme opposing positions.

Camus suggests that one takes a stand *in the midst of* what constitutes a present danger. A director of a new progressive charter school captured this stance and the challenges confronting him in the following journal entry:

> We've been thinking a lot about test scores recently. They are, of course, the essential piece of our continued survival, the currency of our deal with New York State. They will never be the thing that we value most or the way we really assess our students, but they will always be the sword hanging over our head, and something that we need to put a lot of thought and effort into so that we as a school can be as successful as we need to be. Test scores have not been so prominent in our thoughts as we gain solidity as a school and define who we are. We were glad to start with only kindergarten and first grade for many reasons, but among them is the fact that our kids won't be taking high-stakes tests until our third year. But that also means that the scores in our third and fourth year, the scores of our current kindergarten and first grade students, will determine whether we get our charter renewed or not.

Not long ago, a former graduate student of mine conducted an action research study in her school. The study focused on how teachers who value planning their inquiry-based curricula around themes and across disciplines and assessing student learning through portfolios, public presentations, and student research projects are coping with the steady onslaught of high stakes, disciplinary-based State Regents examinations. She called it "creative compliance." She found that her colleagues recognized that these examinations profoundly contradicted their

beliefs about how and what to teach, but they still prepared their students for the exams. At the same time, they preserved and protected alternative spaces that sustained and nourished their practice as progressive educators. Another teacher in a similar school has developed two ways of marking student essays: his own based upon his judgment honed over many years of teaching and the State Regents coding system (1 through 4). Each avoids unbending positions and ultimate solutions, and uses his or her professional expertise to navigate treacherous conditions and to fight back. They are resourceful, nuanced in their response to what troubles them.

The effect of standardization and the extent to which it has influenced life in schools requires that we be pragmatic. Pragmatism pulls us back from the disappointments that all too often follow in the wake of heroic resistance. In his discussion of Dewey, Rogers (2009, 61) puts it this way: "Our commitments thus have a socially constituted, constructed and contingent character." What the pragmatist is after in such a world is "attaining, if possible, workable solutions and decent human relations" (Burbules 1990, 477). The pragmatist accepts the challenge of exercising her freedom to know and to act without guarantees in a world always in the making. She acknowledges that gains might very well be offset by losses; that certainty can cripple one's capacity to act. The cautious, melioristic tendency of pragmatism set in an unsure world buttresses our fragility.

Yet this same pragmatic tendency risks tamping down the resolve needed to contest the uncertainty we all must face in one form or another. Camus strenuously resisted establishing ethical systems, codes, or principles to regulate and guide ethical conduct. For Camus, "Vital participation [in one's life] is both act and value" (Doubrovsky 1962, 74). This is powerfully rendered in *The First Man*, an autobiographical novel written by Camus (never actually finished; published posthumously in 1995). Jacques Cormery grows up fatherless in profound poverty in the company of a loving but mute mother. Jacques' search for the father he never knew does not end in some grand revelation about him or himself. But his desire for fulfillment and happiness through this search, his gratitude for those who guide him to become the person he is and help him escape the harsh, forbidding life of poverty he was born to, is palpable and compelling. The thick descriptions and textured portraits of his mother, grandmother, friends, relatives, and mentors draw us to something essential, something elemental about living well and living joyfully. Death may be around the corner, poverty may scar us permanently, loss and abandonment may leave us yearning for what never was; but in recognizing and opening up to the pain and suffering, we appreciate, affirm, and reach for life. Camus' ethics is about tapping into and embracing this vital force.

Sidney Hook (1974, 44-60) makes the point that not only is insecurity a reality that we must all contend with, it also contributes to the very quality of living a satisfying life. Insecurity arouses the zest to realize what matters to us. How we live with (or, better, in) insecurity speaks to our will to live a distinctive life, a courageous life of becoming. The everyday courage embedded in this position speaks to one's ongoing commitment to continually think of creative ways of responding to the dangers educators feel moved to confront.

Foucault provides some interesting and useful insights into how we might approach this. "Definitive" solutions become new ways of manipulating, codifying, and containing what is possible and warranted. Yet courage is more than saying no. It is an opportunity for creative engagement with oneself and with others.

One fights back with quiet courage, on ground that is neither high nor firm; experimenting, inventing in the midst of danger; attentive to the suffering one bears witness to. Such an ethic sees the self as text in the process of being written, as one strives to constitute oneself, despite the pull toward containment, prediction, and control. Foucault wants to keep ethical conduct open to respond flexibly to troubling situations. His call to be resourceful makes perfect sense in the present over-determined environments of public schools. Foucault remains hopeful that the imaginative capacities of persons to think differently about what is taken and accepted as true and false, if released and cultivated, will provide ample opportunities for decisive action in response to troubling constraints and taken-for-granted limitations. Both the action and the thinking that generated it are temporary, provisional, and open to further examination. Thinking, for Foucault, proliferates pos-

sible courses of action. He hitches his hopefulness to a restless, willful curiosity (see, for example, Foucault 1989, 198-199).

The dangers presented by schools to level all who enter to a deadening sameness, a single, narrowly construed standard of competence become the opportunities that can stir us to think and to act differently. As Foucault (1989, 198) once put it: "The mind is not soft wax; it's a reactive substance. And the desire to know more and better, and something else, grows with this attempt to stuff our skulls." To be vitally engaged in living, even as dominant forces attempt to thwart and confine us, requires fortitude to make a space for ourselves to test the limits of what is possible. It also requires faith in our creative capacity to come up with useful, interesting solutions to vexing problems wrought by standardization.

Those of us troubled by the increasing reliance on standardized practices as bottom-line measures of school success cannot afford to take refuge in a language of critique marked by stubborn negation and fixed positions. Courage, as I see it, requires faith in our capacity to come up with workable solutions to this condition, coupled with an awareness that our actions may not bring about the changes we desire to the extent we want. I am suggesting, further, that when we try to come to terms with what it means to act courageously in the current climate, that we be "open-textured." We may very well disagree about how best to apply the virtue of courage when taking into consideration specific cases even as we embrace common principles (Appiah 2006, 58). With both modesty and persistence we are called to continue to imagine ways of keeping the conversation going about alternatives, even as we remain open to revising and rethinking how best to proceed. How we manage to keep the conversation going may make all the difference.

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A Convergence of Educational Worlds

Chris Mercogliano

The educational practices of democratic schools incorporate all of the elements needed for real learning, thereby providing an opportunity for all children to be successful learners.

I recently attended a very interesting education conference, perhaps the first of its kind. The one-day "democratic education symposium" was cosponsored by the Brooklyn Free School, a multiracial freedom-based school for students K–12, and Medgar Evers College, a branch of the City University of New York that is well on its way to having the highest African American enrollment of any college in the nation. The two schools are located in adjacent Brooklyn neighborhoods and the day's activities took place in the education building at Medgar Evers.

What especially excited me about the conference was the convergence of several worlds that seldom interact: academia, public education, educators of color, and what is known today as "democratic education," meaning a model whereby students have a significant voice in the content of their education and the conditions under which it takes place.

The presentations, not surprisingly, reflected two somewhat parallel interpretations of what is meant by "democratic education." To the majority of education professors and public educators, the concept tended to mean *education for democracy*, with the emphasis on the role education as an institution plays — or fails to play — in a democratic society. For instance, keynote speaker Jean Anyon, who has extensively researched the political economy of education, addressed the ways in which public education continues to be an antidemocratic force in American society. However, according to Dr. Anyon, the school system itself is not primarily at fault. As long as our socioeconomic system keeps reproducing ever-higher levels of inequality, she argued, it does not matter how much reformers reformat curricula and raise standards. The data still shows that unless

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low-SES kids have access to the same social and economic resources as the children of the middle and upper classes, equal educational opportunity will remain a myth. Focusing on school reform in isolation, therefore, is largely a waste of time. Schools are simply along for the ride.

Michelle Fine, a colleague of Dr. Anyon's at the CUNY Graduate Center, struck a similar chord when she decried what she terms the growing "gentrification" of public education. Dr. Fine believes the charter school movement in New York City is in reality a quasi-privatization venture that is turning schools once available to everyone into boutique schools for children of privilege. Similarly, students Antonia Perez and Guido Girgente from Beacon High School, an application-based public alternative high school on Manhattan's Upper West Side, reported that the minority enrollment has declined from 45% to 34% since Beacon opened, with students with learning disabilities all but having disappeared. Furthermore, Perez and Girgente's efforts to force the administration to admit more students of color have met with veiled threats of expulsion.

Professors from the Medgar Evers School of Education faculty also paid special tribute to historian Howard Zinn by showing an excerpt from the 2004 documentary memoir, "You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train," in which Zinn testifies to the importance of becoming actively involved in history making. Zinn's (2004) last book, *Howard Zinn on Democratic Education*, contains much the same message, that one of the key purposes of education is to prepare students for citizenship in a democratic society by teaching them to look critically at history and to reach their own conclusions.

Meanwhile, the representatives from democratic schools tended to emphasize *education as democracy*, meaning a process that in and of itself is democratic. Jerry Mintz, the founder of a democratic school in 1968 and more recently of the Alternative Education Resource Organization, demonstrated how to conduct the democratic meetings that are one of the core practices distinguishing democratic schools from conventional schools. In this context, democratic meetings are decision-making forums run by Robert's Rules of Order in which students, teachers, and administrators discuss and vote on school rules and policies, with everyone possessing an equal vote. Here Mintz's goal was to bridge the gap between the public and democratic education worlds by explaining that democratic meetings can actually take place in almost any setting. As an example he described how the ping pong group he started inside a Long Island Boys and Girls Club governs itself democratically — sometimes in his absence and without any other adult involvement. His point was that the democratic meeting is a readily available tool that public school teachers can utilize to teach their students about the democratic process and to foster in them a sense of responsibility and enthusiasm for learning.

In another workshop, Roger Dennis, a retired New York City public school teacher and longtime advocate for democratic schools, and Jonah Canner, co-founder of the Fertile Grounds Project, which works both in and outside of school with urban teens at risk of dropping out because they have lost interest and focus, explained the other essential elements of the democratic education model: choice; self-directed, meaningful learning; and learning for learning's sake. Canner showed a video about the Hallway Project, an individualized program that he and Becky Raik designed to help traditionally unsuccessful public high school students stay in school and graduate. The key to the program's success, according to Canner, is that students design their own learning projects based on *their* lives and interests, as well as set their own goals and work at their own pace. This approach enables Hallway Project students not only to earn missing credits, but more importantly, to recover their desire to learn.

A small group of teachers, parents, and students from the Brooklyn Free School also attended the workshop, and they contributed a detailed description of how and why the democratic model works well with younger students too. It was in this session that perhaps the most interaction occurred between the separate worlds. The twenty or so Medgar Evers education students and public school educators in the room, most of whom had little or no reference point for schools in which children are entrusted with the responsibility for their own education, peppered the presenters with many of the questions commonly asked by the uninitiated: How do kids

learn in the absence of compulsory classes, homework, tests, and grades? What if they decide they just want to play all day? What happens when students get to high school? How about college? By the end of the Brooklyn Free School presentation, many of those who attended the workshop had been reassured to the point of eagerly asking if they could visit the school to see the democratic model in action.

My contribution to the day was an attempt to build a theoretical bridge between the different worlds by proposing that the conventional model of education itself is antidemocratic. The fact that the passive, content-based, carrot-and-stick approach of traditional schools is highly antagonistic to how children actually learn and grow, I argued, places privileged children at an enormous advantage because they come to school already possessing the skills, concepts, and information being covered. Meanwhile, students from low SES families depend on school to teach them what they need to know, and the methods that the schools use make learning difficult if not impossible for them. It's a classic case of Catch-22, which by definition refers to any paradoxical situation in which an element of the solution ultimately renders the problem unsolvable.

I based my analysis on recent discoveries in cognitive and neuroscience, biology, and psychology that confirm learning to be a highly *active* process based on the kinds of self-initiated discovery that occur naturally through lived experience. Moreover, the latest research shows that learning is far more than just an intellectual event. It involves children's physical, emotional, and social selves in equal measure; and it requires little or no extrinsic motivation. In fact, rewards and punishments only tend to get in learning's way.

The educational practices of democratic schools, on the other hand, incorporate all of the necessary ingredients of real learning, and therefore the democratic education model truly does provide the opportunity for all children to be successful learners. I held up the Brooklyn Free School as an excellent example of a school in which every child, regardless of race, class, or perceptual or emotional challenges, is engaged in the learning process on an equal basis.

I came away from the symposium feeling that, for a first attempt at bringing together professors of education, public school teachers, educators of color, and democratic educators, it was a great success. Members of the different groups found a variety of ways to exchange their points of view and to see each other in action. Those of us from the democratic education world were reminded of the powerful political and socioeconomic forces that determine the societal relationship between education and democracy, while the others had a chance to learn more about the ways in which education itself can be a democratic process. Thankfully, symposium organizers plan to make it an annual event, and I think future symposia promise to catalyze deeper levels of connection and cross-fertilization.

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Affirming the Value of the Child

A Spiritual Curriculum for Infant/Toddler Education

Frances J. Rofrano

Living in the now *with* the child is an important aspect of infant spirituality.

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In this article, spirituality is viewed as a relational process that provides the content for the young child to create the story of who they are and who they are becoming, the narrative self. Spirit is seen as the organizing force behind the creation of the child's narrative self as it emerges in relationships with adults, including professional caregivers/teachers in a daycare setting. Neither truncated by any particular religious dogma or based on feelings alone, the teacher can affirm the child's narrative self as the child reveals it to her and allow the child to see his/her life as valued, connected to others and ideas, and to have continuity and meaning. The manner in which the teacher holds the child's emotions, handles her body, and presents the world to her provides the data that spirit uses to organize the child's narrative.

In the past, the spiritual life of children from birth to age three emerged in the midst of family relationships. Today, it is common to see children as young as two months old spending part or all of their waking hours in out-of-home settings under the care of professional caregivers. This shift in the locus of care necessitates the creation of curriculum models that intentionally nurture the spiritual lives of young children if we are to create a holistic approach to early care/education that attends to the child's body, psyche, and spirit. While such a model incorporates the respected theories of quality care for young children (Copple & Bredekamp 2009), it differs from other models by intentionally considering the young child's spiritual growth as an integral part of child development and early childhood pedagogy. In this article I show how a curriculum that takes spirit seriously affirms the

value of who the child is and who the child is becoming. Consider this fictional scenario:

> It is 10 a.m. at a daycare center. Josh, 9 months old, is sitting at the table with caregiver A eating his snack. On the right side of the room caregiver B is changing Meredith, 22 months old, at the changing table. To the left side of the room Nora, 20 months, is sitting at a child-size table playing with a puzzle as a student intern sits close by observing her.
>
> Nora pushes the puzzle to the floor and walks over to the diaper-changing table and pulls caregiver B's pant leg. Caregiver B looks down at Nora, and says, "Hi Nora, have you come to say hello?"
>
> Nora looks up at caregiver B, makes a loud noise, and pulls harder on the caregiver's pant leg.
>
> Meredith, apparently not liking the interruption, pulls the caregiver's attention back to her saying, "No, no!" as she attempts to roll off the changing table.
>
> Caregiver B turns her attention back to Meredith. "Meredith, it seems you do not want me to pay attention to Nora but I think Nora has come to tell us something. I wonder what it is?"
>
> Nora pulls harder on the caregivers pant leg and makes a louder noise. "I hear you are making a very loud noise, Nora. I think you are trying to tell me something. I'll be with you as soon as I finish with Meredith," says caregiver B.
>
> Caregiver A looks in the direction of Nora and then back to Josh and says, "I wonder what Nora needs?" Josh smiles and continues to enjoy his snack.
>
> Nora walks to the small refrigerator and bangs on the door. "Oh!" say both caregivers, "are you hungry?"
>
> The student intern comes over to the refrigerator and looks inside with Nora. She removes Nora's lunch box and shows Nora what is inside. Nora smiles and takes out her sippy cup and starts to drink some milk.
>
> The intern asks, "Nora, do you want something to eat, too?"
>
> Nora shakes her head up and down, sippy cup in place, and opens her eyes wide. The intern invites Nora to place the container of food in the microwave and press the button to turn it on. Nora smiles, goes to the shelf where the bibs are kept, and then moves towards the table.
>
> The intern says to Nora, "Let's get a space ready for you at the table." She then picks her up to sit around the common table. She helps Nora put on the bib that Nora has chosen. The intern then hands Nora a small sponge to clean her space on the table. She says to Nora, "As soon as the bell rings on the microwave, your pasta will be ready."
>
> Nora plays with the sponge and shows it to caregiver A and Josh. She wiggles in her chair holding the sponge in the air and then places the sponge in her mouth. Nora removes the sponge and laughs at Josh who smiles in return. (At this point the adults are also smiling.) The bell goes off and Nora turns her head towards the microwave. "Oh-oh" says Nora pointing to the microwave. "That bell tells me your pasta is ready, Nora," says the intern.
>
> Nora turns back to Josh and throws the sponge across the table and onto the floor. "I can see you are very excited about eating your pasta, Nora," says the student intern, "you must be very hungry. However, the sponge needs to go into the to-be-washed container, not on the floor."
>
> The intern picks up the sponge and offers Nora the appropriate container and Nora throws it in. The intern places the pasta in front of Nora and sits down beside her as she and Nora talk about the pasta, how Nora's mommy prepared it for her, and how Josh was smiling at her.

The Process is Dialogical

To take spirit seriously is to argue that it is related to the heart of what it means to be human. The young child is born not knowing there is a reality beyond themselves (Winnicott 1971). At this point, spirit is

first manifested as I/Spirit in the mirroring of the infant as *Thou* by the caregiver/teacher before the young child has distanced the world and knows he is separate yet connected to it (Rofrano 2007). There comes a time when the child recognizes the caregiver as separate from himself, and a dialogical relationship becomes possible. In a dialogical relationship one human being speaks to the other about a common content. He brings his being to the other and receives the other's being as revealed by the other. But the speaker goes beyond this perception to receive the other as a partner and thus confirms his being. By accepting the other as a partner the speaker has confirmed the other as a person (Buber 1970).

In an infant/toddler and caregiver relationship the common content is the development of the child's body, mind, and spirit. The child comes to the relationship presenting herself just as she is at that point in time. This presentation need not always be verbal. The caregiver must brings her full presence to the child and receive the child as revealed by the child. The caregiver allows the reality of the child to rise up in herself, allowing the whole child to be truly present to her as she offers her genuine self to the child. But the caregiver must go beyond acceptance of the child's presence and receive the child as a partner in creating their world. By accepting the child as a partner, the caregiver affirms the young child as a person. Infant/toddler spiritual education then becomes a dialogical process that opens a space between the caregiver and the child for the child to receive the information from her interactions with everything in the environment. This space is not in the world nor in the infant but in "the between" of a relationship to which both the child and the teacher contribute. It is in the teacher's receiving of the child's emerging sense of self and the giving of the teacher's genuine self that the child is affirmed in being and can go on being in a healthy way towards wholeness. The spiritual life of the child emerges in dialogical relationship with a caring adult even though the relationship is limited in mutuality (Berry 1970).

In the scenario at the beginning of this article, we can witness the dialogical process in the manner in which the caregiver/teachers interact with Josh, Meredith, and Nora. While it may seem trivial, the fact that the caregiver is sitting and talking with Josh at the table is significant. Caregiver A has brought her presence to Josh and affirms him in what he is doing. Taking the time to allow the child to eat at his own pace tells the child that what he is doing and how he is doing it is important enough for an adult to participate in his activity.

Cumulatively, moments like this one are empowering for the child. All too often we witness children eating alone while caregivers spend time in other tasks or hurrying children along, treating snack time as something to get through so other "more important" things can be done. Living in the now *with* the child is an important aspect of infant spirituality. This simple yet affirming experience will become part of the emerging narrative Josh is creating about himself.

At the changing table, the caregiver is not just physically changing Meredith's diaper. She is engaged in conversation with her about what is happening. The caregiver speaks to Meredith to let her know that the interruption is to assist Nora. She is not told to stay still as she protests by rolling over on the table. Caregiver B responds to Meredith's movements from Meredith's point of view and responds to what the child is revealing. She does this by telling Meredith that Nora has come to tell "us" something and then wonders aloud what that might be. Meredith is given the message that her physical movement has been recognized and that her protest about losing the caregiver's attention has been heard. She is important enough to be told why the caregiver's attention is being diverted. This validates the children's emerging sense of self and becomes part of Meredith's narrative.

Attending to the Child's Body

Over the past twenty years, researchers have been conducting in-depth studies in infant/toddler brain development and the brain's connection to the overall development of young children. They tell us that the infant is born with about 2 million miles of neural fibers in the brain (Siegel 1991). The development of the complexities of the young child's brain depend on the firing of these neurons to form links creating patterns and strong pathways in the brain. The construction of the young child's brain is dependent on the child's genetic information and early experi-

ences. The experiences the young child has with caring adults and other children play a significant role in the physical development of the emerging brain and how its pathways are wired into patterns for emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual development (Newberg, D'Aquila & Rause 2001). How a child is responded to, spoken with, and held physically and emotionally all contribute to the wiring of the child's brain. From birth the young child is creating mental maps, a memory, of who they are.

> Because the infant has the neural circuitry available in a developing but already functional form for implicit memory (emotional, perceptual, and bodily modalities), this form of memory is available from birth, and probably even before. (Siegel & Hartzell 2004, 35)

Some researchers have come to believe that a child's biography becomes his/her biology (Siegel & Hartzel 2004).

Let us examine how the caregivers in this scenario attend to the child's bodily needs. In this daycare classroom, lunchtime happens when the child is aware that she is hungry, not necessarily at noon or any other designated time convenient for the staff. Nora goes to caregiver B and tugs on her pant leg; she wants to tell her something. Nora knows from past experience that she can signal the teacher when she feels hungry. Nora makes the decision to make her need for help clearer by going to the refrigerator where she and her mother placed her lunch box that morning. She continues to direct the process by choosing her bib and by preparing her space for her pasta. This experience tells the child that she has agency, that she can initiate a process and direct its movement. These then are the pathways and patterns being strengthened in the child's brain. This is part of Nora's story.

Attending to the Child's Psyche

A spiritual curriculum for infants and toddlers supports the relationship between spirit and the components of the psyche: emotions, memory, and images. While the components of the psyche are not in themselves spiritual, the meaning the child makes of the experience and the value he places upon them is the work of spirit. "Because of its interaction with spirit, human psyche can be said to be enspirited" (Helminiak 1996, 141). Since the young child creates his emerging narrative self in relation with others, for better or worse, the other's response to the outwardly expressed components of psyche mirror back to the child who he is and is becoming. This data becomes part of the narrative the child is creating. Let us look again the short exchange between Meredith, the caregiver, and Nora.

Honoring Meredith's feelings of being ignored as Nora interrupts the dialogue that had been going on between her and caregiver A, it was important for caregiver A to let the Meredith know in word and action that the emotion being experienced was real and that it was okay to experience it. Honoring the child's emotion may take the form of verbally or physically presenting the child with choices for coping. Here the caregiver with touch and words assured Meredith that that she was close by as she explained to Meredith the reason for the interruption. She further let Nora and Meredith know that Meredith was to get her attention when she told Nora that she would help her when she was finished caring for Meredith.

Knowingly or not, the caregiver was providing a natural opportunity for Nora to decide how she would take care of herself while she was waiting. Nora's choice was to move the process forward by going to the refrigerator. When these moments arise they afford the opportunity for the children to learn that they can comfort themselves, that they can be participants in creating their psychic world. This data is encoded in their body and memory to create the awareness of a pattern of self as competent and cared for. Spirit as reflecting and nonreflecting consciousness will draw on this emotional data to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about other emotions in the future. Spirit works with this information, creating a narrative of who the child is and organizes the construction of who the child will become. Other children, like Josh, observing this encounter are able to feel and to some extent learn about dialogical relationships. The spiritual climate created by this scenario is as real to the young children as the blocks they might be playing with on the floor. It is common for verbal toddlers to tell their parents exactly what happened during the day to other children, when at the time the episode was

happening, it appeared they were not paying any attention to what was going on at all.

Let us further examine Nora's behavior at the dinning table. The teacher and the other children appear to appreciate Nora's sense of humor as she places the sponge in her mouth, yet the intern sets the boundary as she picks up the sponge and requests that Nora place it in the "to be washed" container. Nora is not told not to put the sponge in her mouth and not to throw the sponge on the floor, rather she is given a caring direction and told what she can do with the sponge. While in a dialogical relationship the caregiver views the world through the child's eyes and accepts responsibility for the relationship. There are times when the caregiver must set boundaries for the child's behavior. Telling Nora what she can do with the sponge affirms Nora as having a right to choose her actions and also tell her that there are limits to those choices.

The Nature and Function of Spirit

In *The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit,* Daniel A. Helminiak, a professor of psychology and theology, defines the human as a complex system of systems. Differing from the dual model of body and mind, he contends the human is tripartite: a complex of organism, psyche, and spirit. According to Helminiak (1996, 13), spirit is an open-ended human reality, the grand organizer of the integrated internal life of the human being, a "peculiar awareness that conditions the highest functioning of the human mind." Spirit manifests itself in human life through the human's reflecting and nonreflecting consciousness. Reflecting consciousness is intentional and is directed toward an object. Nonreflecting consciousness is the awareness of our *awareness of ourselves* as experiencing subjects. Without nonreflecting consciousness, we would not know that we are experiencing anything.

We have seen the children in this scenario intentionally directing their attention to their own needs, to their caregivers as they meet the children's needs, and looking to other children for validation of their actions when Nora turned to Josh looking for a response to her attempt at humor. The affirming messages sent by the caregivers about who the child is and is becoming are framing their awareness of themselves as aware subjects. Due to this peculiar awareness "… to know an object is to know yourself experiencing that object" (Helminiak 1996, 63).

According to Helminiak, spirit unfolds in human beings, including the young, on four levels: awareness, understanding, judgment, and decision. While the very young child has snapshots of care encoded during the first year and a half of life, it is not until they are two that this implicit memory is integrated by a part of the brain called the hippocampus. With the development of the hippocampus, the mind is able to connect experiences and begin to make sense of these representations. "The hippocampus thus serves as a cognitive mapper, creating associational linkages between perception (sight, sound, touch) and conception (ideas, notions, theories)" (Siegel & Hartzell 2004, 35).

In the scenario we have been examining, we have seen how a curriculum that takes spirit seriously provides multiple opportunities for infants/toddlers to experience the unfolding of spirit on these four levels through dialogical relationships with their caregivers and teachers. Nora certainly was aware of her need to eat. She was also aware, from her memory mapped in her brain, that she could initiate a process to meet this need. She decided to approach caregiver B and made the decision to tell the caregiver/teacher that she needed assistance. As spirit unfolds in the daily life of the infant/toddler, the infant is encoding all of this data in her body and psyche to construct the story of who she is and will become. This dialogical process is truly at the heart of the learning process for these young children whose curriculum is their own psychosomatic integration and their coming to be a person.

Concluding Thoughts

This article has offered professional caregivers and teachers a curriculum model that seeks to affirm the value of infants/toddlers by providing ways of working with young children that open spaces for the emergence and development of the young child's body, psyche, and spirit. Considering the shift in locus of care for infants/toddlers from the family to out-of-home care and what we now know about the developing brain of very young children, it is the responsibility of early childhood educators to take the

spirit seriously and to consider spiritual development as an integral part of child development and early childhood pedagogy. While other curricula that aim to provide quality care for infants and toddlers are concerned with content, process, and outcomes, this curriculum model is concerned with the role spirit plays in the creation of the content, process, and outcome. In this spiritual curriculum model, the *content* is the physical, psychic, and spiritual development of the infant/toddler. Though limited in mutuality, the *process* is dialogical, set in a nesting of caring relationships throughout the daycare center. The intended *outcome* is infants and toddlers who come to know themselves as valued human beings with agency, voice, competence, and as participants in the creation of their world.

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Interview with Alan Shusterman, Founder of The School for Tomorrow

Sara Bennett

What a school that is connected to the real world and is focused on the real needs of students might look like.

Sara Bennett: Alan, can you tell me a little bit about your background and why you decided to start a school?

Alan Shusterman: I was a public school kid, always a good student but never particularly engaged in school. I was able to get A's despite myself. Growing up I loved hanging out with kids younger than me, I set up school for my younger sister and taught her how to read, and I always had the teaching bug.

But because I was a good student, I ended up at the University of Pennsylvania, and becoming a teacher was never on the horizon. Back then, before Teach for America, it wasn't culturally acceptable for someone graduating from an Ivy League school to go into teaching. So, instead, I went to Harvard Law School. As history would have it, Barack Obama was in my class at Harvard; as luck would have it, I didn't befriend him.

Every little aspect of my life story has informed my philosophy of education, including having gone to Penn and Harvard and seeing firsthand what the best and brightest secondary school graduates are like and do. Of course this is an overgeneralization, but, in general, the students who succeed in high school arrive to college narrow-minded, conformist, and supporters of the status quo. That President Obama, for one, has turned out to be a rather conventional politician, especially with respect to education, has not surprised me, given his educational pedigree.

Alan Shusterman lives in Chevy Chase, MD, with his wife and three children. He is the founder of School for Tomorrow, an independent nonprofit secondary school (grades 6-12) located in Rockville, which opened the Fall of 2009 with 18 students, and three full-time and six part-time teachers.

Sara Bennett, the co-author of *The Case Against Homework*, is the founder of Stop Homework, a project devoted to changing homework policy and practice. Her website is <www.stophomework.com>. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, with her husband and two children.

With my law degree I got a well-paying job in a big law firm — and ended up, at the age of 25, having what I describe as "a mid-life crisis." I was miserable and unfulfilled. So, I made the "radical" decision — that is, radical to my peers — to leave my first law firm job in under a year. For years I regretted going to law school but, as it turned out, the variety of work experiences I had over the next decade — in the legal and business and for-profit and nonprofit worlds — were invaluable. And there's no way I'd be sitting here today, the founder of a unique new school, without them.

The big turning point came eight years ago, when I was trying to decide what to do next. One day my father began a conversation with "Alan, you've always wanted to teach." And then he and my mother offered me this incredible opportunity to make the transition into teaching, with financial support from them; without that, I'd never have been able to do it, for at that point my wife and I had three young kids to support.

I was fortunate to get a job at Sandy Spring Friends School [in Montgomery County, Maryland], a well respected Quaker private school, teaching U.S. history to 7th and 8th graders. I had never taught a day in my life and I had never taken an education class, but very quickly I figured out that I loved teaching, and that I had at last found my calling. Almost as quickly, however, I figured out that there's something very wrong with secondary schools as they exist today.

Secondary schools are completely disconnected from the real world. It's as if they are in a parallel universe. This results in outdated curriculum that does not make sense for the world our high school graduates will be entering and a learning environment that doesn't take advantage of all that today's world has to offer. For example, most schools today, whether public or private, will proudly show you their wonderful state-of-the-art computer labs or their mobile carts. Yet, in the real world, computers aren't relegated to a special room or occasion, but are integrated into everyday life. And then there are the computer or technology classes where what is taught has already been learned by the students, on their own, years before.

Which leads me to the second, even more profound, disconnect between schools and between many of the adults in schools and students. Schools relate to and treat these complex, evolving individuals, the students, in unreal, artificial ways by expecting them to do things that simply don't make sense, yet not expecting them to do other things they are fully capable of; and by regularly placing them in restrictive, suffocating "boxes."

So I decided, within the first few months of teaching at Sandy Spring, that someday I would start my own school. I imagine that had I gone straight into teaching from college, I'd have been one of those teachers who spends his career trying to buck the system, or who ends up burning out and leaving the profession. But, because I was 37 at the time, and had so much real world experience behind me, I could see everything with a fresh perspective and, perhaps more importantly, I had the ability to envision and ultimately create a different type of school.

A few years later, I left teaching, I homeschooled my 4th grader for a year because her 3rd grade year in school had been so debilitating, and I began full-fledged planning to get my own school started. After working full-time for the next two years to get it off the ground,The School for Tomorrow at last opened this past September.

Sara: What does the physical space of SFT look like?

Alan: This year we are subletting three very large carpeted, windowed classrooms in a former public school building, with additional classrooms available for us in future years. We have our own bathrooms and hallway, as well as an administrative office. We also have shared use of a large multi-purpose room, library, and other parts of the building. Outside there are a great soccer field, a full basketball court, two playgrounds, and nice open space.

Our classrooms are designed to be multi-purpose, with lots of different workspaces and configurations possible. All of our classrooms contain a lot of IKEA furniture, assembled by both staff and students, as well as desktop computers and wireless internet; all of our students have laptops. One of our classrooms has a nice home theatre setup, another has most of our growing book collection, and another is where we do most of our art and science and other messy activities. Like everything else at SFT, we are continually transforming and improving our physical space.

Sara: Tell me about School for Tomorrow. What makes it unique?

Alan: Everything we do here at SFT can be traced back to two core questions. First, what does a high school graduate need to know and be able to do in order to thrive in college, the work place, and life in the decades ahead? Second, what are the most effective and efficient ways for students in general, and each student in particular, to master the learning outcomes resulting from the answer to the first question?

I've yet to find any other school that seriously addresses these fundamental questions. Quite simply, asking these questions is what makes SFT unique and results in a school that is relevant to today's world and makes sense for today's students. And the good news is that the answers are already out there — in work done by others within and outside the education world. For instance, over the past decade at least three or four well-funded, compelling studies have been completed that address the first question. Most schools, however, completely ignore or pay lip service to them. But, unlike 20 years ago when they'd be sitting on a shelf somewhere growing dusty, now they're sitting on the Web, available for anyone like me to utilize.

Sara: Do you have a curriculum?

Alan: Yes, there are three main areas of curriculum, in the sense of required learning outcomes, that result from asking our first core question.

First, reading, writing, and arithmetic still matter. Or, put another way, all students must master what we call the transferable academic skills of learning — that is, how to ask the right questions, problem solve, find information and understand it in whatever form it is found, analyze, use, and be able to communicate the information in writing, orally, and with the assistance of multi-media tools. In addition, the research shows that there's a certain level of quantitative reasoning and mathematics that is beneficial for all students to master.

Second, we have a core knowledge component. That's the basic foundational knowledge that someone needs so they can then apply their generic learning skills if they want or need to learn more about a given subject. For example, our U.S. history requirement isn't a one-year course that covers all you can cram into a textbook and 150 45-minute class periods. Instead, it's a pared down mix of key concepts, storylines, and facts that might take a student, say, 20 hours to learn. Through this core knowledge approach, we enable our students to more effectively understand and retain important background information and concepts, and cover many more subjects than in regular schools.

Third is what we refer to as our right brain curriculum. At SFT, drama, music, art, emotional intelligence, character, collaboration, conflict resolution, physical fitness, and mind–body work are treated as seriously as traditional academic subjects. In the 21st century, from a purely economic, earning potential point of view, all students must be given the opportunity to develop their right brain, as well as their left brain skills and abilities.

On top of this well-rounded education, every SFT student will have time to exhaustively pursue whatever study she's most passionate about. For example, we will arrange internships for our students and bring real world experts into the school. Kids are capable of doing amazing things before they're 18 if given the opportunity. We will break through the ceiling that holds kids down in other schools.

Sara: Do you have "bottom-line" requirements?

Alan: Our students will have to meet specific graduation requirements that fall under each of the three main areas of curriculum that I told you about. Where student choice and individualization come into play is how they choose to meet the requirements. For instance, all SFT student are required to master algebra and geometry; but how they do it, and when they do, will naturally vary greatly among them.

Sara: How does this work?

Alan: First and foremost, we recognize that every student is different, and that the same student is different depending on the week, the month, and the year. So, every single student must have his own individualized learning path that allows him to learn at the pace and in the way that makes sense for him. And, given all the resources and knowledge that we have to assist learning in today's world, this absolutely can be done.

Second, more often than not, you'll see interdisciplinary learning at SFT, which is much more mean-

ingful and efficient than the automatic division of the school experience into artificial subject matter pods. You will also see multi-age groupings of students. For instance, if we have a 14-, a 12-, and a 10-year-old who are each ready to learn calculus, then there's no reason they can't learn it together. On the other hand, if they haven't yet mastered pre-algebra, then we don't push them into algebra until they're ready. Moreover, multi-age groupings help to facilitate something we continually promote at SFT: kids teaching and learning from each other. Kids tend to accept help from each other more readily than from adults and, perhaps more significantly, teaching others is the best way to consolidate your own learning.

Which brings me to the role of the adult teachers at SFT, which is very different than at other schools. Traditional teachers basically play three roles: subject matter expert, behavior monitor (or classroom manager, as we refer to it in the business), and judge (Who is smart? Who is stupid?). Of course, great teachers transcend those three roles. But, unfortunately, truly great teachers are few and far between.

At SFT — and this is how it should be in every school — teachers are first and foremost facilitators of learning. What matters is whether we help the students progress in their learning, not what supervisors or colleagues or we think about our "performance." In doing so, our default position — which is the opposite of the traditional micromanagement teaching approach — is that we want our students to be as independent as possible; at the same time, we're there to provide direction and support when it's needed.

The second main role that SFT teachers play is that of modeling what it's like to be a respectful, caring, contributing member of a community and a true lifelong learner. Our teachers model that it's okay not to know something, that it's okay to make mistakes, that, in fact, the most meaningful, significant learning takes place through making mistakes. Most students at other schools are programmed to spend the day trying to avoid making mistakes or revealing what they don't know. At SFT, however, we're creating the opposite culture, one which leads to a challenging but safe learning environment.

Sara: How else are you different from most schools?

Alan: Well, as you've probably figured out already, I can go on and on and on. But I know our time is limited. So, for now, I'll mention only a few more differences.

Research shows, and anyone with common sense knows, that kids learn best when they've had a decent night's sleep and are well fed and well hydrated. The SFT school day starts at 9:30. We have healthy snacks available throughout the day so our students can eat when they're hungry, and we have water coolers in our classrooms so they can get drinks when they're thirsty. Our students are allowed to get up to stretch, to move around, to go outside when they get antsy.

The general rule at SFT is we don't care what your learning looks like — for example, you can chew gum in class or listen to an iPod when working independently — as long as you're making sufficient progress in your work and you're not disturbing anyone else.

Sara: What's your homework policy?

Alan: We have what we refer to as "a sensible homework policy." The only mandatory homework is a half hour of reading a night — reading of the student's own choosing. Beyond that, there is no built-in daily homework at SFT. To be clear, our students will, on occasion, do school-related work at home, but the rule is that, before doing any school-related work at home, students should know why they are doing it and what they are supposed to be doing. If they don't, then they should stop, not waste their time and energy, and check with a teacher the next day.

Exploring Hope and the Inner Life Through Journaling

Sheri R. Klein

Multimedia journals give students an opportunity to arrive at the deeper self-understanding and self-awareness important to becoming an effective teacher.

Sheri R. Klein is a Professor in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stout where she has taught art/design, art education, and teacher education courses. She has published widely about reflective practices and the integration of art and technology into teacher education.

As a teacher educator and artist, I am interested in creating opportunities for students to arrive at greater self-awareness and understanding. I believe that human consciousness is always evolving, that the soul needs tending, that wisdom is as important as knowledge, and that connection to the inner life matters for educators, health professionals, and other practitioners whose work involves the development of human potential.

Krishnamurti (1981, 15) wrote, "Education should awaken the capacity to be self aware" and Parker Palmer (2007) writes about teaching as a spiritual journey. If we think about development as a spiral process rather than linear process, it is then possible at any time to revisit knowledge, experience, and memories with new insights and greater self-awareness and understanding.

Yet, the current state of teacher education has aligned with a business model of education (Johnson et al., 2005) and adherence to external standards and accrediting agencies drive curriculum, program revisions, professional goal setting and development. This presents many challenges for teacher educators to offer students alternative theories and methods, such as holistic education. Nor does it readily "enable [future or practicing] teachers to think contemplatively or imaginatively about teaching" (Klein 2008, 111). Yet, the role of the self and personal development is integral to identity and professional development of pre-service and practicing teachers (Hamachek 1999). Korthagen (2004, 94) supports an approach to teacher education that "incorporates insights from transpersonal and positive psychology" and assists in developing teachers' "core qualities."

However, pre-service teacher education has largely ignored the development of the inner life of teachers' self-awareness and self-understanding as central to becoming a teacher. Parker Palmer (2007, 18-19) writes, "We teach them [K-16 students] that the subjective self is unvalued" and "the split of personhood from practice is encouraged by an academic culture that distrusts personal truth." This "split of personhood from practice" is seen in teacher education which emphasizes methods and strategies that do not fully consider the relationships between preservice teachers' values, emotions, beliefs, dreams and hopes and their intended practices as teachers.

O'Sullivan (2005, 72) reminds us that "hope is needed for survival but along with surviving we need critical vision." We need teachers who are capable of envisioning and working toward a better world. In doing so, the teacher becomes an artist and a creator of the world as he/she wishes it to be. Teaching then becomes grounded in moral vision.

In *Hope and Education*, Halpin (2003, 12) writes, "hope has largely been left to psychologists and theologicans … it is a neglected concept in the academic study of education," including teacher education. Perhaps it is because hope has been identified as a religious/Christian theological virtue that it has been marginalized within secular public education. Yet, it is the secular interpretation of hope that I wish to concentrate on with applications for teacher education. This interpretation involves "anticipating future happiness and trusting in the present" (Halpin 2003, 14) and moving toward "prospects for [educational] reform and renewal" (Halpin 2003, 17).

Journaling as Contemplative Inquiry

Preservice teachers from a variety of discplines explored the concept of hope within the context of a general foundations of education course. Journaling was used by students to contemplate their beliefs about a number of educational issues, including their hopes about becoming a teacher.

While journals have been used widely in methods courses across disciplines (Cohen 2005; Grauer & Sandell 2000; Roland 1995), this journal assignment had multiple aims. First, it was to provide an opportunity for expression of "students ideas, experiences, attitudes, and feelings" (Cohen 2005, 145) in their choice of written, visual and/or audio media. Second, the journal framework provided a structure for students to look inward to contemplate (observe their feelings, suspend judgment, ponder, imagine, discern and see deeply). As such, journaling becomes a form of *contemplative inquiry* "based not on data, information, and the separation of subject, but on knowledge, wisdom and insight" (Haynes n.d., 5) as well as feelings, intentions, dreams, memories, values, and hopes.

Six out of the 13 questions focused on inner experience and allowed for creative and metaphorical thinking, and visualization and reflection on the moral and spiritual dimensions of teaching, such as

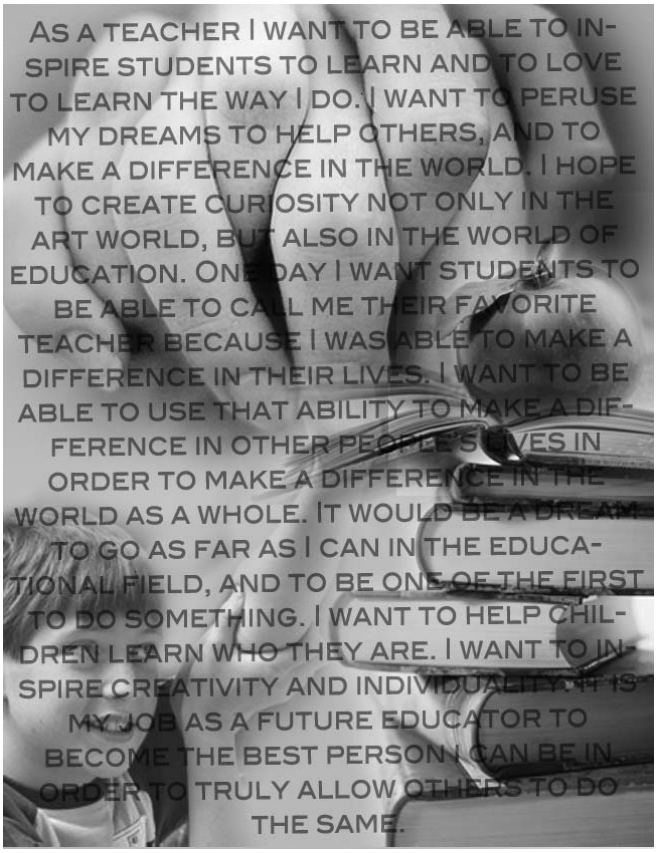
- What are some memorable experiences you have of a past teacher?
- What are your motivations for teaching?
- What do you consider to be the most important virtues and values for becoming a teacher?
- What is your metaphor about teaching?
- How would you assist students to connect to their inner lives with the aim of self-understanding?
- What is your hope as teacher?

The remaining seven questions focused on course/text content relative to teacher/student roles and responsibilities, laws governing education, school funding issues, curriculum/assessment, and school violence.

Of the 48 students, 46 kept full journals; two journals were incomplete and were not used in the analyses. Data analysis of written responses was guided by content analysis (Van Manen 1997) with the aim of understanding the respondents' meaning. I looked for words and phrases and emerging themes within and across responses: What are your hopes for being a teacher?

Eight students responded to this question with a collage or drawing. Thirteen students expressed their hopes in poetry. Almost half of the students chose to respond to the question in a creative, non-linear and artistic way. Students' responses to

this question suggested highly idealistic and altruistic visions for teaching. They also viewed teaching as embracing the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual domains. Their hopes include leading, directing and "teaching kids things" as well as to "awaken minds,"



Digital collage by art student Andrea Wojnowski. Used with permission.

"encourage," "create safe environments" and "send positive messages." They also hoped to "inspire students," and "help students find their calling," "to have all students succeed," and "to start a dream."

Poetry and artwork also offered opportunities for students to contemplate their hopes in different ways. Excerpts from students' poetic responses included rhyming poems such as "Become a role model from the start, and support them with my listening heart" and "Watching children blossom and grow makes a teacher's heart melt like snow." Another student explored the haiku format. Yet another student explored metaphor in the poem that expressed her "hopes as a teacher are to teach to the seasons, "to be like spring, encouraging new growth … to be like summer with a sunny disposition … to be like autumn with vibrancy and fun … to be like winter, foster growth in times of hardship." Students' visual works included hand-drawn, mixed media and digital photo and text collages. One collage included here speaks to the idealism and altrusim of this future teacher.

Motivations and Metaphors

As I looked across the responses from the question about hope, and the question "What are your motivations for becoming a teacher?" it was clear that students expressed idealism and altruism in their desire to help and share with others; they had "an inner need to reach out to people." As I looked at the responses to the question, What is your metaphor for teaching? I was struck by their variety. Teachers were seen as nuturers/guides, technicians, and artists/creators. Nurturers included gardeners, parents, and farmers who "tend to seeds," "water them with curiosity," and "guide them through the storm." Technicans included mechanics who "need the right tools." Artist/creators included composers whose students are various instruments, architects, cooks who "don't stick to recipes," and where "students are flavors," painters whose "world is our canvas on which we make our mark," and other ignitors of creativity "who teach students to keep the fire burning in themselves." Another category of metaphors described teaching as an activity, event, or thing, for example "like riding a horse," "an eco-system," "stargazing," or "a box of chocolates." It is clear from the wide range of responses and metaphors that students overall believe that teaching involves attending to the whole person/student and that teaching involves the body (physical presence), mind (knowledge) and spirit (capacity to inspire and dream).

Conclusion

Journaling as contemplative inquiry allowed students to express their ideas, beliefs, and hopes creatively, in some cases visualizally, and in many cases poetically and metaphorically. The journal questions allowed for inner searching with opportunities to connect deeply with the students' desires, hopes, and dreams. Their responses reveal that they were able to think beyond the technical paradigms about teaching and acknowledge that teaching can be cre-

ative yet unpredictable when "things out of your control," emotional in that it "has highs and lows," and even a fragile and precious organism ("ecosystem") that needs care.

I hope that these students in turn engage their own students in the practice of exploring hope and contemplative inquiry. Halpin (2003, 123-125) suggests hope can be put back into education by "taking hopelessness seriously and taking the moral virtues of teaching seriously." Perhaps we need to also ask students what they feel hopeless about, so that we can minimize, and eradicate cynicism, apathy, despair and pessimism.

Journaling as contemplative inquiry in this one pedagogical encounter yielded some promising outcomes. As a holistic writing strategy, multimedia journals can also offer students opportunities to come up with fresh insights and arrive at deeper self-understanding and self-awareness.

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Teacher Support and Revival in Waldorf-Inspired Classrooms

Mary Goral

Many of the methods used in Waldorf education are equally effective in traditional classrooms.

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We all know that what will transform education is not another theory, another book, or another formula but educators who are willing to seek a transformed way of being in the world. (Parker Palmer 1999, 15)

Most individuals go into teaching for reasons of the heart and, in a purely metaphysical way feel they are "called to teach." They have an inner desire to change the world. They love children, love the way they feel when they are with children, or as Bill Ayers (1995, 8) put it "they become teachers because they love the world enough that they want to show that love to others…. I teach in the hope of making the world a better place."

However, something happens along the way that drains even well-meaning educators of their initial passion for teaching and learning. Matthew Fox (2006) believes our educational system is stuck in the modern tradition of seeking knowledge, rather than seeking meaning. Because we live in a postmodern world, it is crucial that we extract ourselves from the current paradigm and move from "miseducation to mindful education" (Fox 2006, 27). Those who write about the infusion of spirituality into education call for an opening of the heart so that we may once again instill meaning, wonder, and awe into the education of our children. They suggest valuing community over competition, caring and compassion within academics, and an infusion of the arts into the curriculum (Kessler 2000; Noddings 2005; Florio & Williams 2008). In order for education to truly change, educators have to change the way they live, move, and have their being in and out of the classroom. "What we seek is a way of working illumined by spirit and infused with soul," says Parker Palmer (1999, 15).

"How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching

comes?" asks Samuel Intrator (2002, 155). Through Intrator's work with Parker Palmer's Courage to Teach program, he found that attention to the teacher's inner life can make the difference between a teacher dropping out and a teacher becoming revitalized in his or her work and rededicated to the profession.

Similar in intent to Palmer's Courage to Teach, another smaller local program is alive and well in our large, urban, Midwestern city. The city's school district has a number of teachers who are members of the Waldorf-inspired Cadre, a group of innovative public educators who integrate Waldorf-inspired methods into their classrooms. The teachers involved in the Cadre have found renewed meaning in their work. They report that their work with Waldorf-inspired pedagogy and methods has not only kept them in teaching, but has changed and deepened their practice. This article tells the story of the support and revival of the Cadre teachers, including information about the Cadre community, how teachers found renewed joy in their work and how Waldorf education has enhanced their own inner development.

Mode of Inquiry/Research Question

This article reports the findings of a qualitative research project based on ten case studies of urban public school teachers who use Waldorf-inspired methods in their public elementary school classrooms. Due to the unique nature of the work of teachers in the Cadre, I used a combination of qualitative and interpretive methodologies. Qualitative methodology is consonant with my own set of values and assumptions concerning the nature of social reality and the way in which social research should be conducted.

Interpretive methodology allows the researcher to not only immerse herself in the lives and settings of others, but also to use a variety of methods to collect and analyze data. The research question, "What has been your personal experience with Waldorf education?" was posed to teachers who had been members of the Cadre for at least three years. Data was collected through personal interviews and field notes taken during classroom visits. Each teacher was interviewed once for about an hour. Teachers were visited at least twice, with each site visit lasting from one to three hours. In order to verify and triangulate the collection of data, field notes were collected and examined along with relevant written documents, student work, and photographs. These methodologies provide demographic, historical, and personal information that is often unavailable through other means of data collection (Glesne & Peshkin 1992).

Particular themes emerged from the research, such as the power of the Cadre community, a renewed joy in teaching, a deepening of the teachers' spiritual lives, and by teachers' self-report, the fact that the Cadre program actually kept teachers in their profession.

The Cadre Community

The Waldorf-inspired Cadre began with a question after one administrator was introduced to the methods used in private Waldorf schools and found them engaging, developmentally appropriate, academically focused, and seamlessly integrated. A long-term proponent of the arts in education, this administrator saw the intentionality behind the artistic methods used in a Waldorf school and believed that public school students and teachers could also benefit from more than 70 years of Waldorf experience. With this in mind, she conferred with another colleague who knew about Waldorf education and sked her how Waldorf-inspired methods could be introduced into our public schools.

She learned that the Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, CA, had held its first two-week institute on Waldorf-inspired practices in the public schools the previous summer. Specifically developed for public school teachers, this institute immersed teachers in the arts-based methods used in private Waldorf schools. The administrator traveled with two district teachers to California during the summer of 1994. That experience changed her life and that of the two teachers.

After the three educators arrived home, they immediately began to brainstorm how they could bring their newfound knowledge and understanding of Waldorf education to other public school teachers. With this intention, the Waldorf-inspired Cadre was born. In the group's early years (1994–2002), Cadre teachers met monthly for support and professional

development. As the project grew and changed and as expectations from the school district increased, Cadre meetings became less numerous, but they were still powerful and necessary.

An important element that contributes to the ongoing success of the Waldorf-inspired Cadre is that of community. Jung (1973) believed the longing of humans to have a connection to one another is universal, and Steiner (1994) held that if we fail to develop a very strong sense that there is something beyond ourselves, we will be unable to find the strength to evolve to something higher. The longing for community and of working for a higher purpose holds the Cadre together.

Cadre Professional Development

According to Sam Intrator (2002), teaching is a calling that requires constant renewal of the spirit, heart, and mind. In The Courage to Teach program, Intrator works with K–12 educators. Teachers meet seasonally at three-day retreats where their focus is not on school reform or technique, but on their inner lives. In large or small group settings, the inner life of the teacher is explored through personal stories, reflection, poetry, music, and storytelling (Intrator 2002).

Our workshops and classes with the Waldorf-inspired Cadre involve this type of inner work as well. Professional development focuses on the arts as a means to nurture the teachers' spirits. Teachers openly spoke of their appreciation for this work. One longtime Cadre member observed that professional development typically was a rather passive experience, but the Cadre sessions are decidedly active. Teachers get to do what the kids do!

One principal talked about the importance of our workshops and classes in helping energize her teachers. She shared in our interview that teachers derive energy, motivation, and new ideas from the workshops: "They go to classes and they want more." She said that teachers are so excited by the new ideas that they want to share the information with her.

Teachers in the district have many opportunities to attend staff-development sessions in their schools and the district. They are required to attend 24 hours of professional development every year. Many Cadre teachers fulfill the requirement with mandatory building-level professional development sessions, yet they still choose to attend Cadre meetings. They choose to come to these sessions not because they need additional professional development credits, but because they need the community and they are learning something different and useful.

Cadre sessions resemble family reunions. Teachers are happy to see one another and be together with like-minded colleagues. Other teachers have said that the professional development sessions rejuvenate them and inspire them to continue implementing Waldorf-inspired methods into their classrooms.

Our sessions are not at all like typical mainstream professional development workshops. While our focus is on the academic curriculum, themes routinely integrate or highlight the arts. For example, a professor from the Rudolf Steiner College presented a Friday night lecture and a daylong Saturday workshop on teaching history and multicultural education through the arts. The presenter used storytelling, drama, music, art, and poetry during the two days she spent with us. One Cadre member shared her thoughts about the workshop: "There was so much learned, remembered, and experienced, that human words cannot express."

Traditional Classes with Nontraditional Themes

Although we offer classes for Masters credit at our university as well as non-credit options, our class topics are not for close-minded individuals, afraid to step out of the box. The Waldorf-inspired courses offered during the two-week institute in the summer and during both fall and spring semesters bring something unique to our students. For example, last summer we offered a course in child development, but taught Steiner's theory of the development of the human being and compared it with traditional child-development theories. The second class, Teaching Science through the Arts, focused on the Waldorf science curriculum and developmentally appropriate ways in which to teach science to students in grades one through eight using art as the medium. In addition, we begin each morning with either eurythmy or singing classes.

Through workshops and classes, the Cadre community brings like-minded educators together

where they share stories and ideas as well as values. According to Comer et al. (1996, 148), "in every interaction, you are either building community or breaking community." In my work with the Waldorf-inspired Cadre, I found their commitment to building community quite strong, mostly due to their shared belief in the value of a Waldorf-inspired education for their students. According to Palmer (2002, 315), "Through community, teachers can become more engaged in the processes that shape education [and] can become leaders in helping transform the settings of our professional and political lives."

Nearly all of the teachers interviewed mentioned the central role of the Cadre community in keeping them in teaching. "Terry" had been a member of a Waldorf-inspired team at her school with three other teachers. When the principal left for another position, the team tried to follow her but were prevented by district transfer rules. Terry was left on her own for a year or two before she transferred to another school where two other Cadre members were teaching. She recalled,

> It is really different when you're on your own. And I've been in transition. I don't know how long the transition is going to last, but it's like I'm in a good transition. So I feel like I'm kind of waking up again.

There are actually several schools where Cadre teachers have found principals who welcome their Waldorf-inspired approach to teaching. Lowe Elementary now has three Cadre members, Byck has a Waldorf team with one Cadre teacher at each grade level, Hartstern has two Cadre teachers, Dunn Elementary two, and Jeffersontown Elementary, two. Interest seems to spring up whenever a Cadre member moves to a new school. Strength in numbers is not a theory but a reality.

Renewed Joy

As we move further into the reality of education in the 21st century, many teachers face a teaching career devoid of meaning. Most teachers go into the profession for reasons of the heart and a strong desire to serve society and help children. However, according to Intrator (2002, 18), "reality is often the opposite…. We become bitter and disillusioned and feel victimized by the system." The politics of teaching, coupled with increased expectations from society, have caused many teachers to lose heart and to leave the profession for more lucrative, less "frustrating" work. For others, teaching becomes just a job, something to do from nine to three, "a strict exchange of time for money" (Rockne 2002, 20). It's hard to say which is worse: great teachers who leave the profession or great teachers who stay and are no longer engaged or engaging.

Yet some educators find a way to renew their joy, to reconnect with their original passion with increased wisdom, wonder, and a softened heart. Programs on a national scale, such as Parker Palmer's Courage to Teach, and others on a much smaller level like the Waldorf-inspired Cadre, have enabled teachers to find the strength to continue teaching. By focusing on the teachers themselves, these programs have helped teachers reconnect to the heart and soul of teaching through a renewed sense of community.

Besides finding renewal with one another, teachers also have found a new sense of joy through the implementation of the Waldorf-inspired curriculum and pedagogy. "Mary" recalled how she had gotten so involved in her early years of teaching that she became overwhelmed and burned out. When her principal first approached her about the Cadre, she told him she wasn't interested:

> I was so burned out with running some programs early in my career that I said, "I'm not going to do another thing" And he walked in and said, "This is something you can't say 'No' to." And so I got to go to California for two summers in a row for two weeks, to the Rudolf Steiner College, which was, I think, one of the highlights of my life. I began to have more fun … it has probably been what has kept me in education.

Mary had definitely reconnected with her joy for teaching through the arts as well as through "the art of education." According to Steiner (1990, 9),

> In life, it is not the ready-made knowledge that has value, but the work which leads to this knowledge, and particularly in the art of education, this work has its own special value.

In other words, by immersing herself in the process, she was able to revitalize her teaching.

Being a member of the Waldorf-inspired Cadre has a number of benefits. Not only do teachers receive ongoing professional development opportunities to attend graduate level courses and inspiration through community, they also have been given a renewed sense of self, which kept many of them in teaching. They also commented on the way in which Waldorf education helped deepen their teaching, enabling them to understand and reach their students in ways they previously had been unable to do.

A Deepened Pedagogy

"We are in search of a pedagogy of experience and participation, a pedagogy both situated in and stretching beyond itself, a critical pedagogy capable of questioning, rethinking, reimagining" (Ayers 2004, 84). Bill Ayers captures the essence of Cadre teachers' search for a more engaging style of teaching. Some teachers attribute their growth to a more spiritual approach to teaching, whereas others credit their change to a stronger understanding of the development of the child. Through this growth in their teaching, they have found the courage to remain in the classroom. Ayers (2004, 143) again encourages us through his heartfelt prose:

> We can look inside ourselves, summon strength we never knew we had, connect up with other teachers and parents and kids to create the schools and classrooms we deserve.

Growth through Anthroposophy

A number of teachers have also deepened their inner lives through the study of Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner's path to personal development. Steiner continually emphasized that the Waldorf approach was more than the application of a specific teaching method. "This new art of education was born out of a solid Anthroposophical foundation, out of the knowledge of the growing child as body, soul, and spirit" (Steiner 1983, viii). Whether one must be an Anthroposophist to be a Waldorf teacher remains an unresolved question, even in the private Waldorf school settings. However, it certainly enhances the probability that teachers will meditate and reflect on issues of spiritual growth. I have found that teachers who undertake the study of Anthroposophy believe their understanding of the child has deepened.

Although not all Cadre teachers have taken up the study of Anthroposophy, many recognize the benefits of a spiritual approach to teaching. There is definitely a deep satisfaction that comes in knowing you are working from a soul place with your students. One teacher spoke about how using Waldorf-inspired pedagogy grounded her and calmed her in times of stress.

> Waldorf helps the teachers as much as it helps the students. It helps us stay grounded, it gives us some peace. I think it's one of the very large parts of my growth.

Through a variety of experiences, Cadre teachers have developed and deepened their inner lives. Individuals already on the path of personal development are drawn to Waldorf education. It is more than merely teaching to the intellect. It is more than delivering content to students. Waldorf education teaches to the whole child and requires teachers to look inward and to continue their own learning.

Understanding Child Development

According to Steiner (1996, 106), "To find the right curriculum for children aged 7 to 14 is deeply bound up in general with a true knowledge of child development over this period of time." One of the biggest dilemmas facing teachers today is the increased governmental expectations for children in this age group. Due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), our students are no longer given the luxury to learn concepts when they are developmentally ready for them. Rather, they are *all* expected to reach "proficiency" in their academic subjects by particular, arbitrary grade levels. Even though Cadre teachers by law must teach the state's core content to their students, they at least have the advantage of a more thorough understanding of child development and are thus able to bring inappropriate subject matter to their students in developmentally appropriate ways.

Learning about Steiner's thorough approach to teaching through a developmentally appropriate curriculum has helped a number of Cadre teachers reach previously unreachable children. One described how she's changed her teaching and made it

more accessible to her students. Not only does she use developmentally appropriate strategies, she also makes sure to bring the material to children in a variety of different modalities.

> Before when I taught, I would find a project and I would present each step to the children. And it would drive me crazy that a lot of them didn't get the steps even though they were broken down…. Before, I was very limited in my scope of abilities, and my creativity as well. It gave me a whole box of watercolors, you know. It just took me into so many different modes of learning as well as teaching.

Although child development, using various teaching modalities, and differentiating the curriculum are actually three separate concepts in the field of education, having a strong grasp of each obviously helps teachers reach their students in ways that traditional approaches to teaching do not. Furthermore, all three methods of teaching ultimately enhance teachers' creativity.

Conclusion

Teachers in the Waldorf-inspired Cadre recognize the value of nurturing their inner lives in order to keep their teaching alive and in some cases keep them in the profession. Many found that their experience with the Cadre community infused their teaching with new life. Others found the methods inherent in Waldorf-inspired teaching as the antidote to their frustration with the system. Still others deepened their own understanding of teaching through a more thorough investigation of Anthroposophy and child development. Through their own renewed joy, teachers were able to bring new inspiration to their students and to a number of their colleagues. It takes a monumental effort and strong community support to go against the status quo. As Victoria Stafford (2006, 188), in her brilliant essay "The Small Work in the Great Work," states,

> Our mission is to plant ourselves at the gates of Hope — not the prudent gates of Optimism, which are somewhat narrower; nor the stalwart, boring gates of Common Sense; nor the strident gates of Self-Righteousness, which creak on shrill and angry hinges (people cannot hear us there; they cannot pass through); nor the cheerful, flimsy garden gate of "Everything is gonna be all right."

Our mission is to continue to see the world "as it is and as it could be; the place from which you glimpse not only struggle, but joy in the struggle" (Stafford 2006, 188).

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Book Reviews

In the Spirit of Ubuntu: Stories of Teaching and Research

By D. Caracciolo and A.M. Mungai

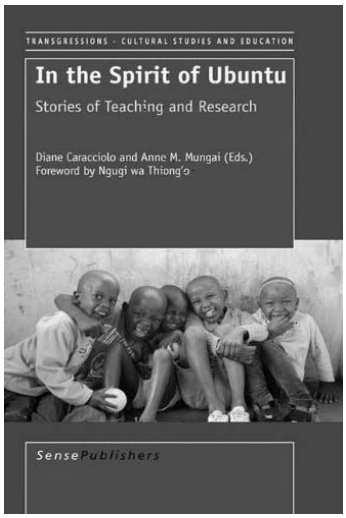
Published by Sense Publishers (Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2009)

Reviewed by Judith S. Kaufman

> It is not, "I think therefore I am." It says rather: "I am human because I belong. I participate, I share." A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are. (Desmond Tutu, p. 31)

This concept of Ubuntu, a South African worldview, unites the varied essays in this volume, written by an international group of teacher educators and researchers who are seeking out and integrating aspects of Ubuntu — healing, respect, and community — into their work. The ideas expressed in these narratives are rooted in post-structuralism, feminism, and critical theory applied to curriculum, pedagogy, and research. They reflect the struggles of many academics within the discipline of education to infuse the institution of schooling with a turn to social justice. To unite the essays under the umbrella of Ubuntu reminds us all that, a decade into this new century, globalization has shifted the zeitgeist, and our gaze must be turned outward (and inward) to the international community.

The essays in this volume vary in quality, but most are thought-provoking, evocative, and generative. They inspire the reader to draw parallels with his or her own work or to wonder how ideas might be applied in different contexts. My response to these essays certainly reflects my own experience and my efforts to attune my teacher education students to the deep connections between social justice, democracy and education in the United States. For educators who have taken on this struggle, they will find wisdom, example, and advice in many of these essays and the worldview of Ubuntu will give them a new way to think about their work.



Despite Desmond Tutu's definition above, the editors suggest that a precise definition of Ubuntu is elusive, but it begins to take on clarity as each essay illuminates an aspect of the concept. The narratives that open the volume are examples of living Ubuntu. The first, by Dalene M. Swanson, who grew up in South Africa, described her return to a school that was the site of her doctoral research. The school is empty and she met a pastor in the schoolyard who describes what had been happening since she left. He told her about trying to protect the school children from drug dealers in the community by reporting them to the police. Recognizing the futility of working against them, he began to work with the drug dealers, understanding that they are all connected through the larger foreign devastation of the fishing stocks in this community.[1] This example of Ubuntu, the understanding of connection and ensuing action, segues to Swanson's own story of her work in the school and a meeting with the principal who left the meeting to deal with one girl bullying another in the schoolyard. They

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were in the schoolyard because their teacher was absent and the students were left to themselves. She remembers blaming the principal for absent teachers and what she regarded as his apathy. Her analysis engages Ubuntu when she understands her own colonizing discourse (blame the principal, blame the school) without considering the place of the school in the larger discourse of oppression in South Africa.

Steve Sharra's essay "Towards an African Peace Epistemology" is an exploration of self and ultimate healing. He grew up in Malawi and had returned there for his dissertation research, an exploration with primary teachers of the impact of autobiographical narrative on their teaching within a context of peace education. Ultimately, this project converged with his own search for his place in Malawi's struggle for independence and the discovery of uMunthu, the Malawan word for Ubuntu. He writes (p. 37),

> the bigger lesson for me has been how to shift from the preoccupation with the gloomy analysis of how bad things are in Africa, to asking how to use Africa's own heritage and diverse knowledges, which include uMunthu epistemology, in creating new social, cultural, economic and education policies and programs that restore hope and optimism, and build a stronger foundation for the future.

In the third introductory piece to this volume, Anne M. Mungai writes about founding an orphanage in Kenya after the death of her daughter in the U.S. The essay describes her journey to Ubuntu from her family's loss to caring for the next generation. She writes, "when the younger generation is cared for, they in turn take care of others, both younger and older, this completes the circle of Ubuntu." (p. 47). At the end of her essay, Mungai writes about African education and notes that many struggle because the curriculum is not relevant to their social beliefs and practices; it is too steeped in the individualism of the West. She cites Venter who "suggests that education in Africa should come to encompass the values that are presented in the philosophy of Ubuntu" (p. 47). This is the thread and the hope for Africa that ties each of these essays together.

The remaining essays in this volume are organized around three themes that are central to Ubuntu: healing, respect, and connection. Michael O'Loughlin's essay opens the section on healing. He sketches the cultural and class borders of his own childhood in Ireland and in a deeply moving essay describes "the exquisite losses involved in my own border crossings"(p. 63). In the spirit of Ubuntu and his own healing through the process of narration, he engages his students in similar fashion. He notes that as a younger scholar and teacher, he had hoped to politicize his teacher education students by exposing them to more progressive and radical ideas about education. Now, he engages them in narrating their own lives so that they can come to see how they are situated in their own histories and culture. Understanding that our worldviews are self-constructed can open us up to the possibility of difference and other possible perspectives. O'Loughlin's ideas build on the power of autobiography (Cole 1991; Knowles 1992) and memory-work (Kaufman, Ewing, Hyle, & Montgomery 2003) as ways to help preservice and inservice teachers develop a critical gaze.

Two of the essays tied to the theme of respect were quite compelling and deeply illustrative of this aspect of Ubuntu as applied to the idea of research. Here, the authors describe how they were moved from a study of individuals to studying with and learning from them. Diane Caracciolo, one of the editors of this volume, writes about how she was moved to study the Shinnecock Nation living in easternmost Long Island. She learned early on that the Shinnecock were not interested in nonindigenous people studying their culture. What they wanted was "for us to *learn to listen* to indigenous peoples' concerns and to respect their cultural authority." (p. 107). In describing her journey and what she learned, she borrows an image from Battiste of the sacred Medicine Wheel with each of four doors representing the actual and possible connections between the colonized and colonizer. In many ways it captures the essence of this volume.

> The Western/autumn door from which we can map the ideas that have shaped and continue to maintain colonialism; the Southern/winter door from which we diagnose colonialism, exposing the roots of oppressive relationship, and in the evocation of darkness and cold, bear wit-

> ness to the struggle of Indigenous peoples to survive and also to endure; the Eastern/spring door that offers healing, recovery and the creation of new knowledge; and the Southern/summer door from which an Indigenous renaissance will spring. (p. 115)

Ultimately, Diane, through her research, comes to respect and partner with the Shinnecock. She uses her work to address the absence of Native Peoples in the local curriculum.

Kryssi Staikidis compellingly describes her transformation from researcher to learner while mentoring/partnering with two Mayan painters over the course of seven years. She writes about how her perspectives slowly shifted in her work with Paula and Pedro Rafael (p. 120):

> It was not easy to disengage from the cultural privilege that I both embodied and had grown accustomed to…. I found that learning outside of my culture enabled me to begin to dismantle such long-held Eurocentric beliefs.

The theme of connection pulls together the final essays in this volume. In "Confessions of a Reluctant Professor," Diana Muxworthy Feige describes the weight of the professorial mask as

> engraved with the markings of the medieval scholar, the Oxford wizard, distant, intimidating, isolated behind libraries of ancient texts, delivering expertise from behind the lectern, estranged from the glazed, glaring eyes of his awed students (p. 150).

For Feige, this is a costume that has become "a heavy cold armor" (p. 150). For her it is a contradiction between the notion of the expert and conveying and living the humanity of teaching for her teacher education students. For her own survival, she turned to service learning, "a pedagogy that demands curriculum and community connections, invites academic content to become alive in advocacy and action" (p. 151). She thought that in service learning she would find herself in the "teacher and the scholar." As a teacher educator, I found personal relevance in this essay, often nodding and smiling in recognition of the struggles to raise the consciousness of students who have barely begun to recognize the boundaries of their ideas. Her narrative prompted me to consider service learning with my own undergraduates and to seek out Diana for advice.

Donna Grace and Rhonda Nowak are teacher educators at the University of Hawaii in Manoa. In their narrative they describe their respective efforts in implementing place-based critical inquiry in courses for in-service teachers. The particular model developed by Rhonda includes five "recursive teaching and learning phases: connect, wonder, construct, act, and reflect" (p. 166). In one of the illustrations of the method, Rhonda writes about using Kapi'olani Park, a place she describes as one of the most photographed parks in Honolulu. While the place is common to most residents, few are privy to the social and environmental issues surrounding the park since its founding in 1877. In a week-long institute with a- dozen elementary and secondary teachers, Rhonda describes the journey the teachers made through the five learning phases listed above. While the teachers developed critical understandings of the park, they also experienced the potential of place-based critical pedagogy in facilitating connections between student literacies and their communities. The teachers

> were excited about the deeper levels of learning they could foster if they and their students become more knowledgeable about their own communities, and then used these funds of knowledge to reflect on the ways in which local issues represent microcosms of universal concerns. (p. 174).

The authors of this essay describe a very useful and easily implemented pedagogy that forges connections to community outside of the classroom and battles "placeless education" (Brooke 2003 in Grace & Nowak 2009).

As I noted in the beginning of this review, Ubuntu shifts our gaze inward, as well as outward to the global community. It reminds that healing, respect, and connection are aspects of humanity that link us all and that we can learn much by embracing this value as we struggle against discourses of power and colonization. I found much that was useful in this collection of essays, and I am inspired to try some of the ideas in my own work.

Note

1. The parallels to the Somali "pirates" are obvious. However, the mainstream press continues to suppress the connection between the foreign devastation of the fishing stocks off the coast of Somalia and the piracy of foreign vessels.

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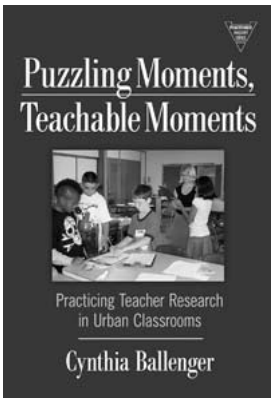
Puzzling Moments, Teachable Moments: Practicing Teacher Research in Urban Classrooms

By Cynthia Ballenger

Published by Teachers College Press (New York, 2009)

Reviewed by Alexandra Miletta

To read the work of Cynthia Ballenger is to come into a world where teaching is elevated to the most noble of aspirations: understanding what it means to be human; noticing and collecting observations and details that are endlessly fascinating to ponder; helping children to know and understand their world and their place in it. In her latest book, *Puzzling Moments, Teachable Moments*, Ballenger provides much food for thought for teachers in prose that is refreshingly devoid of educational jargon and clichés. At its core, the work presented in this book is a stark reminder that life in classrooms rushes by with merciless speed, and to fully understand what is happening, the conscientious and intellectually curious teacher must find ways to slow down, ask difficult questions, humbly examine shortcomings and mistakes, and collaborate with colleagues to ponder the deepest puzzles of the work of teaching children.



Ballenger's research seeks to challenge conventional assumptions about children who traditionally don't succeed in school. Many attribute their inability to do well on tests, on classroom assignments, and to participate as other children do, to social problems in their life outside school, to deficiencies in their parents' abilities to provide academically relevant experiences, and to conditions of poverty that can profoundly affect their physical and mental health. Ballenger turns these problems around by asking what it is that teachers do that creates such a narrow-minded and archaic notion of what intellectual engagement looks like in a classroom. Her considerable contributions as a teacher researcher have helped us to see the limitations of current practices, the strengths of children we did not previously understand very well, and the value of her credo that "the child is always making sense" (p. 6). In this latest work, Ballenger works hard to show teachers exactly how this can be accomplished, with both practical and illustrative details, so that teachers can realize the goal of reaching all children more effectively. To do so, Ballenger argues, they must "develop their curiosity and puzzlement towards children's words and ideas, especially those words and ideas that strike us initially as less powerful and less thoughtful" (p. 8).

The methods of teacher researchers are sometimes described in rather nebulous terms, making it difficult for beginners to know what is meant by inquiry and reflection until they are faced with the daunting task of doing something with the data they have collected. Ballenger zeroes in on three

Alexandra Miletta is co-author of *Classroom Conversations: A Collection of Classics for Teachers and Parents* (The New Press, 2008). She lives in New York City.

central ideas that have informed her work, and that are at the methodological heart of the book: a focus on puzzling children and puzzling moments, expanding the kinds of talk valued in the classroom, and ways to "stop time" in order to reflect on students' talk and ideas (p. 4).

One of the most difficult points of entry for the beginning teacher researcher is finding the right research question. Accustomed to conceptions of research rooted in theory and located in library collections, teachers have a hard time adjusting to the idea that a good research question can come from classroom events that are, in Ballenger's terms, *puzzling moments*, "irritating or troublesome or funny" things that happen when plans go awry, when children seem to not understand; but on closer examination we may discover they are actually thinking hard.

Certainly an important rationale for teacher research is that learning to use the tools of inquiry and to analyze classroom data will lead teachers to be better at understanding children and knowing how to craft curricular experiences accordingly. Ballenger's goal in elucidating the methodological ideas listed above is to focus first and foremost on helping teachers to see the richness of children's thinking. In some instances she also sheds light on instructional decisions and how she responded to her own personal wonderings about what to do next, but this is less to provide a model for others to follow than as illustrative responses to the students' energetic ideas.

Most importantly, she is not afraid to write with candor of her own learning and to say explicitly how her teaching and content knowledge have been affected by the findings of her research. In a section on condensation, for example, she writes (p. 25): "I think that at that time, I was only beginning to recognize from the children's questions how much I didn't know about it." Elsewhere (p. 49), as she describes the students' learning about whales and classification of animals: "I experience a moment of pure panic as I assure myself that whales must have belly buttons — they were born alive, after all; they must!" It is reassuring to recognize in Ballenger's reflections the self-doubt that plagues all teachers, and to have a window into possible responses to our own shortcomings. Because she writes of her errors without regret, we can see how, as she says, "they were part of the fun and feeling and occasional irritation and frustration" (p. 55) of her teaching experiences, and how they helped lead to her own personal growth.

The passages of the book that come most alive for the reader are the ones that capture the excitement of students' discussions as they imaginatively explore together possible meanings of the phenomenon under study. Ballenger is clearly dead set on avoiding the pitfalls of her own elementary school experiences, where most knowledge was gained and stored for eventual retrieval without being meaningfully connected to personal experience. For example, knowing that whales are mammals for her was largely "an odd fact that was remembered mainly because it was so odd, rather than because there was any compelling sense beneath it" (p. 45).

Through her careful analysis, we begin to see with Ballenger how the children use their imaginations and intuitions as tools for understanding, and as she describes it, how they "cause me to see the science again, reorganized and fresh, in their thinking" (p. 49). She then compares their way of imagining to the work of Nobel prize-winning scientists, who also describe the type of imaginative thinking that led to developing beta blocker drugs for viruses, or a deeper understanding of corn genes. Furthermore, she illustrates the children's excitement at discovering "the importance of their own experience" (p. 79) and consequently the total commitment they develop to careful thought, explanation, and listening to each other's ideas. Most exciting of all, she provides many revealing analyses to show how especially those children who are not recognized as the most successful in traditional ways, can provide opportunities for discussion and learning that exceed that of the child who is anxious to show he knows the right answer.

For example, in Chapter Five, Ballenger looks at the case of two contrasting students, Elena and Serena, to show how Elena, by employing her imagination and bringing "drama and impersonation into the conversation" (p. 78) created a space and an invitation for greater participation from other children, and thus amplified their own understanding. By asking serious questions and refusing to accept new information simply because they are told by a book or a teacher that it is true, students in these examples

are working together on complex ideas in ways that reveal, as Ballenger notes, "a different pattern of talent and achievement" (p. 79).

This brings us to consider the horrific shortcomings of current educational obsessions on data and test scores. We seem to have entered into a bottomless pit of test preparation despite evidence that more practice does not yield better results. This has become particularly acute in struggling urban schools where the stakes are high and failure to achieve accountability measures arbitrarily set by state bureaucrats are leading to school closures, teacher layoffs, and inevitably fewer resources and larger class sizes. In order to realize the sorts of results that Ballenger is advocating and illustrating so eloquently, we will need to completely reform many of our current educational practices. For one thing, we must rethink what counts as data. Currently schools use the narrow measures of tests and standardized performance assessments to produce endless charts and graphs, and most of their instructional decisions are based on rather meaningless information.

True "data-driven instruction" would mean figuring out how to go about regularly collecting the kind of data that Ballenger finds so rich by taping and transcribing children's talk and ideas. As she points out, this richness surrounds us like "noisy air." Like carefully trained anthropologists, teachers must learn to take these familiar and fleeting words, record them, ponder their meaning, make them into "something strange, worthy of rephrasing, comparison, of exchanging with others" (p. 85). That is not to suggest that teacher research of this kind is some sort of magic bullet. Teaching is far too complex for a simple solution to current educational concerns, particularly those that have to do with questions of equity, to work. Ballenger's book helps us to know that learning to see into the intellectual lives of all students with curiosity, and to respond with enthusiasm, is at the heart of making teaching meaningful, life-sustaining work.

Taking all children's ideas seriously is not simple or straightforward by any means, but at least it is not tedious. As Ballenger describes it, there is great pleasure to be had in teaching and doing research in this way. "You develop an intimacy with the children's thoughts, and a sense of wonder about their thinking, as you write down what they said and describe how they said it" (p. 63). Teachers are inherently interested in student's ideas and talk, and those who challenge themselves to engage deeply with children's connections to subject matter also experience a strong desire to know more, to talk with expert adults about their understanding and insights. "Doing so," Ballenger points out, "assures that we see their behavior as part of the tradition of human thought and action" (p. 55).

In contrast, analyzing numbers from assessments and test scores is largely meaningless to teachers even when correlated with merit pay, for the psychic rewards of teaching have greater power than the financial ones. Ballenger's research journey extends from looking at differences between her ways of thinking and those of her students, to finding similarities without denying cultural differences. The practices of teacher research she illuminates so thoughtfully require "that we try to understand the puzzling things students do as a part of the range of human responses to new ideas" (p. 53). In these times of narrow conformity, we should all pay careful attention.

The Principal's Challenge: Learning From Gay and Lesbian Students

By Nicholas Pace

Published by Information Age Publishing (Charlotte, NC, 2009)

Reviewed by Alexandra Anormaliza

"What good are [mission] statements if we can only live them when it's easy?" asks Nicholas J. Pace in *The Principal's Challenge: Learning From Gay and Lesbian Students.* In this earnestly written account of his experience as a young and untried high school principal dealing with a student's coming out, Pace tells his own story along with the stories of eight

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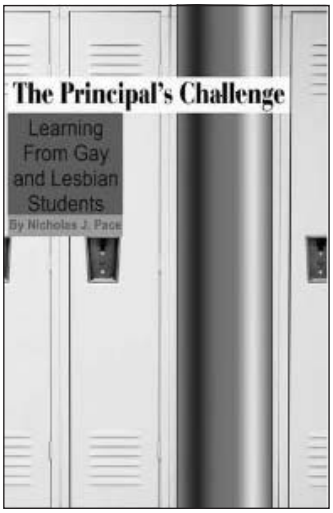
high school students from urban and rural public schools in Iowa, all winners of the competitive Matthew Shepard Scholarship. After spending the first two chapters (the largest section of the book) on these anecdotes, he summarizes what the research says about the difficulties gay and lesbian adolescents experience in trying to come to terms — both publicly and privately — with their identities, discusses why homosexuality in adolescence has such negative associations in the public's mind, and argues passionately that the job of school leaders is to create schools that are safe for all students, regardless of race, creed, or sexual identity.



Citing researcher Gerald Unks, Pace states that "high schools are the most homophobic institutions in American society." To illustrate his point, he introduces us to Mark, Jackie, Steve, Brad, Joe, Aaron, Cassie, and David. In addition to being Matthew Shepard Scholars, these young people have something else in common — they all "came out of the closet" during their high school years. Their stories are both heart breaking and inspiring and demonstrate the courage these youngsters were able to muster in the midst of difficult circumstances. The stories follow a similar pattern. An adolescent suspects that he is gay. He seeks information about gay issues, usually via the Internet, but sometimes in the library or through other sources. He gradually comes out, first to himself, then to a friend, and finally to family members and others. There is some friction at home, but family support is offered nonetheless. The reaction of peers and staff at school is generally muted but surprisingly mostly positive (with some noted exceptions). As the student becomes more comfortable with his identity, he becomes empowered and eventually active in supporting gay and lesbian causes on a greater scale. In many cases the student even becomes a resource for other students and staff members at school. The youngsters whose stories are featured here understand the power of education to help people become their best selves, and it is encouraging to see them actively involved in living that message years after leaving high school.

Aaron's example is particularly powerful. During a conversation with the author, he remembers that he needs to call the district superintendent about posting some flyers advertising a gay and lesbian student conference at a local college. In fact, Aaron is pretty sure that the superintendent has been lackadaisical about promoting the event but will feel very motivated to do so after Aaron's phone call. How's that for empowerment?

Notwithstanding the positive stories exemplified by these students, and given their obvious comfort with themselves after coming out successfully, I was mystified as to why Pace chooses to tell us in five of the eight anecdotes that the students are against "militant" tactics employed by other gay activists, and they are angered by people who like to flaunt their sexuality, or take a stand on unimportant issues and engage in disruptive behavior because this "hurts the cause." These sentiments appear so often that I wondered whether they revealed more about the author's biases than about the students themselves. Is Pace addressing these concerns to more conservative school administrators so that they might be more receptive to his message? In Chapters Three and Four, Pace explores his belief that adolescence is a bad time to come out and the research that supports the opposite view. He describes his stand on the issue as a problem, and expresses self-disappointment for always expecting the worst. "You can't see the good in *anything* anymore," admonishes his wife. And he admits that in his mind "gay/lesbian + high school = bad, period."

In Chapter Four, Pace walks us through research which indicates that students who come out in adolescence are actually more likely to develop resilience, agency, and activism because of the tribulations they were forced to endure during the coming out process. It is heartening that he recognizes that as a principal he had little notion of students as agents of change but tended to categorize them as "challenges" and "pleasures" instead. This black-and-white perception of people is exactly what needs to

be avoided in schools and in society in general. As a professor of teacher education, Pace attempts to teach his students the hard lessons he learned as a school leader and as a researcher. One can only hope that he is succeeding.

There are plenty of examples throughout *The Principal's Challenge* that reinforce the belief that high school is a tough place to embark on a journey of self-discovery. Aaron states that in high school, "if you don't have a girlfriend, that *proves* you're gay." Anyone who has attended high school understands the intense pressure to conform to perceived "normal" ways of being. Difference is not tolerated, and cliques tend to be the norm. The cliché of the jock group versus the geek group, and the smart girls versus the beauty queens, etc., is alive and well in many schools. Unfortunately, these cliques and their devastating practices create conditions that are more dangerous for gay and lesbian youth than for other groups due to the lack of existing support structures in schools and in family units that address the unique needs of this population. As a result, gay and lesbian students tend to turn to outside sources in search of community, thereby creating plenty of opportunity for predators to step in. The lack of leadership in educational institutions around this issue is staggering and places students in danger.

Cassie's experience is the most difficult to read about, especially when her principal informs her that there is no need for a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) in the school because "there are no gay students [here]," and goes on to chide her for her attitude, warning that she will never get anywhere if she continues along her chosen path. The educator in me was devastated by these words. Pace devotes Chapter 5 to providing advice to school leaders for creating schools that are welcoming and nurturing for all students. I wish that he had spent more time detailing specific actions that can be taken to achieve this, as the need is obvious.

As a high school principal in New York City, I experienced first-hand the discomfort and disruption that school communities can feel when a student is openly gay. "Jose" arrived at our school in September of 2008 and within a few weeks made it very clear that he was not the typical Latino male. His mannerisms and voice were more of the kind associated with femininity and his fashion sense (eyes lined with black kohl and highly stylized hair, for example) made him stand out. Once he even wore a pink boa around his neck and shoulders. Even in a small community that is highly diverse and deals very well with racial, ethnic, and religious differences among students and staff, his presence created a stir. Our school's mission states that "students, staff, and families create a caring school environment that promotes collaboration, cross-cultural interaction, and appreciation of diversity. Above all, [our] students become successful contributing members of society and conscientious global citizens of the future." As Pace makes clear, however, mission statements without structures and purposeful and courageous leadership are empty words.

Schools that aim to create safe spaces for students to explore their identities and get to know themselves better, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, must provide forums for students and teachers to discuss matters that affect students' social-emotional and academic development. In our school and in others throughout New York City, these forums are called advisories, and they have teacher to student ratios of no higher than 1:15. In addition to providing a curriculum for advisors to support students who are questioning their sexual identity and/or attempting to come out, schools need to designate time and professional support (such as workshops or goal-oriented collegial conversations) for teachers who are struggling with how to help students with these concerns. School staff need to agree on language, actions, and attitudes that will not be tolerated. While school systems tend to provide written codes of conduct that all schools are expected to adhere to, I believe that these are insufficient. Individual schools need to create their own set of guidelines that are derived from such lists, but they need to make sense within the context of each school. Only when staff members buy into these guidelines and know exactly where the ladder of referral begins and ends will the rules be truly internalized and respected. Buy-in leads to self-monitoring. Teachers and other staff need to hold themselves and one another, as well as students, accountable for violations to agreed-upon policies. Once violations occur — at

any level — these must be followed by fair but firm consequences for the violators.

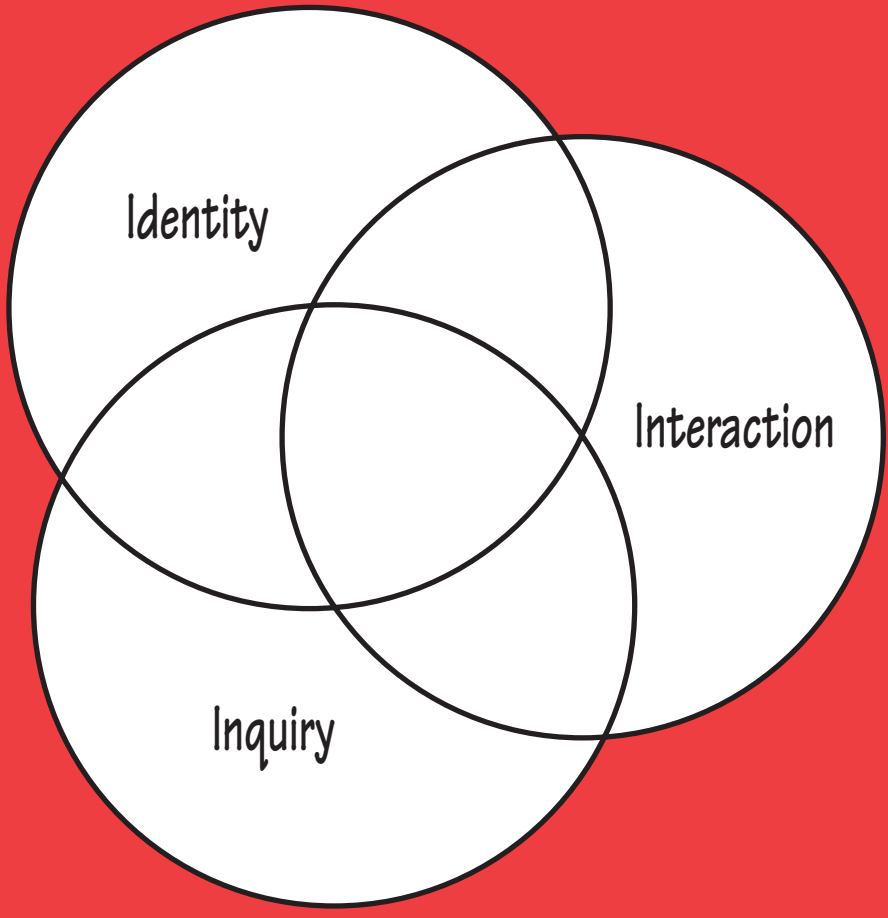
Lack of information leads to misunderstandings and fear of the unknown. Nothing could be more against the purpose of any school than denying information and knowledge to those who seek it or need it. Health curricula must include information about sexuality. This has nothing to do with morality and everything to do with biology. As a society, we would not stand for consciously withholding information about any other subject. Students need access to the facts, and who better than their teachers to provide them without bias. Moral education is the domain of the home. Public schools need to fulfill their role of helping students understand the world by sharing knowledge. Pace touches on the importance of counseling staff in schools, especially as it relates to access by gay and lesbian students. He cites the impossible caseloads counselors are burdened with, student ratios that can reach 1:500, as well as the amount and types of paperwork they are assigned. This leaves little time for actual counseling. Distributive guidance programs, such as advisories, help in this regard by relieving some of the pressure counselors face on a daily basis. However, my experience has taught me that there is no substitute for continuous training for all guidance staff. Furthermore, if schools can afford them, social workers are an invaluable source of support and information not only for students but also for staff and families.

Our school is fortunate to exist in New York City, a fountain of diversity if there ever was any. However, without our culture of valuing diversity, students like Jose, would never have found peace and acceptance. "Nia," an English teacher at our school, founded the GSA and recruited students who were interested in helping strengthen our school's mission. Interest in gay and lesbian causes was almost peripheral. Most of the students in the GSA were actually heterosexual, but they were attracted to the ideals of the organization: to add a dimension of diversity to our school that was not listed explicitly in our mission statement but which everyone knew existed. A year later, "Nia" went a step further and provided a solid example for our students when she decided to come out publicly as a lesbian. When "Nia" talked to me about her plan, we discussed ways in which she could structure the conversation with her students and I connected her with an outside source who had had the same experience and could help her implement her plan more seamlessly. Together, they worked on questions she could anticipate from her students and responses that would honor the students' need for authentic information. Throughout the day, students and staff congratulated "Nia" on her courage. After three years, the GSA is one of the strongest, most popular clubs at our school. Words are powerful, but actions speak louder than words.

School leaders and educators in general would benefit from reading *The Principal's Challenge*. For those who deny the existence of gay and lesbian students in high schools, it provides statistics that will at a minimum challenge their beliefs about the numbers. For those who are looking to understand gay and lesbian youth, it provides eight very human portraits of people who have struggled with their identities but have emerged stronger and wiser. For those who are looking for answers on how to deal with gay and lesbian youth at school, it provides plenty of examples of what not to do and summarizes very succinctly the research on the difficulties these students face in schools and in society at large. For those who are ready to take the next step, it provides encouragement to seek more information and develop an action plan to tackle the difficult job of changing people's perceptions about gay and lesbian youth and, eventually, school culture. A warning: this book is not well edited, and resulting typos and others errors can be distracting. This notwithstanding, the message comes through clearly that protecting and nurturing our gay and lesbian (and I will add bisexual, transgender, and questioning) students is the responsibility of all of our schools. School leaders cannot shy away from this responsibility if we are to be true to our mission of serving all students who walk through our doors.

Educating for Human Greatness

Lynn Stoddard



Educating for Human Greatness

Lynn Stoddard

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Part I

Why We Need to Change Our Educational Focus

Chapter 1

Meet the Principles

> We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road. There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake. — C. S. Lewis

As a veteran educator — ten years as a classroom teacher, and 25 years as an elementary school principal — I thought I'd seen everything. I had interacted with a great variety of children, parents, and teachers. With few exceptions most of them were delightful, and a joy to experience. Most of the teachers were hard working and very dedicated. A few were extraordinary and full of extra enthusiasm and creativity. Then into my life came a teacher who was so unusual she didn't fit any categories. Carolyn Larson was a puzzling enigma to me. She was both a pain and a pleasure — a teacher who fulfilled her calling with rare charm and grace.

Mrs. Larson taught fourth grade at G. Q. Knowlton Elementary School in Farmington, Utah. She passionately believed in providing hands-on experiences for children to stimulate their curiosity and a desire to read. One day she informed me that, since she had already used up her allotment of school busses for field trips, she had arranged for public transportation to take her class on an excursion to visit the legislature which was in session at the time. Using public transportation was strictly against school district policy because of the potential liability. Proper protocol was to at least notify the office when a class was leaving the school grounds, but to go against school board policy one needed special permission from the principal or someone higher up.

Mrs. Larson was wily as a fox. She knew I was also an advocate of hands-on learning and she had heard me say, "In a bureaucracy it's eas-

ier to get forgiveness than permission." Besides, how could I deny a trip that was so carefully planned and organized with several parents as escorts and each child equipped with a personal set of questions to pursue? It was already scheduled!

I was caught between the school board and a teacher who was fiercely determined to make a difference in the lives of children. The excursion went forward with my blessings, but also with a foreboding about possible mishaps. What else could I do? If something had gone wrong, it would have been my neck, not the teacher's.

Mrs. Larson was not the first teacher to test the limits of school board regulations and, in so doing, put my job as school administrator in a precarious position. She was, however, an ultimate example of a teacher who put the needs of children above everything else, no matter what. Whenever I visited her classroom I nearly always found children engaged in a variety of activities all at the same time. Some were reading; some constructing things with tools; some doing science experiments; some writing letters or authoring their own books; some doing illustrations for their own or someone else's book; some drawing, painting, or sculpting; and some working on a committee planning a future learning adventure. Others were in the school library doing research on a personal interest. On some of my visits I would find children teaching other children about their research findings. Other times I would find a parent sharing a hobby or a work skill. Children were kind and courteous to one another and to visitors. Above all, they seemed to be happy and totally engrossed in learning. Never did I see any evidence that children were all expected to learn the same things in lock step.

Even though Carolyn Larson kept me busy providing for her needs with unusual supplies, overcoming school board regulations, smoothing out the jealous feelings of other teachers, and giving many other kinds of support, she became the frosting on my cake. She became one of the reasons why I shifted from active duty as an educator to a new career as an author and consultant. In many ways it was not easy having a teacher like Mrs. Larson in my school, but it was an encounter that would help shape the content of this book. Carolyn Larson was not merely a teacher; she was a one-of-a-kind professional mentor who helped children aspire to fulfill their potential as valuable contributors to society. She was able to bend school board rules because she had such strong support from parents who were involved in her class activities.

Since my unforgettable experiences with Carolyn Larson, we have entered an era in which teachers are not allowed to practice their craft. In recent years teachers have been demoted from professionals serving the needs of children to subservient messengers whose job it is to serve the needs of politicians — to deliver the official state curriculum and thereby raise scores on standardized achievement tests. Teachers are no longer allowed to make important decisions about children. It is a hierarchical system wherein everyone serves the needs of those above them in the hierarchy. Students serve the needs of teachers who serve administrators, and who in turn, serve the needs of state and federal government officials.

Where is Mrs. Larson? She is now working in her son's dental office as a receptionist and dental technician. She quit teaching a year or two after I did because she refuses to work as a mindless slave to the bureaucracy. Her amazing creative gifts are no longer available to children in a classroom. I was saddened to learn that Carolyn and other great teachers have left the profession because they are not allowed to serve children as they did before. They have refused to be held accountable for doing the impossible — standardizing students. For them it is a matter of integrity.

How serious is the exodus of great teachers from public schools? You may have noticed newspaper headlines declaring that our public schools are facing a serious teacher shortage. In a 2001 article, "The Changing Teaching Environment," Hansel, Skinner, and Rotberg relate evidence that the high-stakes environment associated with the standards and accountability movement has contributed to the decisions of experienced teachers to leave the profession. Joel Spring, an historian of education, writes in his 1996 book, *American Education*, that

> in recent years the satisfaction that teachers have gained from autonomous decision making and creativity has been threatened by expanding bureaucratic structures and attempts to control teacher behavior in the classroom.

What is to be done? Shall we continue to allow people far removed from classrooms to dictate teaching practices? What would schools be like if legislators were to stop imposing their needs on schools and decide to support parents and teachers in meeting the needs of individual children? In such a system who is to be held accountable for what? Is

there a way to transform public education so all stakeholders will be winners?

There is a positive answer to these questions. In this book I will share a vision of schooling that may be outside the experience of most readers, but one that I hope you will see as a possible solution to the search for better education for our children. If you will open your heart and suspend judgment until the end, I feel you will join with me in a grand, exciting crusade.

I will speak the truth to the best of my ability. It is a personal truth I have painstakingly assembled over a period of more than fifty years of heavy involvement in public education, first as a student, then as a teacher, administrator, and now as a consultant. In relating my truths, some may say I have gone mad by biting the hand that fed me for so many years. It's not that I'm ungrateful. I haven't given up on public education, as so many have. It may initially appear that I'm trying to destroy a great school system, but although these words may sound critical, my intention is to build, not destroy. I just want to share what I believe is a golden opportunity to transform an institution that could do an immensely better job than it now does. The opportunity is lying there, like a fumbled football waiting for us to pick it up and score the winning touchdown against what will surely be great opposition.

I realize that I am taking a risk that public school teachers will turn against me. However, I only want teachers to discover their plight and resolve to stand up against forces that are squeezing the life out of their profession. I also want parents to realize what is happening and stand up for the welfare of their children.

Before introducing the principles, I would like to challenge you to ponder some thorny questions. If you will take time to meditate on each question before moving on to the next, you'll gain a better understanding of what I'm trying to do.

- Why do we need to change public education?
- What if you were to discover that students, teachers, and parents are all innocent victims of a false philosophy of education, and that all three of these groups promote this philosophy consciously or unconsciously?
- What if you were to learn that standardized achievement tests are not a valid measure of student learning? Furthermore, what

would you do if you found out these tests foster a kind of teaching that is anti-learning?

- What if you were to discover that many of the brilliant, talented people wasting in jails may be there partly because our society failed to nurture each person's unique potentiality?
- What would you say if I told you our public schools are not in the business of education?
- What if you were to learn that millions of people have gone through the public system having only a very small percentage of their gifts, talents, and abilities developed?
- What would you do if you found that public schools crush basic human rights?
- Did you know that student inquiry is usually not encouraged in public schools — that imposed learning is the norm that results in shallow, temporary knowledge?
- Do you know why public school teaching is not considered a profession?
- Do you know why parents are prevented from becoming effectively involved in their children's school education?

I will show evidence that the implications of these questions are all true. The six pivotal principles that I shall describe are the result of my experiences in working with parents and teachers of two elementary schools that ultimately decided to employ an unusual idea. We found a way to view student achievement in curriculum, not as a *goal*, but as a *means* of accomplishing a higher, ultimate purpose: human greatness. This perspective allowed us to focus on the needs of individual learners rather than on the needs of politicians and business leaders.

Perhaps the most important outcome of a focus on nurturing human greatness was the change that began to unfold as teachers and parents discovered new roles. They came to realize that great human beings are a responsibility of both the home and the school, and that by working together much more can be accomplished than when each of these institutions works separately. By focusing on human greatness we make possible an unprecedented alliance between parents and teachers, an alliance that results in parents becoming full, equal partners with teachers. This new purpose for education makes a remarkable difference.

It is my desire that this book be a guidebook for individuals and small groups to begin a process of overcoming the well-meaning tyranny of legislatures trying to do a good thing with bad information. As you consider each principle you may be shocked and dismayed to discover the possibility that our present system of public education is pointed in the wrong direction. During the last few years our schools have been taken over by a political/corporate philosophy that threatens to damage our children and youth. I believe you will anguish, as I have, over the great mystery of how smart parents and teachers could allow themselves to get caught up in a movement that is so patently wrong.

As you examine and ponder each of the six principles, decide for yourself if it is true. Then ask yourself, is this as serious as it appears? If so, what am I going to do about it? Shall I sit on the sidelines and let the federal government and state legislatures continue to ravage the schools, or shall I become a powerful agent on behalf of children to change the course?

The Six Pivotal Principles

As you consider each principle, you may begin to feel uncomfortable. You may feel these principles are so obvious you will wonder why we haven't been following them all along. If you are a teacher, you may feel you are already following them. Or you may feel angry and frustrated because the bureaucratic, hierarchical system doesn't allow you to do what you know is best for children. Please understand that the brief introduction here is only a summary of each principle. The remaining chapters will provide what is needed for you to assimilate the principles and become a powerful change agent — both for yourself and for your community.

Value Positive Human Diversity

This is the foundation principle upon which the others are built. For many years the mission of public education has been that of standardizing students, of diligently trying to make children alike in knowledge and skills. I will show the value of taking the opposite approach — of nurturing each child as a special person to develop their unique gifts, talents, abilities, and skills that can be developed to benefit society.

Draw Forth Potential

This principle recognizes that each child is unique with a unique set of gifts and talents. These special assets can only be accessed through a process of loving interaction. It is a process of bringing out the best that is in each person. *Drawing forth* is the opposite of trying to fill students with information. It requires an entirely different set of skills. In contrast to traditional education, which focuses on helping children overcome *deficits*, this principle works on helping children build on their unique *assets.*

Respect Autonomy

In our traditional system students are not encouraged to be responsible for their own education. This principle recognizes that, regardless of what others do or say, each person ultimately decides for himself what information or influences s/he will use for growth. I will invite readers to respect the inalienable right of every person to be responsible for his or her own learning and behavior. When learners are freed from coercion and given responsibility for their own learning, amazing things happen.

Invite Inquiry

In Chapter Seven I show the difference between imposed, compulsory learning and education that is the result of personal inquiry. The first is shallow and temporary. The second is deep and enduring. When a synthetic, packaged curriculum is imposed on teachers to impose on students it often squelches personal inquiry. On the other hand, pursuing personal interests invites students to ask questions and seek knowledge and wisdom.

Support Professionalism

Teachers in public education are told what to teach and, often, even how to teach. In Chapter Eight we examine what happens when teachers are no longer treated as workers on an educational assembly line, but as creative professionals who know how to diagnose the needs of each child, work with parents, and nurture positive diversity. With this view teaching becomes a true profession and a delicate art, a sensitive, creative endeavor that responds to the special, striving needs of each child.

Unite as Partners

In Chapter Nine we look at what happens when parents and teachers become full partners to help children grow in greatness. The traditional role of parents as spectators on the educational sidelines can be changed to that of active team partners united with teachers to help children realize their amazing potential as valuable contributors to society.

Now, if you can at least accept the *possibility* that these principles are true, and hold them in mind, I would like to explain some of the reasons why public education got so badly off course. To change our system, it will help to know how we arrived at our present condition.

Chapter 2

Public Education Gone Awry

> By reducing education to a numbers game, the standardizers and the testers will ensure that very little goes on in America's classrooms except test preparation.… In other words, the test frenzy will create a dumber, not a smarter America. — Peter Cookson

Mike Hirschi has a big heart. Unfortunately, he is another casualty of an education system that has turned away from the needs of students in favor of the needs of misguided politicians. Mike almost left teaching because he could take no more administrative abuse, but let me tell you what he did before his spirit was crushed.

Mike was a high school media specialist. He was in charge of the school's library/computer center. Mike's passion was to take wayward youth under his wing and help each one find a "personal quest," and in so doing find a reason to stay in school.

One young man, David, had a lifelong dream to become a fireman. Since none of the required courses seemed to fit David's idea of what he needed, he started sloughing classes. Luckily for David, Mike Hirschi became a safety net who arranged with the local fire chief and the school administration for David to spend time learning from the fire fighters at the nearby fire station.

Getting credit was the hard part. The administration and possessive teachers argued over whether the study of fire safety could claim credit in any of the established disciplines. It didn't seem to fit anywhere in the curriculum. The problem was finally solved when the school leaders decided to offer an official course in fire safety. The course became one of

the most popular and David went on to realize his dream as a highly qualified firefighter and fire safety specialist.

State curriculum specialists may still be arguing as to whether fire safety should be allowed for graduation from high school. David didn't care. He got what he needed without graduating.

Another of Mike Hirschi's rescues was a young lady who refused to go to any classes. She had a phobia of being with large groups of her peers. Mike met with Judy and her mother and found that Judy was interested in the history and development of the first transcontinental railroad. She was fascinated with the hundreds of Chinese laborers and the famous "golden spike" ceremony that connected east and west near the small town of Corrine, Utah. Mike arranged for Judy to officially miss classes at school and study at the Union Station Museum in Ogden, not far from her home. As part of her project Judy prepared an impressive presentation of what she learned. For this she received recognition from students and teachers, and a new outlook toward education.

I never learned how school administration solved the credit problem with Judy. Railroad history may indeed have been an easier fit into the curriculum than firefighting, but my point is that traditional curriculum is not designed to fit the needs of students. Instead of shaping curriculum to fit the needs of students, our system tries to make students fit the curriculum. I am reminded of the story about a school faculty that spent the summer designing a beautiful curriculum only to find out, when school started in the fall, the wrong kids showed up.

I need to relate a final story of another young man who was saved by Mike Hirschi. Steven was a pitiful loner who roamed the school hallways with stooped shoulders and a sad countenance. He was ignored by everyone except Mr. Hirschi who figuratively put an arm around Steven, taught him the beginning steps of computer programming, and arranged for Steven to be excused from classes he wasn't attending anyway in order to spend time in the media center.

With encouragement from Mr. Hirschi, Steven created a computer program showing how motor vehicles could be modified to burn natural gas. I was invited to one of Steven's presentations and was not surprised to later learn that a local company was negotiating with Steven to use his program to teach the advantages of using natural gas to power cars and trucks.

After Steven gave several demonstrations to various interested groups, his personality changed. He became a popular "somebody"

who walked with his head up, cheerful and friendly. He was transformed through the efforts of a marvelous teacher who cared enough to bring another potential delinquent out of his shell.

By the time this book is published Mike Hirschi may no longer be working his magic with troubled youth. A new principal decided to strictly enforce the state curriculum, effectively preventing Mike from using his personal quest program with misfits. He became demoralized and almost quit his job rather than lose his health fighting a losing battle. Fortunately the new principal was soon replaced and Mike decided to stay one more year. Even so, it appears that state standardization may still win the battle. Mike may soon join a host of other extraordinary teachers who have left the public school system to pursue other interests. When I last talked with him, Mike told me he didn't know if he could survive another year.

Do you see anything wrong with this picture? Why are some of our best teachers leaving public schools and why is there such a proliferation of charter and private schools and homeschooling? How did we drift off course? Gaining a clear understanding of the problem may help us change focus and make the necessary correction more effectively and with greater zeal.

Tradition and Apathy

Many years ago I saw a film that made a lasting impression on my soul. *Fiddler On the Roof* is the story of a Jewish family in prewar Russia. The main character is Tevye, a lovable, God-fearing man trying to do what is best for his family. The fiddler is a symbol of Jewish traditions — traditions so powerful and enduring that they have shaped the lives of Jewish people for many generations. In an opening scene, Tevye explains with much power and conviction why the fiddler stays on the roof — why Jews continue with old ways — *"because it's TRADITION!"* The delightful story tells of Tevye's struggle to hold on to cherished traditions while his community is thrust into the 20th Century.

Soon after seeing the movie, I made a 35 mm filmstrip about public education's struggle to hold on to obsolete traditions in the face of better research-proven ways. I called it *Children on the Roof*. The opening line was patterned after the words of Tevye: "Children on the roof. Sounds crazy, huh? But, here in the big red schoolhouse you might say that each of us is a child on the roof trying to scratch out a pleasant simple tune

without losing our balance. Why do we stay up there? Because it's TRADITION!"

The message of my filmstrip that tradition prevents us from changing public education in fundamental ways is as true today as it was thirty years ago. Our society desperately clings to tradition. We love the status quo! It is our cherished friend! Our society has been talking about educational reform for years and some people feel there has been much progress, but I will show the changes that have occurred are merely attempts to shore up the old system of compulsory education. They are not a grand effort to design a new system. The changes are in fact not really changes, but merely an increase in pressure on teachers to do things that may be harmful to children.

There are some strong traditions that hold a vice-like grip on public education. These can be replaced with positive, more beneficial traditions, if we understand the roots of the harmful beliefs. Many people in our country believe the following traditions and hold them sacred:

- A first priority of public education is to teach children the basic skills — reading, writing, mathematics — and help all children reach a minimum level of proficiency.
- We must teach children the things they do not know to prepare them for a successful life.
- Children learn best from highly structured course material taught in a sequential, linear way. It is important that children have access to the course texts.
- Letter-grade report cards are an important evaluation/reporting tool.
- It is the job of local school boards to see that the state curriculum is taught in the public schools.
- Teachers are to be held accountable for teaching the official core curriculum.
- Standardized tests are important to ensure accountability.
- The role of parents is to support the schools with tax money and help as volunteers whenever they can.

Do these traditions sound familiar? Are you comfortable with them? If so, it means you may be part of the great mass of people who want schools to be better, but only if they improve within the traditions we hold so dear. We will also see that when the federal government enters the public education picture, the noose of tradition gets even tighter.

Political Interference

A few years ago President Ronald Reagan appointed a task force to look into the condition of public education. This group found our schools lacking in the things they were looking for and declared America to be a "nation at risk." It was implied in the official report that our country was fast slipping economically and militarily and would not be able to compete with other countries. Among other things, we were failing to teach our young people how to read, do math, and engage in scientific pursuits.

The *Nation at Risk* report launched a major effort by business leaders and politicians to reform education. These people declared an emergency and set in motion an extremely intense movement to fix education. The report caused politicians to tighten the screws on teachers to standardize students.

The pressure reached a peak a few years ago with a new battle cry: "Higher Standards!" This motto was adopted at a governors' and business executives' summit for educational reform held at IBM headquarters in Palisades, New York, in March of 1996. Each governor was asked to bring a prominent business executive with him to the meeting. Think of it. Governors took business leaders rather than educators to a meeting to reform education! It was a slap in the face to teachers. Can you imagine how physicians would feel if electricians and plumbers were to call a summit to reform medical practice?

The unfortunate thing about the Palisades meeting was that many educators meekly accepted the outcome. They didn't blink an eye or even gulp when asked to try harder to standardize students. The reason? Tradition! The new motto, *higher standards,* was not a call to redesign education. It was merely a summons for teachers to do what they have been expected to do all along — mold students into a common form, but at a higher level. It was a tradition that must be obeyed.

The governors and business executives, without any input from educators, opted to maintain a system of education patterned after factory, mass-production assembly lines. In this system educators are not

viewed as professionals who can make decisions about the needs of children, but as line workers who must carry out the mandates of managers. They must deliver the official state curriculum. Students are not viewed as responsible free agents who shape themselves, but as raw material to be molded into products by the workers. Thus students serve the needs of teachers who, in turn, are serving the needs of administrators and boards of education that are beholden to the governor and legislature. Parents are not part of the game. They are merely spectators on the sidelines. It is a backwards-facing system in which the only ones looking out for the needs of children are a few maverick teachers, principals, and parents who dare to go against the bureaucracy. It's tradition!

Higher standards was a smoke screen that obscured a harmful effect. It is much like the phrase, freedom of choice, that appeals to our sense of reason and fairness. What patriotic, thoughtful American could possibly be against freedom of choice or higher standards? Should we have freedom of choice in our schools? Certainly, but along with free choice comes responsibility for the choices that are made. Should we have high standards? Of course we should, but high standards for what? Do we want high standards for forcing teachers to do the impossible task of making students alike, or shall we have high standards for nurturing people as they were meant to be — unique individuals?

A long time ago Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote some wise words that become an indictment of what has been happening as a result of so-called government reform:

> The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil. It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do. It is chosen and foreordained, and only he holds the key to his own secret.

"It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do." Did you catch the significance of this? For the past several years the standards literature has been filled with the phrase, "what all children should know and be able to do." Governors and business executives were very serious about standardizing children. They arranged to have subject matter specialists identify what all children should know and be able to do in each subject area and at every grade level. They then had tests developed to measure student attainment at predetermined checkpoints. The strategists then used the tests to hold teachers accountable for delivering the lock-step curriculum — all in the name of higher stan-

dards. I will relate just two examples that were described in Susan Ohanian's great little book, *One Size Fits Few*. In one state, the standards specify that *all* first graders will be able to "distinguish initial, medial, and final sounds in single syllable words," and *all* sixth, seventh and eighth graders (11-, 12-, and 13-year-olds) will be able to "detect the different historical points of view on historical events," including "the influence of new practices of church self-government among Protestants on the development of democratic practices and ideas of federalism." How many adults do you think can do either of these things? Can you? More importantly, is this necessary information that every person should know and be able to do?

You can see how absurd these requirements are. Can you also see what these kinds of standards do to teachers who are expected to ensure that *all* children can do them? The middle grade requirement on Protestantism is so laughably foolish I will not comment on it, but for the phonics die-hards let me challenge you to pick any one syllable word on this page and distinguish the initial, medial, and final sounds that it contains. Can you do it with the word, "*to*"? What about, "*you*," "*on*," "*the*," or "*this?*" The reason you can't do it is that words do not contain the individual sounds of the letters. When we vocalize a word it is always a blend of the sounds of the individual letters. The blend of the sounds is different from the sounds of individual letters. What about the one-syllable words "laugh" or "could"? Do you see how it confuses and frustrates children to be expected to do impossible things, and why many of them learn to hate reading?

These are just two examples of thousands of similar standards that have been concocted by subject matter specialists. If you have ever seen anything more cleverly designed to take the joy out of learning, I'd be surprised. Along with ridiculous, impossible standards comes the inevitable standardized achievement test batteries designed to hold teachers accountable, but accountable for what? It would appear, although I know this is not the intention, that legislatures are trying to hold teachers accountable for destroying children's natural zest for learning.

This great pressure on teachers to standardize students has had a demoralizing effect. They know it's not possible to do what they are being required to do. At the same time, teachers do not realize they have the power to overcome the absurd demands, so many meekly succumb or leave the profession to seek more satisfying employment with much higher pay. I believe one of the main reasons we have the greatest teacher

shortage in our history is not primarily because of low salaries, but society's low view of the teaching profession and the lack of trust and respect that results from it. Teachers who remain in the system out of great love for children try to make the best of the adverse conditions, but they are still affected. The saddest part is that students are the ones who have suffered the most, not only from pressures to conform, but also from lost opportunity to blossom as unique individuals. Alfie Kohn, a prominent educational critic describes the problem as follows:

> We are facing an educational emergency in this country. The intellectual life is being squeezed out of schools — or at least prevented from developing in schools — as tests take over the curriculum. Punitive consequences are being meted out on the basis of manifestly inadequate and inappropriate exams. Children are literally becoming sick with fear over their scores. Massive numbers of students — particularly low-income and minority students — may be pushed out of school altogether.

The publication each year of standardized achievement test scores in major newspapers is done to foster competition and hold teachers accountable. The saddest part of this is that people do not recognize the mounting tragedy. They fail to see that we are putting teachers, principals, parents, and especially children, into an untenable situation. It's a great mystery to me why so many people, especially smart governors and legislators, do not know that it is literally impossible to standardize children who are each a unique creation.

There are many signs that the increased pressure on teachers to standardize students is harmful. Because schools do not nurture positive differences, our youth are displaying differences in other ways, some of them not so positive. There is a growing youth rebellion against uniformity. Many schools are stagnating, and we see an exodus to private schools, home schools, and charter schools. Some students are dropping out altogether, even dropping out of life, as suicide has become the third highest cause of death among teenagers. We may soon overtake Japan as the suicide capitol of the world where the high-pressure education system is a major contributor to horrendous social problems.

The problem of forced standardization is having other detrimental effects. In Utah, where I live, we are faced with a serious teacher shortage,

and it appears the same situation exists all over the country. Only a small, shrinking percentage of high school graduates are interested in pursuing a career in teaching. There are few high school graduates who can see themselves working as non-thinking robots on an education assembly line where they are required to crunch children into uniform packages.

Of course there are many schools that profess to nurture diversity, and some actually do it, but all too often many of these schools only pay attention to individual learning styles and other differences in order to help children all learn the same, government-mandated curriculum at different rates and in different ways. Unfortunately, the increased pressure of is making it increasingly difficult for teachers and parents to meet the needs of individual children, even in schools that have built their reputations on nurturing differences. There are relatively few public schools that actually have the uninhibited freedom to nurture student differences.

As you read through this book you will discover other reasons why the traditions mentioned at the beginning of this chapter are so detrimental to children. You will learn why these traditions combine with public apathy to fiercely resist significant changes. But you will also learn of the great opportunity to overcome these problems and restore dignity and respect to a sick institution.

I have tried to show what happens when public education compels teachers to engage in the impossible goal of nurturing sameness. This is the strongest of all the traditions. It regulates and governs the thinking of parents, school boards, and especially legislators. We have been doing it for so long that nearly everyone thinks it's the way it's supposed to be. Many parents remember their school days with fondness and want their children to have the same experiences they had. These memories cloud the vision and do not allow other possibilities to emerge. In the next chapter I will show what can happen when we change our focus about learners and about the content of learning.

Chapter 3

My Mental Metamorphosis

> Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.
> Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fears, our presence automatically liberates others. — Marianne Williamson

When I first read these words of Marianne Williamson, often credited to Nelson Mandella, they really made an impression on me. I suddenly realized I was guilty of feeling insecure and fearful of letting my light shine. Now these words give me courage to tell my story. It's an unusual story, but an important one that I need to tell. I want you, the reader, to understand that I tell my story not for self-aggrandizement, but because it sets the stage for improving education in schools and homes. May *my* light energize *yours*.

I have always been intrigued with the process by which an ugly worm becomes a beautiful butterfly. I am also fascinated with insect metamorphosis as a metaphor for changing human habits of thinking. We have the power to change wrong thoughts into beautiful truths. Mental habits

are often as difficult to change as physical ones because of tradition, but every hundred years or so a revolutionary idea pops up to forever alter our mental worldview. This is what happened to me when, as an elementary school principal, I discovered a different way of thinking about schooling and of relating with teachers, parents, and children. I am going to share the process of my own *mental metamorphosis* in the hope it will assist you in a transformation as exciting as mine.

Shortly after I started my teaching career I began to sense some discrepancies I couldn't understand. A strange, uneasy feeling persisted for years and then a mind-altering event occurred. I was serving as immediate past president on the Board of Directors of the Utah Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. In 1972 the "Back to Basics" movement was getting up a full head of steam, fueled by Rudolph Flesch's book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, and the behaviorist philosophy of B. F. Skinner. Everyone was jumping on the bandwagon to teach children how to read at younger and younger ages. This was to be accomplished through drills in phonics and through the use of Skinner's behavior modification techniques. Many people in Utah were falling for what they thought would be a panacea. It was to be a revival of old techniques enhanced with a new gimmick. All of this occurred while schools were at the same time in the early stages of learning how to use what was called a language-experience approach to teaching reading, an approach that tried to connect children's learning with their experiences and their need to communicate orally and in writing. It was an approach that offered much promise, but since it departed from the traditional way of doing things, people were suspicious and were left receptive to the fancy slogan, Back to Basics.

Because I showed great distress over the growing popularity of "Back to Basics," I was invited to write a position paper for Utah ASCD that would give a different perspective. After many hours of reflection, study, and several drafts, I presented my paper to the board of directors. It was adopted as an official position of Utah ASCD and was printed with the subversive title, "Learning to Read Should *Not* be the Primary Purpose of Elementary Education."

Need I tell you this position raised the hackles of many people who embraced phonetic behaviorism? It became a thorn to them, so much so that I was challenged to a debate. To make a long story short, the debate was held before a large, statewide audience. It was a debate that was to make an indelible impression on my memory. As part of the debate I pre-

sented the "Children on The Roof" filmstrip I had prepared to support our side. As mentioned earlier, it showed how schools are impervious to change because of "T-R-A-D-I-T-I-O-N, " ... thus, "Back to Basics."

Although I didn't know it at the time, the points I presented in defense of the ASCD position were to become the forerunners of the six pivotal principles for improving public education. In my position paper I started with a quote by the great English philosopher, John Locke, written more than two hundred years ago:

> This much for learning to read, which let him never be driven to. Cheat him into it if you can, but make it not a business for him. 'Tis better it be a year later before he can read than that he should this way get an aversion to learning.

An aversion to learning? Reading as a business? The idea that very young children should be taught reading with phonics and behavior modification techniques was a key issue for the "Back to Basics" devotees. I'm again highly distressed that in my own state, as I write these very words, the governor is launching a reading initiative similar to the one that was in vogue many years ago. Adding to my distress is my conviction that governors and other politicians who dictate school policies do not understand they are exacerbating the very problems they are trying to solve. They impose things on teachers to impose on children that actually squelch children's desire and ability to read fluently. They unintentionally instill an *aversion to learning*. Several of my own children had their desire to read undermined by the "Back-to-Basics" methods. Equally disturbing to me is the apathy and meek acceptance by teachers and parents of harmful practices.

In the ASCD position paper I presented three goals for elementary education that were, and still are, more important than children learning how to read:

- Help children develop their inquiring, creative minds.
- Help children develop individual talents, identity, and feelings of worth as members of the human family.
- Help children develop powers of expression and communication.

Now, before you jump to the conclusion that I am against reading, please go back and examine the goals again. You will see why these goals

do not disparage reading, but restore the essentiality and joy of a wonderful way to acquire knowledge through personal inquiry, the first goal. At the time, I was troubled over the behaviorist movement to teach reading as a mechanical process devoid of life and vitality. The phonics devotees were recommending word analysis and dreary drills instead of helping children discover their hunger for truth and reasons to read. With these goals I showed how the so called "basics," especially reading, would be learned in a more natural way that would be used and embraced as an integral part of children's lives.

Soon after publication of the ASCD paper something happened to confirm the Utah ASCD position. As part of a project in participatory management, the teachers at Hill Field Elementary School, where I was then serving as principal, decided to hold goal-setting meetings with each child's parents, one-on-one, at the beginning of the school year. The teachers asked parents to come to the meetings prepared to answer three questions:

- What would you like the school to help you accomplish for your child this year?
- What are your child's special talents, gifts, interests, abilities, and needs that we should keep in mind?
- How can we work together to accomplish our goals?

Because it was a new, unexpected experience for parents to be included in decisions affecting their children, some had difficulty answering these questions, especially the first one. Very few had thought about school purposes. The state had always done this thinking for them. Now they were being invited to think about the specific needs of an individual child, and how the school could respond.

To help parents answer the first question we developed surveys for them to indicate their priorities for the education of each child for that year. Included on the surveys were subject matter goals, such as reading, writing, mathematics, science, as well as things like self-esteem, love of learning, confidence, work, human relations, and a place for other responses. (See Appendix A for a sample survey.)

When we tallied the priorities surveys along with the informal questions, we were surprised to find that the top priorities of the parents were not subject matter accomplishment, but human goals like the ones I had

included in the ASCD position paper! Even more amazing was the correspondence of the survey results with the results obtained in five other elementary school communities where we conducted the same survey. The order was slightly different, but in each school the top three priorities of parents for the education of their children were essentially the same. The basic subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic, placed at 6th, 7th, and 8th, with science, music, geography, art, and other content areas further down the line.

The top three priorities of parents for the education of their children were first, individual talents and gifts, confidence, and self-esteem; second, communication, respect, and getting along; and third, curiosity, passion for learning, and work. Serendipitously I noticed that the priority groupings could be labeled with three "I" words, identity, interaction, and inquiry:

- Identity: Individual talents and gifts, confidence, and self-esteem.
- Interaction: Communication, respect, and getting along.
- Inquiry: Curiosity, passion for learning and work.

It was an exciting discovery for me to learn that the parents' priorities could be condensed into three words! These key words — identity, interaction, and inquiry — became catalysts for us to focus our attention away from the needs of politicians to the needs of children. When we focus on clear goals, the human brain begins to create, even while we sleep, strategies for accomplishing the goals. It's a wonderful, miraculous process!

We became enthralled with this process when we discovered a story published in *In Context* in 1988 by Marilyn King, "Ordinary Olympians," which related how she accomplished the incredible feat of placing second in the trials for the Moscow games after suffering a serious spinal injury in an automobile accident that had left her unable to walk. Lying in a hospital bed in traction and unable to train, Marilyn spent much of the next few months viewing films of her pentathlon events and forming mental images of how she would perform when she got well. We were inspired by her words:

> We know that in order to accomplish any lofty goal, you must have a crystal clear image of that goal and keep it uppermost

> in your mind. We know that by maintaining that image, the "how-to" steps necessary for the realization of the goal will begin to emerge spontaneously. If you cannot imagine the goal, the "how-to" steps will never emerge and you'll never do it.… The first step to any achievement is to dare to imagine you can do it.

I hope you catch the significance of King's amazing prescription for success. With the three I's as crystal clear goals we were able to begin a process of changing our thinking about education. We announced the results of the surveys to parents and invited them to join with the school in fostering their three top priorities, which we introduced as the three dimensions of human greatness. The mission of our school now became clear. We would no longer be slaves to a state-imposed curriculum that had no goals. The school district had always expected us to teach the subjects of the curriculum without us knowing why we were doing it. Now we had some goals that we could keep "uppermost" in our minds to guide our efforts.

At about this time I discovered a book by George Odiorne, *Management and the Activity Trap*, which helped me understand how public education had evolved to have such an obsession with curriculum. He said, "Most people get caught in the Activity Trap. They become so enmeshed in activity they lose sight of why they are doing it, and the activity becomes a false goal, an end in itself." Now substitute the word "curriculum" for the word "activity" in Odiorne's statement and we can see what has happened to public education: Most people get caught in the curriculum trap. They get so enmeshed in curriculum they lose sight of why they are doing it, and the curriculum becomes a false goal, an end in itself.

This was an exciting, flash-of-light discovery for me. It helped me understand how our society has, over many years, developed an erroneous philosophy of education, and how children and teachers have become innocent victims. It's TRADITION for people to think of student achievement in curriculum as *the* goal of education. The clincher on this is the revered letter-grade report card and grade-point averages used by schools as marks of student accomplishment. These devices enshrine curriculum as *the* goal of education.

When we discovered that Identity, Interaction, and Inquiry were the top three priorities of parents for the education of their children, we

were puzzled as to why student achievement in curriculum came in a poor second. If the "basics" were so important, why didn't parents rate them higher for their children? As we pondered on this we were compelled to consider the possibility that subject matter content, or curriculum, should be in a different category than human development goals. We decided that student achievement in curriculum should no longer be viewed as the goal of education but as a means to help students grow in Identity, Interaction, and Inquiry: the three dimensions of human greatness.

I believe this is the first major mental hurdle that must be surmounted before we can begin to change public education. Student achievement in curriculum should not be viewed as the *goal* of education, but rather as a *means* to accomplish higher human development goals. Such a view is not easy to come by, especially when powerful forces are pushing for student achievement in content as the main reason for schools to exist. State legislatures and boards of education armed with standardized achievement tests make it extremely difficult for parents and teachers to view curriculum as anything but the main goal of education. The bureaucracy imposes a curriculum on teachers that in turn is to be imposed on students, assessed with standardized achievement tests, graded with report cards, and ranked with grade point averages.

It should be clear from this that curriculum is a false goal — an end in and of itself for education. Yet it's the force behind nearly all decisions affecting students and teachers. Even the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) reflects our society's obsession with curriculum. When I was on the national board of directors, many years ago, I suggested a better title for this organization — The Association for Human Development. I raised a question that was ignored at that time — why should curriculum development be more important than human development as a purpose for the organization?

The practice of viewing curriculum as the primary goal of education is often very destructive. Standardized curriculum lowers the feelings of self-worth of all but the high achievers. Many students drop out of school and become burdens to society instead of the contributors they could have become. Our jails are full of people whose feelings of self-worth were destroyed by the curriculum-as-goal philosophy. This is a terrible waste that can be avoided with a different focus.

Another reason our society views curriculum as the goal and major purpose of education is that nearly everyone believes student achievement in

curriculum can be measured, and those who control education need something by which to hold students and teachers accountable. In Chapter Seven I will show that standardized tests measure only shallow, temporary learning. They especially do not measure the quality of teaching!

In the schools where we switched from curriculum as goal to curriculum as means we developed some instruments to assess student growth in the three dimensions of human greatness. We found ways to assess student growth in individual gifts, in kindness and communication, and in curiosity and creativity. The instruments we developed were used by students, teachers, and parents alike. Since nurturing greatness was a team effort, all three marked "report cards" separately and used them as a point of discussion in periodic growth assessment meetings. This assessment of student growth in greatness became a major factor in allowing us to view curriculum as means rather than goal of education. It became clear to us that the significant measurement — the one most meaningful — was to assess growth in what we were trying to attain: human greatness. Assessing student achievement in curriculum was only relevant as long as it enhanced growth in individual greatness. (See Appendix B for copies of the evaluation instruments for parents and students.)

Human Needs

Another event that helped me view curriculum as means rather than goal occurred when I compared the priorities of parents with the three main goals I had proposed earlier in my ASCD position paper. The parental priorities and ASCD goals are the same, except in a different order! The fact that the surveys of thousands of parents in six schools turned up the same results, results that matched the goals of my ASCD position paper, led me to surmise that these three priorities are something innate within every person. They seem to represent three core drives within each of us:

The drive to be a recognized "somebody" (Identity) This drive is much more than the need to merely survive or exist. It is an intense need of the human spirit to fulfill one's unique potential as a special contributor to the world. It is a need to count for something, to have a sense of self-worth. It is a drive to answer the questions, who am I? Why do I exist? and What is the purpose of my life? It is a never-ending quest for Identity.

The drive for warm human relationships (Interaction). This drive confirms another well-known characteristic of human nature — we are all born with a need to love and be loved. Everyone feels a deep need to *belong* and have a sense of community with other human beings. We have a built-in need to communicate with others. This is the second most powerful motivating force of human nature. It is the force of Interaction.

The drive for truth and knowledge (Inquiry) Human beings are born curious. They are born with a strong drive to make sense of the world and to acquire personal knowledge and wisdom. Curiosity is the third most powerful motivating force of human nature. It is the force of personal Inquiry.

If these innate drives are universal, as it appears they are, it means we can hold children responsible for their own learning and development. Everyone is designed to reach for greatness. At birth children have a built-in drive for self-realization, companionship, and truth (or identity, interaction, and inquiry). This makes me believe we can trust the spiritual side of human nature, if not the physical. I like the way Marcus Aurelius put it in his *Meditations*:

> Look within;
> Within is the fountain of all good.
> Such a fountain,
> Where springing waters can never fail,
> So thou dig still deeper and deeper.

If human beings are born with freedom of thought, they are each responsible for their own thoughts. It follows then that people are responsible for their own learning and behavior. This is the second mental hurdle that must be overcome before we can apply the principles in this book. We must change our focus to believe that children are capable of deciding what learning they should pursue. This leads to a belief that children are basically good and want to learn, grow, and develop into the best person each can become.

Compulsory learning must be abandoned if we are to help children reach their full potentiality. If human beings have a natural drive for Identity, Interaction, and Inquiry, we do more harm than good when we attempt to demand learning. It is as natural for the human brain to seek truth and knowledge as it is for the lungs to breath or the heart to beat. Would we ever consider compulsory breathing or compulsory beating

for these two organs in the same way we have compulsory learning for the human brain?

These then are the two giant mental hurdles that must be cleared before we can change our focus and begin to change education. We have an opportunity to see with new eyes and accept three vital concepts:

- Curriculum is a means of accomplishing educational goals, not a goal in and of itself. In other words, curriculum, or subject matter content, is our slave, not our master. It is wrong for someone to decide what all children should know and be able to do, and impose it on teachers to impose on children.
- Students can be trusted to design their own learning. They have a built-in drive for mental, spiritual, and physical growth.
- The role of parents and teachers is that of wise mentors to help children discover who they are and catch a vision of what they can become.

Myths That Plague Traditional Education

This mental metamorphosis changed my perspective of education. It became the basis for my overcoming the myths that have plagued public education for a very long time, myths that have grown stronger with each passing year.

- *Achievement in curriculum should be the major goal and purpose of schools.* Subject matter content is a tool, not a goal. It should be used to help individuals find out who they are and develop their unique gifts so they can realize their full potential as valuable contributors to the world.
- *Grade point averages in curriculum are the ultimate symbol of educational accomplishment.* Wisdom and human accomplishment cannot be measured by traditional methods — not by report cards, tests, time in classrooms or grades completed.
- *Curriculum should be the driving force that regulates teaching and by which we can hold teachers accountable.* Teachers should be held accountable for nurturing human greatness. This requires a different curriculum for each child and a partnership with parents.

- *Curriculum is delivered most efficiently with textbooks.* Curriculum should rarely be "delivered." Textbooks often are not the best source of current information about any subject.
- *Education is the result of what happens in public schools when students are required to learn curriculum.* Education is the result of personal inquiry. Compulsory education is an oxymoron. We only grow in knowledge and wisdom by choosing to do so.

If you can accept these premises, or at least consider the possibility they are true, you are ready to begin the process of making the substantial improvements in education that are found in Part II of this book.

Part II

The Six Principles of Nurturing Human Greatness

Chapter 4

The First Principle: Value Positive Diversity

> One day our descendants will think it incredible that we paid so much attention to things like the amount of melanin in our skin or the shape of our eyes or our gender instead of the unique identities of each of us as complex human beings.
>
> —Franklin Thomas

When my 14-year-old grandson, Trevor, asked me if I would visit his art class at Centerville Junior High School as a guest artist, I was a bit apprehensive. In the first place, it's been a while since I've produced art of any kind. In the second, it's been a long time since I've worked with 8th graders. As I thought it over I warmed to the idea and told him to tell his teacher I would be happy to fill this request.

With three or four days to prepare, I decided to use about half of the class period showing some of my art pieces of long ago — paintings, drawings, and carvings in various media — and then involve the class in a creative activity for the remainder of the time. I was skeptical whether my artwork would qualify me to be called a great artist, but also hopeful that I could establish some credibility for engaging students in the art activity.

The activity was an exercise in using one's imagination to visualize a picture in an abstract squiggle and elaborate on it with pencil, crayon, or marker. I thus prepared in advance a set of two squiggles for each student, each on the opposite side of a sheet of 8½ by 11 cardstock paper.

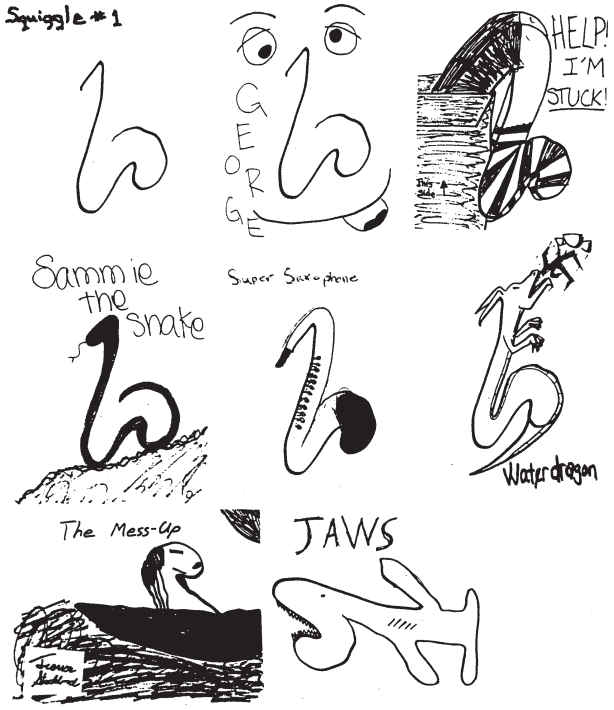
The big day arrived and I appeared at Trevor's classroom at the appointed time. His teacher, Mrs. Taylor, greeted me warmly and then asked him to introduce his guest. I then showed my art pieces and briefly told about each one. I tried to emphasize the opportunity we have to use our talents to make others happy. I explained how I had created each piece to make life brighter for a needy person. I had borrowed them back for my lesson. Luckily, my brief presentation seemed to establish some credibility, for Trevor and his friends were politely attentive.

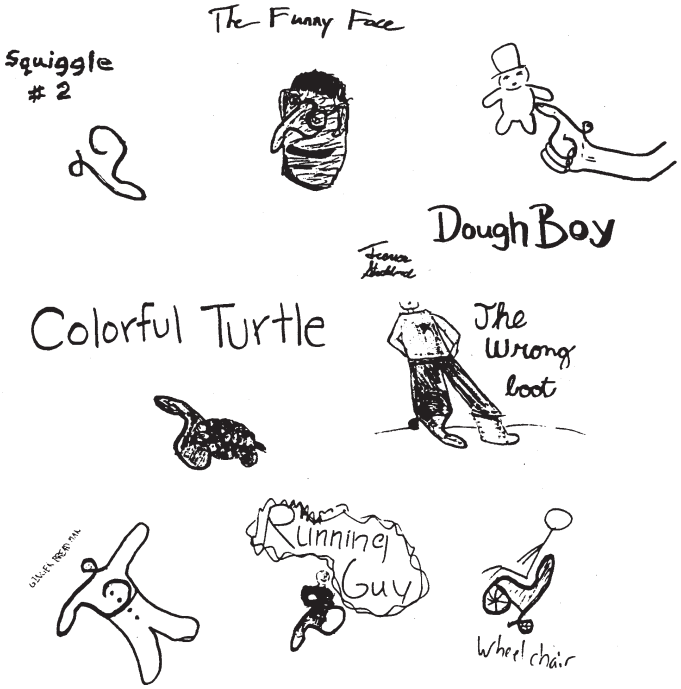
After showing my artwork, I told the story of a man I had known who was extremely talented in making an amazing picture out of any squiggle. I then passed out the squiggles and invited Trevor and his friends to choose one of the two squiggles and make a picture out of it. They were instructed to rotate the squiggles until they could see a possible picture and then use pencil, crayon, or marker to finish the picture. They were then to label the picture with a title and be prepared to show their creation and tell about it.

Now, what do you suppose happened? As each student stood and showed his or her creation and received applause, I could sense feelings of pride. Did every child see and create the same picture from the chosen squiggle? In Trevor's class there were 15 students. If there had been a hundred, a thousand, or even a million, would there have been any two squiggle pictures exactly alike? So that you understand the squiggle exercise better I have reproduced some of them on the following page.

Now let's suppose we were to give some instructions about what to see in the squiggle and even tell you how the picture is to be drawn. Would any two squiggles be alike now? Would any be alike if we were to hold the child's hand and draw the picture for him or her? What happens when we try to force or even invite conformity? In sharp contrast to the children who are smothered with well-intentioned demands to conform, we can envision a remarkable picture of a generation of children and youth valued for what they know, can do, and become. It is a bright picture of amazing potential and remarkable accomplishment.

It's easy to see why nurturing positive human diversity is the opposite of valuing and nurturing sameness. What's not so easy is to actually live by this principle. After going down the wrong road for so many years, it becomes a habit that is hard to break. We must truly believe that it's better to nurture diversity than to engage in the impossible task of nurturing sameness.


Squiggle #1
GEORGE
HELP! I'M STUCK!
Sammie the Snake
Super Saxophone
Water dragon
The Mess-Up
JAWS


The Funny Face
Squiggle # 2
DoughBoy
Colorful Turtle
The Wrong boot
Running Guy
Wheelchair

What does it mean to value positive diversity? It means you deeply care about yourself and all other people in the world. It means you appreciate your unique gifts and the gifts of everyone around you. It means that you often collaborate with others and combine your gifts with theirs to create new, previously unknown ideas, circumstances, or products. When you nurture positive diversity you foster positive qualities — the traits that benefit humanity; not negative, often burdensome, behaviors. It means you find some good in others, no matter how wretched or evil they may appear. It means you see beauty in the people of every race, religion, or political persuasion. To value diversity is to value people, to love and cherish every person in the human family as they are — not as you wish they would become.

I've been acculturated to view those different from me with suspicion. This puts me in the company of many others in our country. We live in a society of people trained to devalue those who are different from us. Most of this training is not planned and deliberate; it is complex and very subtle as we grow up watching how people treat one another, and especially as we become accustomed to how we were educated in the public school system. It's a very powerful tradition. Most of us were educated to put aside our gifts and talents in favor of succumbing to an imposed curriculum. In the competition for grades we learned that conformity was much more valuable and important than creativity or diversity of ideas. We learned that it doesn't pay to be different.

On the educational assembly line we were not allowed to express our individual need to grow according to our internal blueprint. All of us were required to study algebra, for example, in order to graduate from high school, even though very few of us would ever use it in our lifetime. We were force-fed this subject at the expense of gifts and talents that were crying out to be recognized and developed. While algebra may have been appropriate for the few of us with mathematical talent, it was a waste of time for the vast majority who could have been busy developing their own, unique gifts. I don't mean to pick on algebra. It would be the same for any other subject of the curriculum that all children are *required* to study while a person's unique gifts are crying out for development and expression. This is only one of the many subtle ways public education taught us that diversity is not welcome. The requirements to graduate from high school are basically the same for all.

It would be an entirely different story if we were to nurture individual diversity and hold every child responsible for his or her own learning

and development. Why not, as a requirement for graduation, expect each student to prepare a comprehensive presentation to show his or her qualifications and plans for making a contribution to the world? The candidate for graduation would show courses taken, skills attained, services rendered, and, most of all, a plan to use one's gifts, knowledge, and talents to be a contributor. In this way graduation ceremonies would be personalized and different for each young adult. Graduation celebrations would occur at different ages, times, and places, and distributed throughout the year.

This concept was first introduced by Maurice Gibbons in an article in *Kappan* over twenty years ago. In it he described what public high schools would be like if they were patterned after Walkabout, a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood for young Australian aborigines. In this rite the young native must go for an extended journey into the harsh Australian Outback, alone and without provisions, to prove he can survive and return to be a valuable contributor to the tribe. Gibbons gave three examples of what high schools would be like if students were to have freedom of choice about what to learn and were to be held responsible for their choices. I remember being thrilled at the vision of a different kind of high school that Gibbons portrayed. He called his vision *Challenge Education,* a vision that invited student growth in five challenge areas:

- Adventure: a challenge to the student's daring, endurance, and skill in an unfamiliar environment.
- Creativity: a challenge to explore, cultivate, and express his or her own imagination in some aesthetically pleasing form.
- Service: a challenge to identify a human need for assistance and provide it; to express caring without expectation of reward.
- Practical Skill: a challenge to explore a utilitarian activity, to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to work in that field, and to produce something of use.
- Logical Inquiry: a challenge to explore curiosity, to formulate a question or problem of personal importance, and to pursue an answer or solution systematically and, wherever appropriate, by investigation.

Do you see how these challenges restore responsibility for learning back upon the student where it belongs? Soon after reading Gibbon's Walkabout article I met a man who took the message to heart and actually organized a high school that was patterned after Gibbon's vision. Arnie Langberg serendipitously became my roommate at a conference on reforming education. We lay awake most of several nights talking about what he was doing to create a different experience for high school students. Students enrolling in Arnie's High School Redirection were told, up front, that to graduate, they must show they are ready to be contributing members of society.

What happened was amazing. Many of the students had failed or dropped out from the traditional system. Since they had not had prior experience with school freedom and responsibility, there was an initial period of searching to find self-direction and purpose. Eventually, nearly every student found a quest and graduated in their own ceremony where they demonstrated the gifts, talents, and knowledge that they would use to benefit the community. One of the graduates was described by *Denver Post* writer, Mark Stevens:

> Michelle Ramey isn't the type to get lost in a crowd, even among last year's crop of graduates from Denver public schools. She stood out as the first student to graduate from Denver Public Schools High School Redirection.
>
> The school is unusual (no grades, no test scores) and so is its graduation: No pomp, no circumstance; No cap and gown formality. The ceremony involved Michelle and eight of her teachers and friends. The setting was the living room of her advisor's northeast Denver home.
>
> Michelle gave her own valedictorian speech. In it she reviewed a long list of accomplishments in three challenge areas in which the school requires study — global awareness, career exploration and creative expression. She told about studying calculus under her principal, Arnie Langberg; about planting fruit trees on the Navajo reservation in Arizona; about working with geriatric patients in a hospital; about her in-depth study of Senegal; and her apprenticeship with wig master Sami Rene Gabriel at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. And, at the ripe age of 16, Michelle told

about her plans to attend community college and earn a cosmetology license to avoid the trap of "flipping hamburgers." At the end of the ceremony Michelle's friends and teachers took turns showering her with praise.

Contrast this rite of passage with the mass production graduation ceremonies that occur in our high schools each spring, where hundreds of students line up to receive their diplomas. My experience tells me that only a small percentage of high school graduates know what they want to do with their "education." Education for mass mediocrity takes a heavy toll. I recently attended the high school graduation ceremony for a grandson and waited patiently for over 400 graduates to file through the long line for a diploma. I wondered how many of these students were equipped to be contributing members of society since I know that a large percentage would not pursue higher education. You could tell that many of these youth were fed up with school; they wanted no more of it.

In contrast, if we were to honor and develop positive human diversity, our public high schools would be much different than they are today. Students would be encouraged and helped to develop their own personal gifts, talents, and interests, and in this way build a vision of a promising future using their own assets to make a better world. I believe the massacre at Columbine High School and other high school murders might have been avoided if the killers had been helped by parents and the public school system to recognize and develop their personal gifts and see their bright future as valuable contributors to their community.

If it is so important for legislators and business executives to hold teachers accountable, why not hold them accountable for a mission that they can achieve? Instead of giving teachers the impossible assignment of producing student uniformity, why not hold teachers accountable for nurturing positive human diversity? The reason why this is possible is that each person is unique and was meant to be that way. By holding educators accountable for nurturing positive diversity, we return to teachers the right and privilege to exercise professional judgment about the curriculum content and teaching methods that are best for each child.

Developing Identity

The greatest need of every person born on this planet is to find out who s/he is. It is a need that never dies, and it grows more intense with each passing year. As parents and teachers we can help children discover

who they are and their great personal worth, if we embrace identity as a crystal clear, first priority purpose for education. Remember Marilyn King's prescription for success? When a person maintains, at the front of their minds, a crystal-clear focus on an important goal, the brain begins to develop strategies for accomplishing the goal, even while we sleep. I call it mental magic.

The catch to this is that it must be a whole-hearted *focus,* not merely a weak acceptance of a different goal for education. We must truly believe that positive human diversity is worth striving for. We must understand the great advantages of constantly working hard to develop positive human diversity as a viable alternative to standardization. We must know deep in our hearts that every person is an individual who is designed and meant to be unique, and that we do damage when we try to mold children to fit a common shoe.

A few years ago I read a wonderful book that opened my eyes to a world of unique people, and how thrilling it is to live among them. The book, *You Are Extraordinary* by Roger J. Williams, is a scholarly, scientific portrayal of humans who are distinctive in every way. In the book, he asserts that

> there is now abundant evidence — I have assembled a conclusive assortment in this book — that on our arrival as newborn babies each of us brings along a host of highly distinctive inborn characteristics.… We, as individuals, cannot be averaged with other people. Inborn individuality is a highly significant factor in all our lives — as inescapable as the fact that we are human. The basic answer to the question "why are you an individual?" is that your body in every detail, including your entire nervous system and your brain (thinking apparatus), is highly distinctive. You are not built like anyone else.

This means that it's not just our fingerprints that reveal us, but our every feature. Williams convincingly showed how every one of our body parts are unlike those of any other person's. Sure, we all have arms, legs, eyes, ears, nose, and toes, but they are our very own distinctively designed parts that combine to make a unique person. You are probably aware of the science of being able to identify people by their voice patterns and the relatively new technology of digital facial imaging. Every person has a distinctive voice and face!

This isn't all. The whole nervous system of every person is unlike that of any other. This is the finding that has the greatest implication for education, and especially for this book. Dr. Williams, the recipient of many awards for his research, found that "every individual is highly distinctive with respect to the numbers and distribution of nerve endings of all kinds — in eyes, ears, noses, and mouths, as well as in all areas of the skin." Williams goes on to say:

> This has tremendous meaning because our nerve endings are our only source of information from the outside world. If the nerve endings are different in number and are distributed differently, this means that the information we get from the outside world is somewhat distinctive for each of us.

Just think of the implications of this for education! After the nerve endings, which are the receptors of information, comes a distinctive transmission system which carries the information to a distinctive brain which then decides what to do with the information; where and how to store it and how it connects with other information that is already there. Every unique human brain is at the top of a unique nervous system. We all think differently. Even though we all have a brain, it is a brain that works in its own unique way. Each of us is one of a kind!

Unity

This brings us to the idea of unity as the beneficial outcome of valuing and nurturing diversity. *You can't have unity in any endeavor unless the participants value human diversity.* Why? Because that's the way we are. Human beings *are* diverse. How can we be united in anything unless we value one another? If you have a penny and I have a penny and we exchange pennies, you still have one cent and I still have one cent. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange ideas, you now have two ideas and I have two ideas. Then when we blend the two ideas together they give birth to other ideas we can share — on and on.

To value diversity is to value people and ideas that are different from mine. When two or more people value one another, they can learn from each other and blend their unique gifts, ideas, and knowledge, and make the total greater than the sum of their parts. To value diversity is to value collaboration over competition and democratic interaction over autocratic control. To value people is to value variety.

Well, what else can we expect and hope for? When most adults were forged in society's furnace of suspicion, when they learned that differences are unhealthy, should we be surprised when adults have trouble getting along? Could it be any different? What would the future be like if children were to learn, early on, that positive differences are extremely valuable? What would the world be like if public schools were to abandon their obsession with standardization and adopt a mission to help students discover and develop their true, original selves?

Once again I turn to Dr. Williams for his profound insight:

> Children ought to begin at an early age to understand the individuality that they and all others possess. Children of kindergarten age have different ears for pitch, rhythm, and melody; each has his own color vision, and in any classroom there will be many different reactions to colors and color combinations; their taste buds will not agree; their judgments regarding a host of odors and flavors will not agree; their reaction times and motor skills — including the way they can use their hands — will be distinctive. Some knowledge about all this … would be a wholesome and early inoculation against the disease that makes people hate anyone who is "different."

If everyone in a school community — parents, teachers and children — were to focus on helping one another develop their unique identities, they would learn more and more about their valuable selves and the value of others with each passing year. They would learn of the many kinds of jobs and opportunities that are available to benefit society and require the gifts, skills, and knowledge that only they possess. In this way there would be many fewer misfits, fewer people who hate their work and are miserable doing things they were not prepared to do.

When Socrates said "Know Thyself," it was a prescription for what a true education is all about. It has been thousands of years since he uttered these words. Now we may have the first chance to adopt them as a cornerstone of public education. When identity is a crystal clear focus, a clear goal, it calls for us to value and nurture positive human diversity as the number one principle for improving public education.

In summary, there are at least ten reasons why we should change our educational focus to nurture positive human diversity:

- Human beings were designed to be individuals.
- Each person is born with a unique way of assimilating and processing information.
- People have a central drive for self-fulfillment.
- To nurture positive diversity is to work in harmony with the central needs of individual children.
- Authoritarian, imposed curriculum works against human motivation to learn, lowers student feelings of worth, and limits potential.
- It's impossible to standardize human beings. Teachers who are directed to do it often feel like failures.
- People have much greater potential than we have supposed.
- To nurture each child's unique gifts is to unlock incredible accomplishment.
- Positive Human Diversity fosters unity. It is a principle that allows parents, teachers, and children to be full partners with a common purpose.
- Teachers have more to offer as professionals than as subservient line workers on an educational assembly line.

Now, if you are convinced that our system of public education should change to nurture positive diversity rather than sameness, I will ask you, how strong is your desire? Perhaps you are not ready to go whole-hog for diversity. You are beginning to sense that such a change of focus would result in massive changes within the public system, and you are nervous and not ready to face the unknown. If so, you are probably not alone. Fear of the unknown has stopped many great ideas dead in their tracks. Remember TRADITION? Can you give up comfortable conventions in favor of an unusual proposal that is backed by ancient wisdom and modern science? Can you suspend judgment until you find out for yourself that these things are true?

In the next chapter we look at some ways to nurture the innate greatness that comes as standard equipment with every person born on earth.

Chapter 5

The Second Principle: Draw Forth Potential

> The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides, and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire. —Teilhard de Chardin

As with other principles, I'd like you to understand how drawing forth potential is the opposite of a major practice of those who control public schooling these days. In previous chapters I've shown how this philosophy erodes morale. Now I want to suggest a strange paradox. Have you ever considered that the schools that produce the highest standardized achievement test scores may be the ones providing the least education, while those with the lowest scores may be educating best? The political/corporate stance is not to nurture individual potential so much as it is to standardize students with an imposed curriculum — to designate what all students should know and be able to do and pressure teachers to make sure it happens. This practice not only demoralizes everyone, but it induces a kind of teaching that is antithetical to learning.

What is education? Are public schools in the education business? If you ask anyone on the street these questions, they will likely give you an "are you crazy" look and try to avoid talking. If you do manage to get an answer, they will probably say, "of course, everyone knows that schools exist to provide education for students." Our society regards schools as the ultimate symbol and source of education. Nearly everyone feels that schools are built to provide educational experiences. Do they really do it? Do public schools exist to develop human potential? Is their major purpose that of encouraging purposeful, creative thought and action?

Many people have assumed so, and have harbored the notion for years. Because of this deeply ingrained mindset some people will be surprised, even shocked, to learn that schools, despite the theory, are in practice really not organized to provide educational experiences for students. Our public schools may exist for a different reason.

I realize that what I am about to say may alienate some teachers. But I'm not talking about teachers, I'm talking about the system. Nearly all teachers intend to be instruments of education. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic imposition of curriculum prevents teachers from engaging in the business of education much of the time. I will say more about this later, but here I would like you to consider the real agenda of politicians as they try to manage schools. The agenda may be unintentional, but it is more the less extremely potent.

Let's look at the word, *education.* It's a grand, mysterious, wonderful word! It elicits feelings of excitement or despondence depending on one's experiences in the public school system. *Educate* comes from the Latin, *educere*, or *educe*, which, according to my dictionary, is to "bring out or draw forth from latent or potential existence."

One strange thing about this word is that public school systems in America do not appear to be organized for the purpose of *drawing forth* anything, but for *pouring* facts *into* the heads of youngsters. If education really means "drawing out," public schools may not be in the business of education after all. They seem to be organized for a different purpose altogether. The definition of education given in my dictionary suggests an opposite meaning: "the act or process of educating or being educated; systematic instruction." Similarly, the definition of *educate* is, "give intellectual, moral, and social instruction to (a pupil, esp. a child), esp. as a formal and prolonged process." The definition of the word, *teach*, also follows this meaning: "give systematic instruction to a person about a subject or skill."

From the word *educere* we can infer that the act of teaching is to *bring out or draw forth*. This is very different from the commonly accepted meaning, to *give systematic instruction*. Two apparent opposites. On one hand, teaching is a process of bringing out something from within the learner, the "latent potential." On the other hand, it is a process of giving, pouring in, or delivering information.

Upon which of these two meanings — *drawing out* or *pouring in* — is our system of public education founded? It would seem over a period of many years our society has evolved a system of public education based

primarily on the business of delivering highly structured curriculum to students in a "formal and prolonged process." This process involves thirteen years of age-level grouping, K-12, and an elaborate system of testing to see if the prescribed curriculum is assimilated. Our system is a teach-and-test system. Those who control the schools believe we should be primarily concerned with learning that is numerically measurable.

I will later show in Chapter Seven how this system of imparting information results in shallow, temporary knowledge rather than deep, personal knowing. I will show that very little, if any, real learning is numerically measurable. I will also show there is a time and place for invited instruction, the kind that makes a lasting difference. However, in this chapter I want to emphasize the possibilities that are opened when we look at education as the process of drawing out what is already within every individual.

What if American public education had originally been organized for the purpose of drawing forth the latent, potential existence of learners, and had persisted for many years in trying to improve on this purpose? We can only guess at the amount of unfulfilled potential that lies dormant in the children, youth and adults of this country — largely because of a public school system organized to give systematic instruction. Our failure to draw forth the latent or potential existence of students appears to be a significant omission of public schools. The words of a wise poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, are a fitting description of conditions existing because schools have not been organized to draw forth the latent existence of learners: "of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!' " When we add up the undeveloped potential of millions of people who have gone through the public school system we find an enormous reservoir of latent existence still waiting to be brought out. Our nation has a huge human development deficit!

After we fix our present system for children, we may find there is great benefit in going back to draw forth the latent existence of all adults who have already gone through our public schools. There is still much latent talent in the graduates and dropouts from our public system that is waiting to be uncovered and developed. You and I each have a great reservoir of talent lying dormant, waiting to be awakened.

This then is the second pivotal principle for refocusing public education in America: Draw forth from learners their latent, potential existence.

If we get serious about nurturing the gifts of every student, we will need to learn how to look for the special gifts, talents, and strengths of each child. This is quite different from delivering a prepackaged curriculum over a prolonged period of time that characterizes our current bureaucratic, factory model of education. We can use this principle to free people from their obsession with curriculum as the *goal* of education. It's a principle for helping learners discover their true, inherent greatness. It requires a different mindset and a forgetting of old ways so we can make a new path.

I gained a new understanding of the potential of this perspective when my wife and I attended the International Gathering of Savants that was held in Austin, Texas, in the fall of 2000. In attendance at this gathering were some autistic savants who demonstrated very special gifts. One of them, Tony DeBlois, weighed one pound when he was born. He was premature and spent months in an incubator. Because of some of the treatments used to help Tony live, his eyesight failed to develop. His mother, Janice, was horrified to find that he would be both blind and autistic.

In spite of huge challenges, and against all odds, Tony struggled to live and fulfill his destiny to become one of the world's premier concert pianists. Now, a robust young man of 31, Tony DeBlois can play over 7,000 pieces, many of them extremely difficult. He can play Chopin, Rachmoninoff, Liszt, and Bach, as well as jazz, swing, rock — you name it — in a way that amazes even the most accomplished artists. It's hard to name a piece that Tony can't immediately begin to play as though he had been practicing for weeks. Tony's brain, heart, and fingers seem to work as an integrated unit in a way that totally amazed me! How *can* he learn such difficult music when he is blind? When I heard and watched him play and sing — Tony did Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Music of the Night* as a special request from me — I was astonished, no, flabbergasted. I can't find a stronger word for how I felt. Tony performed with such feeling — with his heart — that it brought tears to our eyes.

Tony started playing the piano — remember he is blind and can't see the keys — at the age of three! When he was fifteen his mother enrolled him in the prestigious Berklee School of Music in Boston. It was not until this time that Tony could put words together in sentences. It appears that it was the recognition and development of Tony's gift of music that enabled him to activate language. This is an important point: It is through development of a person's own assets that deficits can be overcome.

When we draw forth a person's assets, and nurture them, we automatically honor positive human diversity, we validate a person's self and give permission for him or her to exist as an individual.

Contrast this approach with that of a public school system obsessed with having children overcome their deficits. When we invest our total effort in giving prolonged instruction — when we keep a child's nose up against deficits for thirteen years — we cannot help but affect his feelings of worth. How does it influence the release of his personal potential? What happens to unrecognized and undeveloped assets? Do they shrivel up and die?

I have a son who did poorly in elementary school because the system was not organized to draw forth his latent potential. Doug got low grades, many Ds and Fs, on his report card all the way through elementary school. Counselors and psychologists in junior high school gave many tests and couldn't find the problem. Then a miracle happened. A sensitive music teacher, Miss Jarman, discovered that Doug had a beautiful singing voice. Solo opportunities were provided and Doug blossomed. From that time on his report card sported As and Bs in all subjects. In high school Doug was given prominent singing parts in musicals, including the lead singing role in Meredith Wilson's *Here's Love*. His grades continued to improve. Doug's deficits were overcome through recognition and development of his assets. He developed reading, writing, and math skills only after his mind was activated with a healthy dose of asset medicine. Doug is now a successful self-taught computer programmer, whose future was saved by a teacher who knew the importance of drawing forth the latent existence of her students. My wife and I will be forever grateful for this great lady. We shudder to think of what might have been had not a great teacher nurtured my son's special gift.

For several years we saw bad things happening, as "extracurricular" subjects like music and art were being subordinated so that students could be standardized with basic core curriculum — with the things business executives and legislators felt were more important. For Doug music was not an extracurricular subject; for him it was the most important subject of the curriculum. In elementary school, teachers tried for years to correct my son's deficits in reading, writing, and math. All this accomplished was to make him feel like a failure, a failure that was validated by his report card. We're glad Miss Jarman knew how to recognize and draw forth the potential that lay within Doug. We're also pleased

that the system didn't make Doug stay in elementary school until he reached a certain standard in "core" subjects.

It is the discovery and development of one's assets, one's latent potential, that opens the door to an acceptance of one's deficits and a desire to do something about them. Often a person will see the need to overcome a deficit while pursuing and building on an asset. For example, a person who is developing a gift in music may often feel an intense need to improve reading or writing skills in order to learn about a famous composer or performer. The desire and reason to become literate is reinforced, and action follows need.

As parents and teachers, how do we help children find and develop their assets? How do we draw forth their latent potential? A change of attitude is a big first step, but knowledge of basic principles of teaching will also be helpful. How is positive diversity best nurtured? What do great teachers do to overcome the strangulation of standardization? Extraordinary teachers seem to have a sixth sense (love?) — about each child's need to grow according to a private, internal blueprint. They see great potential and goodness in every child and know how to bring out the best in each one. They have a magic touch that says, "I believe in you." Nearly all teachers have these feelings of love for their students, but with a great many the power of love is squelched by the pressure to ignore the needs of children in favor of the needs of politicians.

What then is the best way to draw forth the latent potential of learners? How do we help children discover their dormant gifts and develop them? One strategy I will share is one that was invented by the teachers, parents, and children at Whitesides Elementary School when they kept Identity at the front of their minds as a major goal of education. The strategy we invented is called The Shining Stars Talent Development Program. Students, teachers, and parents were all invited to develop and share talents in a series of weekly talent shows. At the start students, parents, and teachers were provided with a shopping list of 83 different talents to "try on" as they prepared their presentations for the talent shows. Our list included several possibilities in nine different categories — arts, writing, crafts, dramatics, dancing, musical, physical, hobbies, miscellaneous, and other. (See Appendix C)

Over time, as students, parents, and teachers each experimented with several talents, many of them started to become aware of their unique and valuable gifts. Talents that were not normally nurtured in school were recognized as valid assets to be developed and shared. One fourth

grade teacher, Mrs. Russell, reported one day how thrilled she was to discover that Michael could do something that no one else in her class could do: stand on his head for an extended period of time. She explained that she'd been looking for a long time to find something in which Michael could excel. She needed to help Michael find an asset he could build on. Michael had been a trial behaviorally and scholastically until classmates applauded his head-standing ability. From then on, Michael started to blossom in other ways. He soon became involved in six information quests over a short period of time, revealing a great hunger for knowledge that had heretofore been hidden.

The main point I want to emphasize here, in addition to strategies for drawing forth the gifts of students, is the power of love, the power of really believing in someone else. It is love that makes the most difference. It was not only Mrs. Russell's use of The Shining Stars Talent Development Program that made the difference in Michael, but her intense love for each child in her class. Her love for her students gave her courage to expand a prescribed curriculum that did not include head standing.

Valuing Variety: Mining for Treasure

To value people is to value variety. There are billions of kinds of people in the world. The highest, ultimate kind of valuing is an unconditional, with-all-your-heart, kind of love. It is this kind of valuing that empowers a teacher (parent or professional) to provide the unusual support a person needs to find, bring out, and develop a unique set of latent gifts, talents, and abilities. Each of us possesses a dormant set of powers, that, if fully developed would astound everyone. These powers lie hidden largely because we grew up in a society that did not value variety enough to have schools and families dedicated to this aim. Rather, we have chosen to give students 13 years of systematic instruction.

Many years ago I learned of a study by J. P. Guilford who found that the human mind is capable of engaging in more than 140 different functions, and that I.Q. tests may measure no more than eight of these various ways of thinking. We typically engage only eight to ten of these functions because schools and homes are not organized to nurture any but the lowest forms of thinking. Over 100 functions lie dormant, waiting to be activated. Creative thinking and other, higher levels of cognition and emotional reasoning are left undiscovered and undeveloped.

A few years ago Howard Gardner wrote a best selling book in which he introduced the concept that we all have seven intelligences, rather

than just one. They are musical, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. He since has added an eighth, naturalistic. He maintains that each of us is stronger in some of the intelligences than in others. We each have a matrix of these intelligences that is like no other person's. Gardner has accused the education establishment of ignoring the development of all but two of these intelligences: logicalmathematical and linguistic.

Another pioneer researcher was Professor Calvin Taylor at the University of Utah who introduced six creative talents that we all have in varying degrees of atrophy: academic, productive thinking, planning, communicating, forecasting and decision-making. Only the academic talent is nurtured in schools.

Guilford, Gardner, Taylor, and other behavioral scientists over the years have revealed a complex and wonderful picture of human potential that is staggering to contemplate. With at least 140 different mental functions, eight intelligences, and six creative talents, we each have a much greater latent existence than anyone has thus far dared to imagine. Can you fathom what people would become if schools and homes were dedicated to helping children mine and develop their hidden treasures of knowledge? Suppose we were each born to be gifted in a unique set of over 100 dormant powers. What could we become, if each of us were to develop each of our many assets to the degree that Shakespeare developed his skill in writing, blind Tony DeBlois, his gift in music, Einstein, his knowledge of physics, or Mother Teresa her compassion? Kim Peek, of Rain Man fame, remembers everything he reads — with his left eye scanning down the left page and his right eye simultaneously scanning down the right. He and Tony DeBlois are just two of dozens of savants who have developed their gifts to an incredible degree. Now suppose our schools and homes were to value variety and people enough to draw forth the latent potential of those placed in their charge. It is a mission with unimaginable possibilities.

Chapter 6

The Third Principle: Respect Autonomy

The human Will, that force unseen,
The offspring of a deathless Soul,
Can hew a way to any goal,
Though walls of granite intervene.
Be not impatient in delay,
But wait as one who understands;
When spirit rises and commands,
The Gods are ready to obey.
—James Allen

The third principle for changing public education, respect autonomy, is an invitation to believe in the right of children to build themselves with their own free wills. As James Allen so eloquently expresses it, human will is a force that can hew a way to any goal. Ironically, this great power of free will is withheld from children when they are sentenced to 13 years of confinement in America's compulsory education system. In our public schools students are denied the right to direct their own learning and build themselves. The curriculum is crafted and chosen by others, and is imposed on children who are required to serve the state by aiming for other people's goals.

I believe it is not only possible, but imperative that we reorganize the system, that we reverse the hierarchy and allow teachers to meet the needs of students as they engage in self-directed learning. We can still hold teachers accountable for high quality interaction with children and their parents. This would mean a major change from having high standards for building uniformity to having high standards for nurturing positive variety.

The third principle for changing public education, respect autonomy, is a self-evident truth. We know that humans are born with freedom of thought and are thus responsible for their own thoughts and actions. My dictionary defines autonomy as the right of self-government, personal freedom, and freedom of the will.

According to Allen, free will is a very powerful force that can hew a way to any goal. If this is true, we have a wonderful opportunity to help learners tap a force that may be second only to the power of love. In education circles there's been much discussion recently about "student engagement in learning." The problem of student motivation has been with teachers ever since the beginning of compulsory education many years ago. Teachers and parents have long struggled with a nagging, persistent question: How can we help children shift from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation? How can we motivate students to want the learning we want them to have? With the standards movement the buzzword is engagement. Teachers are perplexed over ways to get students engaged in learning the required material.

I believe that motivation to learn is inherent within every human being. All of us were born curious. We want to find personal meaning in our lives. The problem with a standardized curriculum is that when we are asked to learn other people's knowledge our curiosity shuts down and we are not engaged, except perhaps to learn enough to pass the test.

If we as parents and teachers can learn how to respect autonomy, it, like love, can change everything. The mighty force of free will can be ours and that of our children. To illustrate what can happen when we respect autonomy, I will tell you three stories. Each story represents a certain level of respect for the autonomy of learners. The stories are all in school settings, but parents and teachers should be able to transfer the ideas for use in many other settings.

Level 1: Novice

Morris Cunningham taught sixth grade at Edwards Elementary School in Salt Lake City. Every Friday, for half of the school day, Morris would have Initiative Day for the students in his class. During initiative time students were allowed to plan their own learning. They were asked to plan how they would use their time, write it on a 3 x 5 card, and tape it to a corner of their desks. This was so Morris could walk around, look at each child's plan, discuss it with him or her, and offer help or suggestions.

I learned about Initiative Day when I became an apprentice to Morris as a new teacher trainee. During the term I spent working with Morris Cunningham and 33 delightful youngsters, I was impressed with the love and rapport between the teacher and his students. Mr. Cunningham had a delightful sense of humor and a loving way with each child. It was easy to tell that these children loved their teacher. Love and Initiative Day became the most memorable, and the most valuable lessons I learned from a remarkable teacher.

The next year I landed a contract to have my own class of 35 sixth graders at Verdeland Park Elementary School in Davis County School District. I spent two miserable/happy years trying to get my sea legs as a full-time teacher. I'm sure I would not have survived had it not been for the lessons of love and the sense of humor I learned from Morris Cunningham. For some inexplicable reason I didn't try Initiative Day until my third year — after I was transferred to a different school. I must have been afraid of losing control. Perhaps I didn't have enough faith that students could manage themselves.

When I did try Initiative Day it was after a period of time showing students how to make a plan for their learning. I wrote my daily lesson plan on the chalkboard, blocking out the day in hourly, half-hourly, or fifteen minute blocks and writing in the activities that would be done during each block: reading, math, science, art, writing, social studies, committee work, recess, etc. As we discussed the proposed plan each morning, we made changes that were suggested by students and agreed upon by consensus. Planning for each day of school in this manner took about 30 minutes, but I felt it was well worth it. At the end of the day we would take a similar amount of time for evaluation: discussing what went well, what we needed to improve, and make tentative plans for the next day. In this way I felt students could learn how to make a learning plan of their own.

After several days of doing this I decided it was time to try my own Initiative Day. When I proposed this idea, I told children they could make their own learning plan for one-half day on the next Friday. The children greeted the idea with enthusiasm. As we did in Morris Cunningham's class, I asked the children to write their plan on a 3x5 card and tape it to a corner of their desks. During initiative time I walked around, giving help to individuals or working at my desk and telling children to come for help if needed. When it looked like someone was having difficulty with self-management, I would go take a look at the child's plan and discuss it with him or her.

Our first Initiative Day was not a smashing success, but some children felt they had accomplished a lot and asked to do it again. Other children seemed lost, disorganized, and unable to make a plan of their own. In response to this need, before turning kids loose on their own, we made a list of suggested things that could be done during Initiative Day and placed it on a large chart for all to see.

From then on, with activity ideas posted, Initiative Day was much more successful. Almost all children made productive use of their time. We actually found that most children accomplished more in self-directed learning than they did in teacher-directed learning. Although we were still tied to the district curriculum, I found that children were freed to go at their own pace in each subject and not have to wait for those who listened to a different rhythm.

This made it almost impossible for us to return to a teacher-directed, lock-step program. I found that children accomplished much more with self-direction than they ever did when I was calling the shots and trying to keep children together as a group in every subject. They did so well, in fact, that Initiative Day was expanded to two or three days each week.

This I consider to be the novice level of respecting autonomy. Now let me tell you about another, higher level.

Level 2: Intermediate

We discovered Barbara Sheil at an education conference in San Francisco. I was with a few other principals and supervisors from our school district attending meetings organized by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. During the conference several of us decided to attend a presentation of a young teacher who told us an amazing story.

Barbara was a sixth grade teacher in Walnut Creek, California. The year before her presentation Miss Sheil had been assigned an unruly group of students, mostly boys, who had been wrecking havoc in other classrooms. Barbara had developed a reputation for being an outstanding teacher who could tame spirited youth. Although she didn't think it was fair, Barbara accepted her lot and said she would see what she could do.

For several months things went as expected. No matter what she tried, many of the children in Barbara's class refused to do any schoolwork and spent much of their time disrupting the few who were trying to learn. Finally, in desperation and frustration, Barbara decided to try a bold plan. She announced the following to her class:

> We are going to try an experiment. For one day I am going to let you do anything you want to do. Inasmuch as many of you do not want to do my assignments, you might as well decide for yourselves what you want to do with your time. The only requirement is that you may not hurt one another.

After my experiences with student self-initiated learning, Barbara Sheil had my attention. I was anxious to find out what happened with her experiment. Barbara then went on with her story:

> Many started with art projects. Others read or did work in math and other subjects. There was an air of excitement all day; many were so interested in what they were doing that they did not want to stop for either recess or lunch.
>
> At the end of the day I asked the class to evaluate the experiment. Some of the students were "confused" and distressed by not being told what to do and by not having specific assignments to complete. The majority of the class thought the day was "great," but some expressed concern about the general noisiness and the few who "goofed off" all day. Most felt that they had accomplished as much work as usual, and they enjoyed being able to work at a task until it was completed, without the pressure of a time limit. They liked doing things without being "forced" to do them and liked deciding what to do. They begged to continue the experiment, so we decided to try it for two more days. I asked each child to keep a work folder and make daily plans for what they were going to do.
>
> I found I had much more time to talk with individuals and groups. At the end of the third day I evaluated the work folder with each child. To solve the problem of grades I had the child tell me what he thought he had earned.
>
> The greatest problem I encountered was maintaining order. In a class such as mine with many problem individuals, discipline declines when a teacher's external controls are lifted. I came to the conclusion that if we could survive this period, in time they would develop greater self-control.

> At times, I had a difficult time watching some children sit idly by and was concerned about their progress and achievement. I constantly had to remind myself that these pupils had been "failing" under the old program and had never completed assignments under the old regime either.
>
> In general though, the class was delighted with the new plan. The students even worked on their projects outside the classroom. Many interesting projects began to develop. Noticing that some of the boys were drawing and designing automobiles, I tacked a large piece of paper on the wall for their use. After discussing their plans, these boys began to paint a mural showing the history of automobile transportation, incorporating their concepts of cars of the future. They used the encyclopedia as well as books about cars as references. They worked together and some began models and scrapbooks. These were the boys who had produced very little, if anything, so far that year.

At this point in Barbara's story she told us that other teachers began to notice and comment on changes in the behavior of some of the "wild" boys in her class. They were becoming polite and respectful! It was also then that Barbara decided it was time to tell her principal what was going on. She had not asked for permission to free the children for self-directed learning. Now that she had passed the point of no return, Barbara wanted the approval and support of the principal in case there were repercussions from parents. To her delight, Barbara found the principal very supportive. He too had noticed changes in the behavior of the rowdy boys. Barbara went on to tell us about her feelings and personal transformation:

> Earlier I had mentioned how many "problems" there had been in this class — both disciplinary and emotional. This program had, in fact, developed out of an attempt to meet the challenge that the "problems" had presented. At times I felt whipped, defeated, and frustrated. I had felt that I was making no headway and had resented my role as a policewoman. After our program had gotten into full swing, I found that I had changed too. Earlier in the year I could but

> bide my time until I would be able to send the "gang" onward and upward to seventh grade.
>
> I now began to see these children with different eyes, and as I watched them, I began to realize there was hope. I asked to take this class on, in the same self-directed situation, to seventh grade. I felt these children would continue to progress toward self-actualization within the framework and freedom of the self-directed program.
>
> Now that the mechanics of the program were worked out, now (after my authoritarian role was discarded) that there was greater understanding and rapport between the children and myself, there was greater opportunity for self-growth — not only creativity, initiative, imagination, but self-discipline, self-acceptance, and understanding. I would venture that this program might result in fewer dropouts and "failures" in school.
>
> It was not the panacea, but it was a step forward. Each day was a new adventure. There were moments of stress, concern and pleasure. They were all stepping-stones toward our goal of self-actualization.

Those of us who attended Barbara Sheil's presentation were so impressed that we approached her afterward and asked if she would be willing to come to our hotel room, tell us more, and answer questions. She came, and we spent a delightful evening with a remarkable teacher who developed the courage to respect autonomy. For me, this was a memorable highlight of the conference.

Level Three: Advanced

I learned about Sudbury Valley School when Daniel Greenberg called to comment on one of my articles that appeared in an educational journal. If you watched the *60 Minutes* special about Sudbury School in 2001, you will know that this school is highly unusual and that its philosophy is controversial. It grants students the total right to decide what they will learn, how they will learn, and when they will learn it. What you didn't learn on *60 Minutes* was how extraordinarily successful this school is in nurturing individual potential. Daniel Greenberg is one of the founders

and, in traditional terms, could be called the principal or headmaster, although this school is not organized in the typical hierarchical pattern.

Sudbury Valley School is an example of trust and faith in children and their right and ability to direct their own learning. It is an example of total respect for autonomy, although I believe there may be a still higher level that I will describe later. This school grants students complete control over their own learning. From four through nineteen years of age children are given the right to decide what they will learn, when they will learn, and how they will learn it.

Sudbury Valley is a private school that has been operating for more than 30 years with a long waiting list of students and parents who want to become part of a very unusual approach. "The main building is an old stone mansion surrounded by ten acres of lawns, trees, a millpond and set amidst hundreds of acres of state park and conservation lands, woods, and rolling hills."

In his little booklet, *Free at Last: The Sudbury Valley School*, Greenberg tells some remarkable stories of what happens when students are freed to be responsible for their own learning. One of his stories is especially poignant for illustrating the unique operating style of the school:

> Sitting before me were a dozen boys and girls, aged nine to twelve. A week earlier, they had asked me to teach them arithmetic. They wanted to learn to add, subtract, multiply, divide, and all the rest.
>
> "You don't really want to do this," I said, when they first approached me.
>
> "We do, we are sure we do," was their answer.
>
> "You don't really," I persisted. "Your neighborhood friends, your parents, your relatives probably want you to, but you yourselves would much rather be playing or doing something else."
>
> "We know what we want, and we want to learn arithmetic. Teach us and we'll prove it. We'll do all the homework, and work as hard as we can."
>
> I had to yield then, skeptically. I knew that arithmetic took six years to teach in regular schools, and I was sure their interest

> would flag after a few months. But I had no choice. They had pressed hard, and I was cornered.
>
> I was in for a surprise.

Greenberg goes on to dramatically show the difference between required, assigned learning and learning that is requested by determined children. It took 20 hours of class time, two 30-minute periods each week over a period of 20 weeks for these children to learn even more math than children learn in six or seven years of traditional elementary school. They even learned long division, fractions, decimals, percentages, and square roots. More importantly, these children were able to use their math in solving everyday problems. Freely exercised student will power provided an impetus that is usually lacking in traditional education.

Sudbury School is a shining example of what can happen when the autonomy of students is respected. There is no organized structure of children grouped by grades or ages. There is no hierarchy of power. Every person, child and adult, has an equal vote in deciding how the school is to be run. There are no organized "classes" except when students individually or in groups go to a staff member and negotiate an agreement to be taught and to learn. Staff members spend much of their time just waiting for a request to teach. Occasionally a staff member will post a notice on the bulletin board — "anyone interested in X can meet me in the seminary room on Thursdays at 10:30AM."

Sudbury Valley is an example of a climate, philosophy, and setting where the incredible power of free will is effectively harnessed for unusual student accomplishment. Graduates who choose to do so are able to enter any college of their choice without report cards, grades, transcripts, or SAT or ACT scores: they take their portfolios and are able to prove to admissions officers that they have the right stuff to succeed.

When someone on the waiting list finally gets to enroll in Sudbury it doesn't take them long to find an area or two of interest to persistently pursue until they graduate or until another interest leads them into a new exploration. Students leave Sudbury with personal gifts, talents, and interests developed to a high degree: they are ready to be contributing members of society. The difference between the graduates at Sudbury and most graduates of public schools is striking. Most Sudbury students pursue knowledge for a different reason than do their counterparts in public education. Once a quest is identified, a Sudbury student, armed with intrinsic motivation, aggressively gathers information to

build personal knowledge and meaning. Students learn for the joy and sake of learning to satisfy internal needs. They do not learn to satisfy someone else's needs for them. In this way knowledge sinks deep into their bones.

There are hundreds of individuals who have left Sudbury to become quite successful. I could go on, but I need to end this portrayal of the advanced level of respecting autonomy and suggest there may be an even higher level. The levels I've presented thus far — novice, intermediate, and advanced — are somewhat arbitrary. They are merely used to give the reader some idea of what it means to honor a person's right to be self-governing, not only in education, but in all endeavors. It is this right that enables a person to harness free will. It's the power of will that any individual can use to accomplish things that would be otherwise impossible.

When I suggest there may be another level above advanced, I do not mean to imply that Sudbury School is deficient in any way. I only mean to show that when we integrate the first two pivotal principles, value positive diversity and draw forth potential with the third, respect autonomy, teachers and parents may be able to take a more active role in a child's education without interfering with a child's right of self-government. The apparent, often passive role of the staff at Sudbury may be an illusion, but I feel that even these extraordinary teachers are always looking for better ways to interact with students. Parents who feel uncomfortable allowing self-directed learning can rest assured that children can be set free in ways that do not stifle their creative urges. The right kind of guidance may allow students to have even more freedom. A higher level of respect for the autonomy of learners may be found when we integrate the first three pivotal principles.

Level 4: Professional

This level of respecting autonomy has probably not yet been achieved in this world except perhaps in a few isolated homes and schools. No, not even there. It is an ideal for which we can strive. The reason? True freedom is inextricably tied to responsibility and integrity. Actually, freedom follows and is the result of being responsible and completely virtuous and honorable. The more we develop the qualities of responsibility and integrity — reliability, honesty, dependability, decency, and wholeness — the more free we become. It's a matter of degree. Personal integrity is a process for becoming whole and filled with the light of truth. It's

a process of repenting every day for the mistakes we make and trying every day to be a better person. The road to freedom is tied to this. It is bound by obedience to natural and just laws.

A friend of mine, Rick Salway, gave me an illustration of the principle of freedom connected to responsibility. A kite flies best when it is held in check by a cord in the hands of a skillful owner. Cut the cord and what happens? The kite soon falls to the ground. It is no longer free. When the kite is given exactly the right amount of freedom and restraint it can climb higher than the same kite in the hands of an inexperienced person — even when there is very little wind. So it is with all human beings. Children need exactly the right amount of freedom with loving control to help them rise to their full potential.

There's a fine line here. We aren't talking about compulsion. If you obey a law begrudgingly, it's not the same as if you obey cheerfully of your own free will and choice. If you obey out of a sense of duty and obligation, you are less free than if you obey because you really want to. It's a matter of attitude.

The same is true with learning. If you learn begrudgingly, because you are compelled, it's not the same kind of learning as that which is voraciously sucked into the brain with the power of free will. Assigned, required learning has a different effect on us than freely chosen learning. There will be more about this in the next chapter, but first let's consider some other meanings of respecting autonomy at a professional level. What does it have to do with flying kites? Can we, as parents and teachers, learn how to give freedom with the right kind of loving control? I believe it has to do with integrating the first three principles for changing education.

First, value diversity. Just as there are many kinds of kites, each with a different need for control and encouragement, so there are even more kinds of kids needing specialized controls and support. Second, draw forth potential. How do you draw forth the potential of a kid? In much the same way as we draw forth the potential of a kite. We must first get totally aquainted with the kite we are flying. Is it a box kite, tetrahedral, stunt kite, two-stick, dragon, single or multiple line, delta or Bermuda kite? There are hundreds of different kinds of kites. Each one has its own special flying characteristics. I was fascinated to learn of the Millibar Messenger, a one-line kite, that was recently flown by designer-builder, Richard Synergy, to a world record altitude of 14,509 feet! Can you imagine? Nearly three miles! To coax the most out of a kite you must learn the

characteristics and provide exactly the right amount of control and freedom. You must learn when to increase tension on the line and when to release as the wind and kite give signals through the cord to your nerve receptors and brain. If you give too much freedom, the kite begins to descend. Too much tension pulls the kite down.

So it is with children. Each one has unique "flying" characteristics. I believe the professional level of respecting autonomy has to do with learning how to provide the right amount of control and freedom for each child as s/he gives signals to our nerve receptors, heart, and brain. It takes insight and sensitive perception to coax the best from another person. When insight and perception are activated with love, genuine, unconditional love, the more likely we are to provide the right amount of control and encouragement for children in their efforts to fly. The professional level of respecting autonomy is an ideal worth striving for. Anyone willing to value diversity, draw forth potential, and respect autonomy is on the right track.

The next pivotal principle for changing education is another usually ignored facet of respect for the autonomy of children. We will see how inviting inquiry adds great impetus to the will of learners.

Chapter 7

The Fourth Principle: Invite Inquiry

> The inquiry method is not designed to do what older environments try to do. It works you over in entirely different ways. It activates different senses, attitudes and perceptions. It generates a different, bolder, and more potent kind of intelligence. It will cause everything about education to change.
>
> —Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner

"Congratulations Jason! You have become a Great Brain! You now know more about the moon than anyone else in the school. You may even know more about the moon than anyone in our whole city! It gives me pleasure to present you with a badge and certificate of accomplishment and tell you that your picture will appear in the Great Brain Hall of Fame."

These words were greeted with applause, cheers, and flashing of cameras as I welcomed nine-year-old Jason Workman into The Great Brain Club. Jason's mother, his grandparents, classmates, and an assortment of invited guests had come to celebrate the efforts of a young man who had enjoyed an in-depth study of Earth's moon. Jason's Great Brain presentation, a knowledge recital, was similar in effect to a musical recital. It offered a way to showcase the results of intense study and hard work over a period of several weeks. The Great Brain Project was one of the strategies invented by teachers, parents, and principal to help children grow in the three dimensions of human greatness, Identity, Inquiry, and Interaction — in self-worth, curiosity, and communication. Marilyn King's invitation to maintain central goals constantly in mind paid off. It resulted in a program that gave impetus for children to exercise auton-

omy, their free wills, and responsibility in pursuit of deep learning. In addition, the Great Brain program became a special tool for uniting parents and teachers in a common cause.

As part of his presentation, Jason plastered the room with pictures of the moon, most of them drawings he had made while looking through his telescope night after night as the moon went through its various phases. In making his drawings Jason employed one of the tools that many astronomers use to record their observations. Jason labeled all of the major craters and other features, told about the moon's gravity, its apogee and perigee, its effect on Earth's tides, and many other fascinating facts. At the end he answered questions posed by the audience, displaying a remarkable accumulation of knowledge. He also invited members of the audience to look through his telescope. Later in the school year Jason made an impressive display for the school's Great Brain Fair.

Jason's "journey to the moon" began one day when his teacher handed out application forms and invited class members to choose a topic to study in depth over a period of time and become a Great Brain on one of four ascending levels: "specialist," "expert," "mastermind," or "genius." The application form was a contract for parents to become full partners with the school to help a child grow in greatness. (See Appendix D.) On the form Jason indicated his particular interest, the moon, and agreed to

- Make a list of questions to guide his research. (He would be encouraged to add to the list as he dug deeper and deeper into his topic.)
- Use all available resources in the school and community for learning about the moon.
- Study diligently and keep a record of his findings.
- Prepare an interesting way to share his knowledge and make arrangements with the teacher to make a *Great Brain* presentation.

On the form was a place for Jason to sign, indicating his agreement with these conditions and a place for his parent's signature agreeing to become the child's research partner. The application form was to be re-

turned to the teacher so s/he could keep track of Jason's efforts and guide him to information as it became available.

Jason took the form home and asked his mother if she would be willing to help him become a Great Brain. She agreed, and they were off to a new adventure that became a special bonding experience between mother and son. As Jason chose his topic, made a list of questions, and started to compile resources, it soon became apparent that he would need a telescope so he could study the moon first hand. Jason's mother wisely suggested that Jason find a way to earn money so he could buy his own telescope.

After searching for a while Jason finally landed a job selling Christmas cards door to door. In this way he earned enough money to buy the small telescope that he used to study the moon. After many hours of observing and sketching, after several visits to the library and the planetarium, and after much reading to find answers to his questions, Jason decided it was time to prepare his Great Brain presentation. A time for the presentation was scheduled with Jason and his teacher. and Jason then prepared a set of invitations to be distributed to friends and relatives.

That is how Jason became a bona fide Great Brain — at the genius level of knowledge. Not bad for a fourth grader! Jason was only one of hundreds of children who accepted the challenge and invitation to study a self-chosen topic in great depth. His mother was only one example of hundreds of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or neighbors who agreed to become partners with the school to help a child grow in greatness.

I could relate many stories of children, some of them as young as kindergarten age, who decided to exercise their amazing wills to learn at a different level than that which is fostered in traditional education. Paulynn White, a fifth grader, wrote the lyrics and music for a song that she sang and played as part of her Great Brain presentation on dinosaurs. Roger Jensen, a first grader, drew an impressive picture of an 18-wheel truck as part of his presentation on the many kinds of trucks that frequent the highways. He was so shy that his mother had to stand by his side as he showed models and told about a great variety of trucks. Penny Wilson and her parents almost got stuck in the mud in a swamp as they waded waist deep in water to catch pollywogs for Penny's study of frogs. These are just a small sample of the hundreds who engaged in inquiry-based education. They are the stuff of which memories are made.

The Great Brain inquiry process gives learners a different slant on education. Participants soon discover that

- They are responsible for their own learning and behavior.
- Satisfying accomplishment is the result of personal effort.
- They are valuable, important people.
- Every person is gifted and talented.
- Cooperation with others is essential.
- Learning is a joyous activity.

The fourth pivotal principle for changing public education, Invite Inquiry, like the others, is the opposite of what public schools are normally organized to do. It is the opposite of force-feeding the state curriculum for 13 years of public schooling. Inviting Inquiry is a high form of respect for autonomy. It is another way to help children be responsible for their own learning. According to Postman and Weingartner, "it works you over in entirely different ways and generates a different, bolder, and more potent kind of intelligence."

My objective in sharing what follows is to help our society break free from a crippling tradition. What happens if we refocus education and Invite Inquiry as the basic mode of educational interaction with children over a prolonged period — all during a child's formative years, both in the home and in school? What are the advantages of nurturing a child's innate curiosity? How do we do it?

At Hill Field Elementary School and Whitesides School we found it makes a big difference in changing a child's attitudes toward school and learning even if s/he is given only a portion of the time for inquiry. Unfortunately, we were still tied to the state-mandated curriculum, but a partnership with parents and a focus on helping children grow in greatness gave teachers courage to put the state curriculum aside at least part of the time. With teachers' and parents' minds set on nurturing Identity, Inquiry, and Interaction, they invented several strategies that started to change the lives of children and themselves. Although I cannot show evidence from carefully controlled empirical studies, I know deep in my bones that some of the strategies helped children grow in feelings of self-worth, curiosity, kindness, and a different, deeper kind of knowing.

How the Brain Works

If we were to really understand how the human brain works, I'm sure we would quickly change the way public schools function. Those who have engaged in an intensive study of the brain have been telling us for years that public schools don't operate in a way that's compatible with how human brains work. After reading some of the research studies I'm impressed with one major concept: Human brains learn helter-skelter. In other words, human brains have the natural ability to randomly gather thousands of pieces of information from the environment and connect these pieces with thousands of other pieces of information that are lying in mental storage — accumulated from many experiences — to build new personal concepts. Researchers have found that human learning may actually be suppressed by the way curriculum is organized and presented — in a linear fashion — in public schools. We have embraced the false notion that concepts must always be presented in a line, one after the other, for understanding to occur in a human mind. Scientists have found that what is logical and sequential for the teacher is probably not logical and sequential for any learner. Neve, Hart, and Thomas in a 1986 article in *Kappan* put it this way:

> Brain-compatible instruction dispenses with the hoary and ubiquitous notion that learning must occur in some arbitrary, sequential, "logical" order that has been officially sanctioned. Brain-based instruction stems from recognizing that the brain does not take logical steps down one path … but can go down a hundred different paths simultaneously (like an enormously powerful analogue computer). Random learning, like assembling a complex jigsaw puzzle, is seen as the way human brains work. This is aided by many varied experiences and by a global emphasis rather than by splintering learning into narrow subjects or units.

In order to understand why it is so important to Invite Inquiry, I have developed a model of how it seems to me the brain works. If you can visualize a mass, roughly the shape of a sphere, that is covered with thousands of tiny jig-saw puzzle-shaped pieces, each with a tiny fishing pole protruding outward, you will see my model of human brain function. Each of the miniature fishing poles — message receptors — is in constant motion casting a line to hook a piece of information that seems relevant

to one's past experiences and reel it in. Whenever the brain catches a piece of information through active, aggressive fishing (Inquiry), it is hauled inside and processed to become permanent personal knowledge.

On the other hand, if information is imposed, rather than sought, it is plastered on the outside of the sphere where it soon is sloughed off and forgotten. Imposed learning is shallow and temporary, while learning gained from personal inquiry is deep and enduring. There is a great difference between knowledge acquired from personal searching — finding answers to one's own questions — and unsolicited information.

When Plato wrote that knowledge acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind, he was revealing a truth that scientists are only now beginning to understand. It is the reason why traditional education often fails to make as much of a difference as education that is based on personal inquiry.

Another metaphor for the brain could be a vacuum cleaner, or an aggressive octopus. When information is sucked into the brain and processed by one's free will it has a much different effect on us than does unsolicited information. It is the reason why the fourth principle, Invite Inquiry, is so important and powerful. I like the way Victor Weisskopf, a prominent professor of physics, puts it:

> People cannot learn by having information pressed into their brains. Knowledge has to be sucked into the brain, not pushed in. First, one must create a state of mind that craves knowledge, interest and wonder. You can teach only by creating an urge to know.

Inquiry-Based Homes and Schools

A home or school organized for the purpose of helping the inhabitants become avid seekers after knowledge and wisdom is very different from those that are driven to impose a body of predetermined information. The first step in establishing the home or school as an inquiry center is to overcome a major mental block about curriculum. Some homes and many schools are tied to the false notion I mentioned in Chapter Three that student achievement in curriculum is the major goal and purpose of education. This mindset leads to the creation of artificial, or contrived courses of study that are designed to standardize students. The subject matter content most often found in textbooks and worksheets falls in this category. Once we understand the difference between genuine and arti-

ficial curriculum we can proceed to organize homes and schools that are inquiry based. Here is the difference: Genuine curriculum invites inquiry. It raises questions; it encourages investigation and digs deeper for connections between what is already in one's brain and the new material. Artificial curriculum, on the other hand, is usually found in textbooks and courses of study designed to produce a predetermined outcome or response. Remember Emerson's comment: "It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do." Genuine content is the world and everything in it: people, plants, animals, insects, birds, fish, rocks, mountains, rivers, sky, clouds — everything. It is the real stuff of our environment and is usually assimilated through our sense receptors. This is level one curricula.

The second level of authentic curricula is to be found in such places as libraries, television, and on the World Wide Web. The material found in most library books is usually not written to produce a predetermined response in the reader; rather they are designed to offer information and to generate thought and questions.

When it becomes clear that the first three pivotal principles — Nurture Positive Diversity, Draw Forth Potential, and Respect Autonomy — are valid, we can get serious about the fourth — Invite Inquiry. The first teacher to catch the significance of this principle at Hill Field Elementary School was Jim Thurgood. When the school adopted Identity, Interaction, and Inquiry as its primary goals, Jim was the first to take visible action. I relate his story to provide some clues as to some possible things you might do to establish an inquiry-based home or school. Most of all I'd like to pass on a philosophical attitude that seems to me makes the difference between authoritarian, imposed learning and learning that comes from personal seeking.

Jim Thurgood loves animals. He probably loves children even more. Over a period of several years of watching Mr. Thurgood teach fourth graders, I noticed that this remarkable teacher was fascinated with the magical effect that animals have on children. He always kept gerbils, hamsters, rabbits, reptiles — a variety of small animals and birds — in cages in his classroom. He found that children's problems — lack of love in the home, low confidence, or whatever — were always ameliorated when a child bonded with and cared for an animal. Jim showed children how to love and appreciate living things and the reciprocal benefits that come from this interaction. I thought of Mr. Thurgood as "Dr. Domuch" because of his uncanny ability to commune with animals and convey his

amazing gift to children. Jim now owns and operates a delightful pet store, *Teacher's Pets,* and continues to bless his community with his gifts. Unfortunately, he retired early from teaching because of pressures to suppress his gifts in favor of delivering the state curriculum.

When Human Greatness became the major goal and purpose of our school — with Inquiry as one of the three dimensions of greatness — Jim looked for a way to share his understanding of child/animal bonding with the whole school. One day he came to me and proposed that we replace the artificial plant area in the main entrance of the school with an aviary inquiry center. The space he had in mind measured approximately four feet by fifteen and could be expanded to eight by fifteen by ten, floor to ceiling. It would be constructed with two by fours and chicken wire, and could be viewed from both sides as people entered the school from doors on either side.

Knowing full well that such a major change required permission from the Buildings and Grounds Department, Jim and I obtained the necessary materials and constructed an aviary in a few hours one evening under cover of darkness. We hoped to get forgiveness when building officials saw what a benefit this would be for the school. In the next few days Jim supplied the aviary with a variety of finches, canaries, parakeets, a real hibiscus tree, and birdhouses for nesting.

As you can imagine, the aviary became a big hit with children. There was always a crowd on both sides watching the birds. Teachers would soon learn how to take advantage of this interest and guide children into many interesting investigations. Actually, teachers were almost forced into it when it became difficult to pull children away from the aviary to return to their classrooms.

One day the Director of Buildings and Grounds, having heard of our innovation, came to see for himself what we had wrought. To our surprise, when he saw the fascinated observers lined up three deep watching the birds, he decided to replace our amateurish carpentry with an expertly designed and built aviary with two parts — one side for birds and the other side for small animals. In a few days it was completed with beautiful hardwood and heavy screening to take the place of our chicken wire and rough lumber.

We now had a deluxe miniature zoo/aviary. It became the featured inquiry center of several we developed at the school. During the next couple of years, Mr. Thurgood supplied the zoo with an interesting variety of birds and animals. Among these was a hen that made a nest, laid fer-

tile eggs with the help of a feisty rooster, sat on them for the requisite 21 days and 5 hours, and brought forth a dozen delightful chicks.

Can you imagine the flood of questions that came from children involved in this experience? How does a hen make a baby chick with an egg? What does the rooster have to do with it? Just reading about it, doesn't this story elicit questions in your mind? Especially, how did the teachers handle the delicate sex questions? Children who grow up on farms usually learn about sex in a natural, wholesome way, while those who didn't often develop unhealthy misconceptions. Jim's zoo became a fascinating inquiry center where children developed healthy attitudes toward the reproduction of species. All of the parakeets and finches multiplied exceedingly under the loving care of Jim Thurgood and his assistants (usually poor, neglected children).

Of the many temporary inhabitants of the zoo, and perhaps the favorite, was Panchita, a capuchin monkey, given to us by a missionary returning from Brazil. He had obtained Panchita when she was very young, raised her as a pet, and tearfully donated her to the Hill Field School Zoo when he found his life too busy to care for her anymore.

Panchita was a wonderful zoo attraction. She probably lived outside the zoo as much as she did in it. When Panchita learned how to turn the knob on the zoo door she would sometimes wander through the halls and unexpectedly drop in on a class to the screaming delight of children. Everyone was sad on the day we donated Panchita to the Hogle Zoo in Salt Lake City. In return, we were able to have a large South American rodent, an agouti, on temporary loan from the Zoo. As time went on, our elementary school zoo hosted such things as baby goats, a strutting male turkey gobbler, and a large snake.

As an inquiry center, the Hill Field Elementary School Zoo was unexcelled. It stimulated children to ask many questions and go to the library to look for answers. It was also a place where children would sit and draw pictures of the animals and birds. It was a sad day for me when I learned, after my transfer to another school, that the zoo was torn out during the next summer while school was not in session. The school entrance returned to its former sterile appearance. It's very possible that the new principal succumbed to the pressure of school officials to deliver the no-nonsense, standardized curriculum.

There is no end to the ways you can make your school or home into an inquiry-based learning center. Here are some practical projects, from my own experience, that you might consider:

- We developed a library/media center where children and teachers could investigate printed and audiovisual materials.
- We converted two small conference rooms next to the media center into a realia center and equipped it with real things from nature — rocks, seashells, bird nests, beehives, pine cones, insect collections, etc. — and investigation devices such as binoculars, magnifying lenses, telescopes, and microscopes that children and teachers could check out and use. We also obtained some war surplus, metal 30 mm ammunition boxes, and invited parents, children, and teachers to make inquiry boxes. Typical of these boxes was one that contained some electric wire, batteries, bulbs, switches, a large nail, a small compass, and an inquiry guide for learning about electric currents.
- With the help of parents, we made a map of all interesting inquiry sites within a two-, five-, and ten-mile radius of the school. These were used for numerous walking and transported field trips.
- We tore apart National Geographic Magazines, and science books and rebound them into individual inquiry study units on a great variety of topics.
- We built a 50-gallon aquarium, stocked it with sea creatures, and obtained some war surplus 5-gallon glass jugs that we used to study leeches and other interesting water creatures.
- We converted two more adjacent classrooms that had a sliding partition in between and again, with the help of war-surplus materials, organized an elementary shop/arts and crafts center.

These are just a few of the creative actions that arose out of a community that embraced a different, inquiry philosophy of education. Now I want to tell you about another school that was on the verge of greatness until it was overcome with the philosophy and pressures of standardization. I tell the following story with the anticipation that you will get inspiration to refocus your own school or home.

The Dream School

Several years ago I met a couple of unusual elementary teachers at the home of my friend, Arnie Langberg. As you may recall, he was the man

who organized a high school after the Walkabout pattern of freedom and responsibility. One of these teachers, Cyndi Dieken, had heard about my work and asked Arnie if a meeting could be arranged. To make a long story short, I spent an afternoon with Arnie and two delightful ladies talking about what an elementary school could be like if teachers were given freedom to pursue their dreams for children. After a wonderful afternoon of fantasizing, I gave Cyndi and her friend copies of my book *Redesigning Education* and they left.

Some years went by. I had almost forgotten the meeting when the phone rang at my home. Cyndi was on the line to tell about their efforts to incorporate the Education for Greatness philosophy at the Lab School in Fort Collins, Colorado. Things were not going as well as she hoped and Cyndi was calling to ask if I could come and talk to the teachers. They could pay at least part of my expenses.

I went to Fort Collins and spent a pleasant afternoon talking with eight teachers who seemed eager to improve education at the Lab School. These folks seemed to be in an ideal situation: an old building designed for twice as many classrooms, but with only eight classes of about 25 each. Furthermore, they had applied for charter status for a school that was already expected to innovate and try new ideas. In the evening I met with teachers and parents together and found that parents were very receptive to the Education for Greatness philosophy. Earlier in the day I had found, when I visited several classes, that there were numerous parents in the school helping in many ways. It looked like Cyndi and her colleague had laid the groundwork for important changes. Promising to keep in touch, I left the next day to return home.

I met with the staff of the Lab School on two more occasions. The last time is indelibly printed in my memory. During the meeting, with a focus on student inquiry, one of the teachers said, "Let's organize our school with eight inquiry centers, each built around the gifts, talents, and interests of our teachers. Students could then rotate or move freely from center to center to find personal quests." This seemed to strike a chord and teachers immediately started to choose centers. One of them, the only man on the staff, said, "I'll make a science and math inquiry center." Another said, "I'd like to organize a quiet place where we feature the reading and writing of books and stories." A third said, "I'll organize a little theater where children can write and act out their own plays, design costumes, and make scenery." Another said, "Let me be in charge of a shop/art room where children can come to design, create, and make

things with all kinds of materials." Another said, "I'd like to do a nature center filled with living plants, animals and rocks — with a door to the outside so children can go on guided excursions." It went on until all had indicated a special interest.

Can you imagine how I felt? Like I was in the delivery room when someone was giving birth to a new baby! That same evening the parents came to a meeting and one of the teachers enthusiastically presented the plan for a school built around inquiry centers. Her presentation was greeted with applause and cheers. Parents were excited about the possibilities.

This occurred in the spring, just before school let out for the year. During the summer I had visions of parents and children joining hands to create eight fascinating inquiry centers at the Lab School. I could see each one in my mind's eye and communicated with Cyndi about the opportunities that were theirs to involve parents and children in the creation and operation of each inquiry center.

I wish I could report on the realization of a wonderful dream. Alas, the Lab School Community did not transform the school into an exciting inquiry-based learning center. The tidal wave of standardization engulfed the school and drowned the dreams of parents and teachers alike. My vision of an ideal, dream school was washed away in the flood. This was also the spring that the Poudre River overflowed its banks and flooded a large area of Fort Collins. The flood became a catastrophic metaphor for a dark system of education that is now chest-deep and rising by the hour. Fortunately, floodwaters did not reach the school, but perhaps worse, teachers and parents were overcome by politicians' mania for standardization.

Cyndi was devastated by the news that her beloved school would not be allowed to meet the curious urges of children. It would have to buckle under to the needs of politicians. Rather than compromise her integrity, Cindy quit her job at the Lab School and started a new venture.

Curious Parents and Teachers: Curious Children

An inquiry-based philosophy of teaching has radical implications for homes and schools. Some of us will need to make a major mental habit adjustment in the way we perceive the world. It presents an exciting opportunity to learn to see with fresh eyes. To actuate the fourth principle, Invite Inquiry, some of us will need to go back to our early childhood and

retrieve something the public school system stole from us bit by bit: our curiosity. I call it the Great Brain Robbery because the public school system unintentionally, in an effort to make us smart, in an effort to *give* us knowledge, did just the opposite. It robbed each of us of a curious attitude and the chance to acquire personal knowledge, the knowledge that comes from mentally processing new information so that it becomes our own, not knowledge adopted from others.

It is interesting to observe the robbery while it's taking place. As children enter kindergarten they are usually full of questions, unless, as happens in rare cases, curiosity is squelched in the home before a child comes to school. As children move up through the grades it's easy to observe a gradual decline in the amount and quality of children's questions. The official core curriculum has become so pervasive that there is little room for questions that may lead into a thousand paths.

You've probably heard of scientists' claims that most of us are using only five to ten percent of our mental capacities. What if we could increase this to over 95 percent? What would children grow up to be like if the knowledge they acquired in schools and homes was the kind that came from personal inquiry? What would they be like if their information fishing poles had more chances to catch bigger fish and convert them into dynamic brain and body cells? What would it be like, if most of the information obtained in schools and homes did not slough off the brain, but was internalized to become a vital part of children for them to remember and use throughout their lives? What would happen if a child's power to ask penetrating questions was nurtured to increase each year?

The fourth pivotal principle, Invite Inquiry, in some respects is already in place — put there by our creator and supported by a rich, stimulating environment. Humans have been blessed with a curious nature and placed in a world full of wonderful stuff. Our challenge is not to spoil it all by force-feeding artificial, contrived information into delicate hearts and minds. I've already described some physical environments that can be organized to invite student inquiry. Now I want to talk about the human element.

The Power of Example

Perhaps the most stimulating strategy for inviting inquiry is for parents and teachers to stop thinking of themselves as information dispensers and become active, seeking learners. The most powerful teaching strategy I know is for a parent or professional teacher to take an intense

interest in a child and learn from him. This strategy calls for a reversal of roles, for the child to be the teacher and the teacher to be the learner.

Being curious is part of human nature. All we have to do is revive a gift that has atrophied from lack of use. If we have forgotten how to be curious or have had our inquiry stolen from us, we may have to return to a childish way of looking at things and find joy and wonder in everything about us. With conscious effort we can renew and expand the curious attitude we were born with. As parents and teachers we can best invite inquiry by being examples of curiosity for children. What message is conveyed when children see *us* being curious? When children observe the important people in their lives being hungry for knowledge, showing an insatiable curiosity, and a zest for learning, what does it tell them? If a teacher, whether parent or professional, is first and foremost a learner, it conveys the message that learning is enjoyable and important. In sharp contrast, what message do children get when they see someone who knows all the answers and is obsessed with showing it?

After many years of watching teachers I'm impressed with the difference between two teaching styles and the effect these styles have on children. On the one hand, there are those who know their subject and sincerely have a strong desire to teach their knowledge to others. Many of these teachers are very skilled at making their subject interesting for children. They plaster knowledge on the brains of their learners so deftly that some of it is taken in and internalized for long-term use. In current terminology these teachers are said to be using the direct teaching method. There is a growing body of adherents for this method. These people often hold up student growth in standardized achievement test scores to substantiate their claim for the benefits of direct teaching.

There's another, much smaller, group of teachers who give the impression that they know their subject, but are just as interested in learning more about their subject as they are in teaching what they know. It could be said that these teachers are just as interested in helping learners find out what they, the teachers, don't know as they are in delivering the knowledge they already possess. These teachers could be said to be using the inquiry method. They invite student questions and often say, "I don't know. Let's find out together." These teachers don't hold up standardized achievement scores as evidence of student growth, largely because these tests don't fit the creative, deep learning that happens with the inquiry method.

The word *creative,* as used here, describes two things that happen when a learner pulls in some information by personally seeking it out. First, the learner creates his or her own knowledge by making mental connections between the new information and other self-constructed knowledge already filed in the brain. It could be said that this new personal knowledge is filed in the dynamic file for long-term availability, to be used in solving a problem or in some other beneficial way. This is the second creative act. In other words, knowledge obtained from personal inquiry is self-constructed and then used for some future purpose that is unique to the user. I vividly remember children who would learn spelling words to pass the test on Friday and misspell them in a written composition the next week. On the other hand, children would retain the spelling of words they needed in writing that was important to them.

There are other, more subtle differences between the direct teaching method and the inquiry method, which, I believe, account for the differences in student learning. With direct instruction the curriculum is closed. There is a boundary line around the content that was placed there by those who wrote the text with the goal of producing a predetermined response in the learner. With the inquiry method the curriculum is open. There is no limiting line around the content. The subject, be it math, science, art, geography, or whatever, merges over into other content areas, ever expanding. There is no intention to produce a predetermined response in the learner other than a flood of questions and creative use of the knowledge obtained through personal inquiry.

The result of this kind of learning is often surprising. Standardized achievement tests are useless for measuring student growth from personal inquiry for several reasons:

- The learning is unexpected and unpredictable.
- Personal, creative knowing is deeper and more intense, and affects each child in countless, immeasurable ways.
- It's nigh impossible to devise test questions to ascertain how a learner sees new relationships between various disciplines or subjects.

There is one final thing I'd like to say about standardized achievement testing. Because of the limitations expressed above, these tests automatically call for direct instruction, a method that usually results in shallow

learning, mainly because the learner has little personal involvement in the information that is being supplied. The tests call for uniformity and severely limit the amount of time teachers can allow for student self-initiated inquiry. They work against children who want to build their own knowledge through the processes of personal inquiry.

Searching for Questions

Before moving into the next chapter to talk about the professionalization of teaching, I'd like to mention another aspect of Inviting Inquiry. The number one tool for inquiry is the power to ask good questions. There are many ways to regain what was lost or stolen from us. I've already implied that we can develop a curious attitude by looking at everything with fresh eyes, as a child, to see what makes it tick.

I'm reminded of a classic case of curiosity deprivation. One day, a few years ago, my wife and I were standing, holding hands, on the edge of the north rim of the Grand Canyon. It was one of those days of perfect temperature, sunshine, and a cool breeze. We were awestruck with the beauty of everything, the cumulus-laden sky, the gnarled pines, the spring flowers, a soaring eagle, and especially the immense, multicolored chasm at our feet. The mighty Colorado River was a shimmering ribbon and barely audible, whenever the wind was right, almost a mile straight down. We were totally spellbound with the grandeur of it all. We were alone in a glorious moment with our Creator. The silence was awesome.

After a while of being speechlessly entranced, we heard footsteps behind us. We turned to see a man and a woman approaching on the path. They came up beside us and the man, after a quick perusal, said to his partner, "What a hell of a hole. Let's go." And they turned around and left.

I was stunned. Here we were, standing at the edge of eternity, on the brink of one of the most beautiful places on earth, when we were suddenly assaulted with perhaps the most extreme case of insensitivity I've ever experienced. How could two people with all their senses seemingly intact not feel what my wife and I were feeling? Did they not see what we saw? Why did they not linger and feast upon this magnificent scene? To this day, many years later, I'm still curious as to the motives behind such strange behavior.

What can we do to prevent the loss of curiosity and wonder in children? We can start by asking questions. A person full of curiosity and wonder about the world is a person full of questions. A parent, or other teacher, who wants to be an example of curiosity will ask many ques-

tions about everything, always searching for the best questions to ask. It's been said that it is more important and useful to look for good questions than it is to look for good answers. Why? Because insightful questions will usually lead to other, more penetrating ways of seeking. A little question is often swallowed up by a bigger question, which in turn, is swallowed up by a larger one — and on and on, until we catch a whale.

The more we know, the more we realize how much we don't know. I invite readers to find ways to get in the habit of personal inquiry so that you may become an example of curiosity for children. Look for questions everywhere and you'll soon find a new zest for life, a passion for learning that will rub off on everyone. We can best Invite Inquiry by showing how much fun it is. We *can* change our attitudes and habits of perceiving the world. I used a story from Marion Hanks's *The Gift of Self* that illustrates this kind of change in my first book, *Redesigning Education*. It bears repeating here because it is such a good example of what can happen when we change our way of looking at the world:

> An obscure spinster woman insisted that she never had a chance. She muttered these words to Dr. Louis Aggassiz, a distinguished naturalist, after one of his lectures in London. In response to her complaint, he replied, "Do you say, madam, you never had a chance? What do you do?"
>
> "I am single and help my sister run a boarding house."
>
> "What do you do?" he asked.
>
> "I skin potatoes and chop onions."
>
> He said, "Madam, where do you sit during these interesting but homely duties?"
>
> "On the bottom step of the kitchen stairs."
>
> "Where do your feet rest?"
>
> "On the glazed brick."
>
> "What is glazed brick?"
>
> "I don't know, sir."
>
> "How long have you been sitting there?"
>
> She said, "Fifteen years."

"Madam, here is my personal card," said Dr. Agassiz. "Would you kindly write me a letter concerning the nature of a glazed brick?"

She went home and explored the dictionary and discovered that a brick was a piece of baked clay. That definition seemed too simple to send to Dr. Agassiz, so after the dishes were washed, she went to the library and in an encyclopedia read that glazed brick is vitrified kaolin and hydrous aluminum silicate. She didn't know what that meant, but she was curious to find out. She took the word *vitrified* and read all she could about it. Then she visited museums. She moved out of the basement of her life and into a new world on the wings of vitrified. And having started, she took the word *hydrous*, studied geology, and went back in her studies to a time when the world was covered with clay beds. One afternoon she went to a brickyard, where she found out about the history of more than 120 kinds of bricks and tiles and why there have to be so many. She sat down and wrote thirty-six pages on the subject of glazed brick and tile.

Back came a letter from Dr. Agassiz: "Dear Madam, this is the best article I have ever seen on the subject. If you will kindly change the three words marked with asterisks, I will have it published and pay you for it."

A short time later there came a letter that brought $250, and penciled at the bottom of the letter was this query: "What was under those bricks?" She had learned the value of time and answered with a single word: "Ants." He wrote back and said, "Tell me about the ants."

She began to study ants. She found there were between eighteen hundred and twenty five hundred different kinds. There are ants so tiny you could put three head-to-head on a pin and have standing room left over for other ants; ants an inch long that march in solid armies half a mile wide, driving everything ahead of them; ants that are blind; ants that get wings on the afternoon of the day they die; ants that build anthills so tiny that you can cover one with a silver thimble; peasant ants

> that keep cows to milk and that then deliver the fresh milk to other ants in the colony.
>
> After much reading, microscopic work, and deep study, the spinster sat down and wrote Dr. Agassiz 360 pages on the subject. He published the book and sent her the money, and using her earnings, she went to visit all the lands she had dreams of visiting.

This story shows what can happen when a caring person knows how to Invite Inquiry. Dr. Agassiz knew how to Invite Inquiry by making people aware of the knowledge that's available in ordinary, commonplace things we often take for granted. All around us there are wonderful discoveries to be made. We can Invite Inquiry by first doing it with ourselves. We can restore curiosity as a learning way of life. A curious attitude is contagious because it's so much fun. Others will see our newfound zest for life and want to join the party.

With inquiry education it's time to abandon an obsolete concept: homework. It was a tragic mistake to ever call the learning children do at home, *work.* This term has instilled in many generations the idea that learning is often miserable and undesirable. When we adopt Invite Inquiry as a principle for changing education, we automatically embrace a new concept: Home Study. This means that children can learn at home without being required or assigned to do it. The Great Brain Project and other strategies usually create the kind of interest that results in children wanting to do projects and learn wherever they are.

Literacy Through Inquiry: Inquiry Through Literacy

The library of my youth was a box of comic books on the front porch of a nearby neighbor. I remember making many visits to this library to exchange a Superman, Batman, or Dick Tracy comic for a new one whenever I needed another adventure. The supply was endless and ever-changing because all the kids in the neighborhood kept the comic book library fresh with new books they had traded for old ones. It was an honor system that worked a magic spell on all of us, and it resulted in a group of youngsters becoming voracious readers. The printed word, always linked with an action picture, made reading a most exciting adventure.

I learned how to read through personal inquiry, the same way everyone learns how to read. It's a different inquiry process for every person because we are unique individuals. We have unique sensory receptors and unique backgrounds of experiences to connect us to the printed word. Like learning a language, reading is more *caught* than *taught.*

How do we learn to speak the language of our culture? We learn by being spoken to, over and over, and by watching the gestures of the speaker. Researchers have found that this is the best way to learn a foreign language as well. I have three grandchildren who learned how to speak and write Japanese while they were enrolled in a Japanese elementary school when their father was transferred to Japan on a business assignment for three years.

Learning to speak a language is a very complex process inside the brain that we may never fully understand. One thing we do know is that the process is personal and individual; it is different for every person. From this, and from many research studies, we can infer that the process of learning to read is also a result of personal, individual inquiry. Both learning to speak and learning to read are skills a person attains through self-directed learning. We do not formally teach talking, so why do we often make the mistake of trying to formally teach reading? If we understand the informal, natural way a child learns to speak the language of the culture, how does this help us know how to help children learn how to read? Should all children learn how to read at the same time? Just as there are individual rates for learning how to talk and walk, so also there are different rates for children learning how to read. Human beings are designed to be diverse! Unfortunately, over time, some self-styled experts and textbook publishers have foisted artificial methods for teaching reading on schools. The textbook industry has reaped a fortune selling basic readers so children can be divided into slow, middle, and fast reading groups for direct instruction.

During my classroom teaching years I soon became very uncomfortable trying to teach reading the way supervisors wanted — with a basic reader and children divided by ability into three groups. I found that the read-around-in-a-circle kind of instruction was not for me. I got better results when I provided children with a great variety of reading materials from which they could choose and gave them plenty of time for silent reading. After silent reading, we often took time for students to share their excitement of the wonderful stories they were discovering. I'll never forget one day, while all the children were quietly reading, I heard

a sobbing and looked up to see a little girl crying. When I went over to ask, "What's the matter?" Julie told me she had just finished *Biography of a Grizzly* by Earnest Thompson Seaton, and was distressed when Wob, the grizzly hero ended his long life by walking into the valley of death. Julie had lost a true friend! Later, when Julie shared this experience with the class, several children formed a waiting list to read this classic story.

Sometimes we ran out of time for children to share their reading experiences, so we created a file so students could write about their reading on a 4 x 6 card. Students used this file to share their feelings about a book as well as to find other books to read.

One year I decided to measure and compare the difference between my previously used reading group method and my new method of surrounding children with high-quality literature and giving them time for reading and sharing their experiences with books. When I compared the results on reading tests, I was surprised at the difference. With the old reading group method of using controlled-vocabulary basic readers, my fifth graders advanced the expected one year of growth. The next year, when I immersed children in a variety of great literature and provided time for silent reading, students averaged three years of growth in one year!

Later, as the principal of two schools that decided to nurture the three dimensions of greatness, I learned more valuable lessons about human literacy. One of the teachers, Beth Moore, was very successful using an unusual approach. While teaching first graders, she obtained a large-print typewriter and used it to transcribe children's stories as they described the pictures they made. At first, these stories were short and simple ("This is my dog.") and over time, became more elaborate ("This is a picture of our family camping at Bear Lake."). The stories were attached to the bottom of the picture, then pinned up for display in the classroom. At the end of the day, each child took the illustrated story home to read to parents.

How does this kind of reading instruction compare with the Dick-and-Jane, read-around-in-a-group, kind of instruction that many of us were exposed to? Do you see the difference? Beth Moore provided each child with instant success in reading because students were reading their own precious words. At the same time, children were developing their creative power with art materials. Students also learned how to read each other's stories.

The School Post Office

When the teachers at Whitesides Elementary School made a commitment to help children grow in the second dimension of greatness, Interaction, they discovered an amazing tool. One day three fourth-graders came to my office and asked if they could make an announcement to the school over the public address system. When I asked, "What for?" they responded, "We want to start a school post office. We've made a mailbox and will invite everyone in the school to write letters to others in the school and drop them in the mailbox. Each day we will deliver the letters to the ones they are addressed to, if the letters have the right room numbers on them. We especially invite cooks, custodians, librarians, parents, secretaries, everyone, and even you, the principal, to write letters."

When I gave permission for the announcement, I had no idea what a commotion it would cause. Nor did I realize that an important discovery was about to be made about human literacy. The announcement was made and a large official-looking mailbox was placed in the hallway outside the office door. Then the fun began. It was but minutes until the first letter arrived.

The post office made a dramatic impact on the life of the school. Within a day or two of its inauguration, some other school activities had to be curtailed or postponed in order to provide students with the time they needed for writing. The flood of mail was so great that the teacher, Della Russell, and her students who started the project, had to reorganize their room into a mail-processing center. Some adult staff members, including me, received so many letters we became concerned about how we would ever have time to reply. Children started writing letters at home and rushing to school each day to read their mail.

Other problems began to emerge as a few students started to write hateful notes and send them to others whom they disliked. This was partially solved when teachers pointed out that letter writers would usually respond in kind: If you want to receive an interesting, uplifting letter, that is the kind you should write. If you want to receive a letter that builds your self-esteem (Identity), kindness and friendship (Interaction), or stimulates intellectual activity (Inquiry), that is the kind you should write. Children were encouraged to write, not only to their close friends, but to someone whom they felt needed a friend.

The school post office became a valuable device for building Interaction attitudes and skills. Many children started to write as never before

without being assigned or coaxed into doing so. The post office made it possible for students to pass notes without getting in trouble. They learned how to spell new words at a rapid rate. Many kindergarten and first graders began reading and writing without formal instruction. There was powerful motivation when these children received personal letters and needed to answer them. The teachers invited older students to write to younger ones in clear printing, instead of cursive, to facilitate this process. Children soon found the importance of learning how to address their handmade envelopes properly and of putting a return address on their mail. They also learned the necessity of writing legibly. The school post office also became a valuable instrument for nurturing Inquiry as students sought help with vocabulary, spelling, and grammar.

After about a week, post office fever subsided somewhat as some children concentrated on the quality of their letter writing rather than quantity. Many children started to expand their contacts to include pen pals in other states and other countries. The teachers decided to keep the post office as a permanent part of the school and rotate the sorting and delivery jobs among the classes. Some classes made trips to the local post office to learn how to operate a mail delivery system.

The school post office is a strategy that is compatible with how the brain works and learns. It involves a flood of randomly supplied information, personal inquiry, and learning by doing. Perhaps most importantly, it is an activity that generates its own steam. Students do not need to be coaxed, assigned, or required to participate.

Brain research is now telling us that the best way to help children learn the skills of communication — listening, speaking, reading, and writing — is to immerse a child in a pleasant, interactive environment where he or she has as many opportunities as possible to actually practice these skills. Just as a child can't learn to ride a bicycle until he or she gets on and starts pedaling and balancing, neither can a child learn to communicate until he/she engages in real communication. A child learns to read by reading, to write by writing, to listen by listening, and to speak by speaking. The brain picks up the cues it needs while it is engaged in the process.

This means that we need to drastically reduce the amount of time we spend *teaching* literacy and start having children spend more time *doing* literary things. The important thing to remember in teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing is that literacy is not the goal; it is a means of helping children grow in the three dimensions of greatness. Literacy

acquired without nurturing self-worth (Identity), respectful communication (Interaction), and curiosity (Inquiry) is misguided at best and may be harmful to the recipient. If we build literacy with this in mind, we will usually avoid doing things that dampen children's natural curiosity and hunger for knowledge. If you want more information on helping children learn how to read in the natural way, I recommend two books: *Understanding Reading* by Frank Smith and *Beyond Traditional Phonics* by Margaret Moustafa.

The fourth principle for changing the direction of public education, Invite Inquiry, is a vital principle that will necessitate a major attitudinal change on the part of many parents, teachers, and especially some influential politicians and business leaders. My experience tells me that it will be well worth the effort to accommodate this principle. While direct teaching is often much easier than inviting inquiry, the results are entirely different: the first is shallow and temporary, the second endures endlessly.

Chapter 8

The Fifth Principle: Support Professionalism

> There is no word in the language that I revere more than "teacher." None. My heart sings when a kid refers to me as his teacher, and it always has. I've honored myself and the entire family of man by becoming a teacher. —Pat Conroy

Whack! A sharp blow to the top of my head was instantaneously followed by the sound of breaking glass — followed by deathly silence. My classmates were staring at me, wondering what I had done to merit such treatment from our teacher. Most of them had seen C. J. Manning throw the hard-backed eraser that bounced off my head and crashed through the window at the back of the classroom.

I knew immediately what I'd done to deserve the missile attack. I had been leaning across the aisle between our desks whispering with June Hadley, a cute girl who had caught my fancy. We all knew that verbal interaction with others was rarely tolerated in Mr. Manning's classroom. Most often he would throw a piece of chalk whenever students were caught talking. This time C. J. felt the infraction called for larger caliber ammunition.

Clarence Manning was a portly, older man, always dressed in a gray suit with a vest, complete with gold pocket watch and chain. He limped with a cane and, over the years, had compensated for a physical handicap by learning how to throw things with great accuracy. He taught fourth and fifth graders in a two-room school in our small town in rural Utah. I still revere Clarence Manning as one of my greatest teachers. Af-

ter many years, he still stands at the front of a long line of teachers who influenced my life. I'll never forget his emotional rendition of Longfellow's *Evangeline*. Every day after lunch he would read to us, sometimes with tears in his eyes and a choke in his throat.

It may seem strange that a person would hold in high esteem a teacher who throws things at his students. These days this kind of teaching behavior would not be tolerated. A long time ago teachers were so honored and respected that people would not question a teacher's behavior. I did not tell my parents of the eraser incident until long after it occurred, but I doubt they would have spoken to Mr. Manning about it anyhow. They would have felt I got what I deserved.

Nearly all of my teachers were dedicated professionals who practiced their art with love and great skill. In those days teachers were held up by society with honor and respect. As I began my professional teaching career in 1950, I looked forward to becoming part of this elite group.

Everything went well early in my career. My community did, in fact, treat me with kind deference, but with the proliferation of standardized achievement tests and talk of accountability, conditions gradually started to change for me and other teachers as well. We would soon no longer be regarded as competent professionals. Why? Mainly because we could not produce the uniform product that legislators and business executives were demanding. The harder we tried to shape students into a standard mold, the worse it got. There was great pressure to ignore student individuality and do what was expected: make sure all students were able to know and do the same things. This resulted in a rapid decline in student cooperation and discipline, which called for more rigor, a favorite phrase of politicians and business executives, and a call for higher standards. When students rebelled at being treated as products on an assembly line, teachers took the blame and were asked to double their efforts to standardize students and apply extreme disciplinary measures. As more testing was called for, conditions gradually worsened until in 2002 Congress passed the President's education bill that allocates federal money and assistance according to achievement test results. The President and his consortium of experts have wheeled out a new motto, "No Child Left Behind," a catchy phrase that seems to remove the last vestiges of freedom for children and their teachers.

Teachers, students, and parents have all been victims of misguided but well-meaning efforts to improve education. They are caught in a vortex of degradation. The scenario goes like this: (1) Politicians begin to use

standardized testing to hold teachers accountable. (2) Teachers respond with unsolicited direct instruction on test items. (3) Personal inquiry decreases. (4) Student apathy, discipline problems, and dropouts increase. (5) Test scores decline. (6) Legislators call for more rigor, higher standards, and more testing. (7) A standardized, teacher-proof curriculum is developed. (8) Creative teaching disappears as teachers dutifully follow the new manuals. (9) Many teachers are demoralized and leave the profession. (10) Test scores decline again. (11) Student apathy and discipline problems increase again.

Will our society have enough sense to put an end to this frightening scenario? There is a way out of this thorny dilemma: Support Professionalism.

The fifth principle for changing education — Support Professionalism — is to restore teaching to its time-honored place in our society. It may be the most powerful and effective way to reverse the trend and put education back on track to true reform. By holding teachers accountable for doing things that are possible, instead of holding them accountable for doing the impossible task of standardizing children, we can restore the teaching profession to a position of trust and respect, mainly because the results will be vastly different. As parents we can also hold ourselves accountable for doing what great parents have always done. We can act as professional teachers in our homes.

The fifth principle for redesigning education, Support Professionalism, is the doorway to Mission Possible. It will come from a major cultural attitude change that embraces the principles of this book. It *is* possible for us to value and nurture Positive Human Diversity. It *is* possible to Draw Forth the Latent Potential of Learners. It *is* possible for us to Respect Student Autonomy. It *is* entirely possible and relatively easy to Invite Personal Inquiry. Of course, all of this is easier said than done, but now there's new hope. There's much reason to believe that significant changes are finally possible.

I've just finished reading a great little book that supports and adds another dimension to my contention that tradition prevents changes in education: *The Teaching Gap* by James Stigler and James Hiebert. These authors tell about a major study that was conducted to find out why American students lag so far behind those in other countries in mathematics, especially those in Japan.

The study began with video photographers, a native of each of three countries, Germany, Japan, and the United States, going to a different

classroom each day for seven months and videotaping an eighth grade teacher teaching a mathematics lesson. When the videotaping was completed, a team of researchers and math teachers from each country assembled at UCLA to study the tapes. They engaged in a complicated process of analysis that took several months.

Their conclusion was a complete affirmation of my belief that tradition is a ruling force. These researchers, after many hours of study, reflection, and discussion, agreed that teaching, in each of the countries studied, is primarily shaped by the culture. In other words, we all assimilate basic teaching methods from those who taught us for twelve or more years. That's why nearly everyone is a professed expert on teaching. It's the reason politicians, lawyers, business executives, farmers, everyone, consider themselves to be teaching authorities. It's also the reason why it's so difficult to change people's vision of teaching. Not only is it tradition, but it's also a lifestyle custom of a proud people.

To illustrate this, let me relate an example of how teachers teach a mathematics concept in the USA with how it is done in Japan. In the United States, teachers typically show students, often on an overhead projector, how to do a mathematical process such as how to add unlike fractions (1/3 + 1/4). Following the teacher's demonstration, the students are assigned to do many similar problems for practice until they master the process.

In Japan, the problem of the day is presented and students are challenged to figure out, individually or in small groups, how to solve the problem. This is followed by much discussion and demonstration of the thinking process of various students and recorded on the chalkboard. Several avenues to a solution are explored. Students are not expected to do many problems for practice. Teachers in Japan use the chalkboard rather than overhead projectors because the chalkboard is more suitable for recording the linear "story" of student's thought processes as they explore various avenues for solving the daily problem.

The Japanese system is more closely related to what I call an inquiry method of teaching. Less student practice is needed because students have been guided to integrate their own knowledge, a process that builds understanding. The American system is usually direct instruction. Knowledge is plastered on the outside of the brain and soon sloughs off. The German method fits in between these two.

These differences may explain why Japanese students perform so much better on tests. When Japanese students are presented with a prob-

lem on a test, they have learned how to figure out a solution, on the spot, even if they have never seen a similar problem. American students, on the other hand, deficient in inquiry skills, must rely on memory of a process that matches the problem. If it so happens that the test produces a problem that has never been encountered by the student, or the student has forgotten the process, s/he will probably not be able to arrive at a solution.

The approaches of teachers in the three countries were so consistently applied by many teachers that the researchers were forced to conclude that teaching is a cultural activity. It is a system learned over a long period of time while sitting in public and private school classrooms. While each teacher exhibited a unique teaching style, it was always consistent within the overall cultural mode.

This brings us to an interesting point. The American system of teaching is basically an information delivery system that is deeply ingrained in the heads of most people in our culture. The factory conveyor belt is often used as a metaphor for schooling in our country because of the prevalent practice of teachers conveying information to students. When we think of teaching we most often think of a teacher explaining, expounding knowledge, or showing students how to do something. The postal system with teachers as mail carriers could also be an apt symbol teaching in the United States.

These visions of teaching may be a major reason why so many efforts to improve education have failed. We keep asking teachers to improve the delivery system, the only system we know. We keep asking teachers to improve the way they plaster information on the outside of children's brains. Teachers have actually been asked to try harder and harder to do the wrong things better and better! We are now discovering that students do not retain unsought knowledge that is conveyed or delivered to them. They learn best from personal inquiry, by pursuing information on their own initiative to build their own knowledge. A shopping mall is a better metaphor for what happens when students go searching for the information they need to fill in the blanks they perceive in their own knowledge.

In our country we have spent millions of dollars and countless hours of energy trying to perfect a system of education that doesn't work very well. We have exhausted nearly every possible way of improving the conveyor belt when all the while we should have been working to improve the shopping mall!

Another example of our cultural mindset about teaching is found in the way teachers most often convey a major concept in geology. Follow-

ing textbooks written by experts in the field, they teach that rocks are classified in three major categories: igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary. Pictures of rocks thus classified, or real rocks, are then shown to support the concept. Students are often asked to examine a rock and tell in which category it fits.

Now contrast this with an inquiry method in which students are given a variety of small rocks and are challenged to see how many different classifications they can produce. Working as individuals, or in small groups, students will produce an interesting variety of categories for classifying their rocks — by shape, size, color, hardness, composition, texture, weight, and more. As part of this exercise students can be challenged to arrange their rocks from lightest to heaviest and prove their arrangement by inventing their own weight-measuring devices. Commercially made measuring tools are not allowed until afterwards to check and compare the results of student's arrangements. It is fascinating to watch students invent ways to measure the weight of their rocks.

If the rocks contain enough variety, I have found that sometimes students will develop theories about density and mass and show why a large, porous rock sometimes weighs less than a smaller one. In one of my workshops students decided to demonstrate this concept by immersing the rocks in water and measuring the amount of liquid displaced by each rock.

The value of engaging students in hands-on inquiry should be obvious. Students can learn much more about the classification of rocks, or anything else, through observing, weighing, measuring, and comparing objects and events than they can by being told what conclusions they should draw from their experiences. After students have had their own experiences classifying rocks, the categories, igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary have much more meaning for them.

A Different Cultural Vision

How do we go about changing a culture to reflect a different vision of teaching? What can we do to break a well-established pattern? How can we overcome a deeply entrenched tradition? For the vision of teaching I have tried to convey in this book is much different than the one most often displayed in our culture. Supporting Professionalism in the context of this book does not mean supporting business as usual in schools and in many homes. Supporting Professionalism means that we will support a new kind of teaching — the kind that follows the six pivotal principles.

Let's now examine some of the implications of Supporting Professionalism as defined by the principles.

Value and Nurture Positive Human Diversity

How do we support schoolteachers and ourselves in attempts to nurture positive differences? We must somehow come to an agreement that building positive human diversity is a valid, exciting mission for schools and homes. I will suggest some implications for ways to convey to teachers that it's now okay to treat children as individuals and support them in doing so.

It's not only possible, but highly desirable to hold teachers responsible for treating each child as a unique person. Nearly all teachers will welcome the chance to prove they can value and nurture positive human diversity. What a relief it will be for teachers to have the standardization monkey lifted off their backs and replaced with an invitation to be professional teachers! Albert Einstein is reported to have said: "I believe in standardizing automobiles, not human beings."

What an invigorating stimulus it will be for teachers to be freed from the education assembly line — freed from being treated as subordinate workers taking orders from people who are far removed from classrooms and who know very little about teaching. To be treated as a competent professional will breathe new life, zest, and enthusiasm into every teacher.

Restoring dignity to the teaching profession is no more complicated than for lawmakers, school board members, and business leaders to stop telling teachers what, when, and how to teach. There may be nothing wrong with telling teachers what kinds of people are needed in the workplace and elsewhere, what kinds of skills and knowledge are needed, but please stop there. Resist the temptation to tell teachers what curriculum to use and how to administer it. To do otherwise is like telling physicians that the same medication and treatment is good for every patient.

One of the greatest incentives for teachers to rise to a new level is to let them know that we have faith that they will know what to do to help parents produce a society full of competent, caring, creative people. We need to tell them that we respect their ability to assess the needs of each child and foster his or heroptimal growth. If we want to see a revolution in education, just turn teachers loose. Free the slaves and let them unlock their great creative powers!

An article in the March 2002 *Kappan* by Barry McGhan builds a strong case for giving teachers full control over their own reform: "Only when teachers undertake the responsibility of fixing their own teaching — individually and collectively — will they come to be viewed as professionals, people whose viewpoint will not be discounted by self-styled experts who think they know best how to improve education." I believe teachers will enthusiastically respond to an invitation to overcome cultural constraints, especially when they are invited to help parents nurture positive human diversity.

It will be relatively easy to fashion a system that holds teachers responsible for doing what is possible — in contrast to a system that demands uniformity. One could ask teachers to keep a log of some of the ways they nurture positive differences each week. It could be an agreement between a teacher and parents that each would keep such a log and use it as a point of discussion in periodic assessment meetings. Other ways will be created as we become familiar with a new way of looking at what it means to teach.

One final word about supporting teachers as they nurture positive human diversity: This attitude opens a door of opportunity for us to allow and encourage teachers to be themselves, to be diverse, to fully capitalize on *their own* unique talents and gifts as they interact with children. Up to now we have asked teachers to function with their own natural abilities hidden. We have expected them to perform according to an imposed cultural pattern as obedient workers on an assembly line with their minds disabled. When we respect teachers as professionals in their efforts to nurture the positive diversity of children we will release a marvelous power for dynamic change in education, both at home and in schools.

While we wait for a new generation of teachers to be prepared, we can give permission to current teachers to use their unique gifts in helping students identify and develop their gifts. It may come as a shock for many teachers to be allowed to create their own lesson plans — as in days of old — but the new freedom will be eagerly embraced by all except those robots who need to be told what to do day by day. They will soon leave the profession and be replaced by people who welcome an intellectual and creative challenge.

Draw Forth the Latent Potential of Learners

With this principle we give ourselves and teachers permission to care enough to see the good in everyone and draw it out. We give permission

to alter the curriculum for each child to discover his or her own gifts and develop them for humanity.

We give permission for love to be a vital force in education.

Drawing forth the latent potential of learners is the exact opposite of trying to cram a cleverly crafted body of knowledge into the heads of reluctant learners. It's much easier to respect and support teachers for doing what students are naturally inclined to do than to require them to go against the grain of learning. When students become eager, aggressive participants in their own education, the teachers who draw forth latent potential are elevated to a high level of honor and respect. Teachers serving the needs of students, rather than serving the needs of bureaucrats beholden to powerful corporations, will help us enter a bright new era. The act of supporting teachers to draw forth and help children develop their unique gifts, talents, and abilities instead of demanding that they standardize students will help usher in the desperately needed revolution in education.

When we discover that a child is gifted in math, music, reading, writing, language, art, mechanical skills or whatever, and we nurture the gift, what does this do for student achievement? Although standardized tests are not appropriate, if students were to be given these tests, would the scores increase or decline? I'm sure it doesn't take the mind of a rocket scientist to see that the overall average scores would skyrocket (excuse the pun). Students would score high in the things they were good at and lower in other areas, but the overall average scores would be much higher. Then, if we take into account the growth that takes place as students are energized from personal asset development to overcome their deficits, we will understand why the average scores would shoot up dramatically. For those who are obsessed with standardized achievement testing, I hasten to point out that these tests are a major contributing factor in the development of a system of education that pressures teachers to force children into a common mold. By eliminating these tests, we can begin to think about creating ways to assess the growth of the latent potential of learners. We can support teachers to draw forth the superb gifts of each special child. Inasmuch as tests drive teaching, we need a new kind of assessment that will call forth a different kind of teaching. I will explain more about this in the next chapter.

Respect Autonomy

This principle, like the others, calls for a change in the direction education has been headed during the last 40 or 50 years. During this time, those in control have gradually eroded the right of students to build themselves as well as the right of teachers to use their creative wills to influence learners. The factory model of education, with students viewed as products and teachers viewed as subservient workers, has all but destroyed student autonomy.

If we respect the right of students to build themselves with free will, we must also respect the right of teachers to harness their own wills in their professional callings. To do less than this is to take away a great power, that of creativity — and when creativity is lost, we lose our humanity; we lose a very precious part of ourselves. When we steal autonomy from teachers, students, and parents, we take away volition and the right to shape our own futures. Does this help you to understand the Great Brain Robbery and the reason why we must replace assembly-line education with a totally new system?

Invite Inquiry

To respect teachers as professionals as they help students engage in personal inquiry would change the nature of education in schools and in the homes of our culture. Textbooks will no longer be used as the main source of information. Books that have been designed and written to deliver a common body of information into the heads of students will no longer be appropriate. When we invite student inquiry we will need access to a great variety of sources of information. The school library or information center, accessible to the community for extended hours, will become the center of learning along with inquiry centers, which I described in Chapter Seven. Also, the surrounding community itself, and the web of Internet information will increase in value as places to learn.

What about cost? I've often heard parents and teachers alike complain about the shortage of textbooks for children. When I was an elementary school principal I used to dream the kind of library we could have if we could have used money wasted on textbooks to spend on exciting, beautiful books, films, recordings, microscopes, binoculars, and other hands-on inquiry materials for the library. I figured the cost several times and was amazed at what could have been, if there were to have been a major attitude change on the part of the teachers and the public. Since then, the

testing industry has taken another huge bite out of a budget that could better be spent on inquiry materials.

Unfortunately, even today many teachers and parents still do not see the school library as a center for inquiry. I know there are school libraries that remain like the one in a school I was transferred to many years ago. The librarian, Mrs. Bently, was a strict lady who allowed children to enter her sacred sanctum only once a week, class by class, for 30 minutes at a time to check books in and out. If a child had a question at other times, and needed to search for information, s/he had to wait until class library time, usually several days away. The teachers went along with Mrs. Bently's system largely because the tradition of our culture did not support the inquiry method of teaching. As you can imagine, Mrs. Bently did not fit my vision of how a school librarian should function. After several unsuccessful attempts to get her to change, I was pleased to grant Mrs. Bently her request to transfer to another school and be with her old principal, the one I had replaced. I hired a new librarian, Bonnie Poulson, who opened the library for spontaneous, free-flow inquiry at all times, and we got along just fine. Bonnie was instrumental in making the Great Brain Project as successful as it was, and in helping teachers begin to overcome traditional teaching methods.

Supporting the inquiry method of teaching is much different than supporting teaching that has been shaped by our culture. This is one reason it may be difficult for some people to accept. On the other hand, fears will soon be erased when people see children enthusiastically pursuing information to build their own knowledge.

This then is what it means to support professionalism. Being sensitive to the needs of individual learners — and meeting those needs — is much different than trying to deliver a set of curriculum into the heads of many different kinds of children. It is much more complex, but it is also many times more rewarding. If we work as hard to develop a new system of education as we have to perfect the information delivery system, we will soon see great benefits. Teachers and parents need to shake off the bureaucratic chains and stand up for children. Our very integrity is at stake.

Chapter 9

The Sixth Principle: Unite for Greatness

> Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. — Margaret Mead

How can we create a system of education that is different from what we have experienced? Up to now it has been virtually impossible to fundamentally change education in schools and homes because we all see education through the eyes of our past experiences. Generation after generation of teachers and parents teach the way they were taught. Because we can't envision a different way, we keep trying to make the old way better.

However, we now have an unprecedented opportunity to see education from a different perspective. With the sixth pivotal principle for changing education, Unite for Greatness, we can do something that has never been done before. Small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens — parents and teachers working together — can use a strategy that is not bound by a cultural fixation. The strategy is this: Employ a crystal clear purpose that is so powerful it can unite parents with teachers and change the way we use curriculum.

Power lies in the vision. When we lock in a mental picture of what we want to accomplish, the brain quickly responds to the challenge. This is confirmed by a study reported by Jeffrey Schwartz and Sharon Begley in *The Mind and The Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force*. In "mind over matter" the researchers found that the brain actually changes its physical nature when the owner exerts his *will* upon it. This means we can direct our brains to create strategies for accomplishing our

goals, if we persist in thinking about them. We can actually overcome our cultural, mental fixation about what it means to teach!

A new purpose for education must be simple and easy to keep at the front of the mind at all times. It must also be one that teachers and parents both embrace and for which both are responsible. If we really want to help children grow into the people they were meant to be, we must be able to hold an image of greatness constantly in our minds. With such a purpose we can change curriculum from boss to servant. Students, parents, and teachers can take control of subject matter content and use it for *their* needs rather than for the needs of a few influential business executives and powerful politicians.

American education has never had the unique kind of purpose I'm talking about: a dynamic, fully functioning purpose. It's the reason why student achievement in curriculum had become our goal, an end in and of itself. Our system of education has always been curriculum-centered rather than student-centered. It's the reason curriculum development has smothered any thoughts of education for human development. It's the reason politicians and business executives keep trying to improve the only thing they know: the factory system of mass-produced uniformity.

Throughout the history of American education there have been many attempts to identify important goals for education. I'm aware of school districts and individual schools that have developed mission statements — mostly within the confines of our cultural context. Within this context the mission statements either aim for student achievement in curricula, or have been so complex and wordy they never got into the heads of teachers and parents to guide minute-to-minute decisions. If you want confirmation of this, just try asking parents or teachers to name the major goals of their school. Nine times out of ten you'll get the same response I do: a blank stare. If schools do have goals, they don't share them very well.

The revered grade point average is the best evidence that we are trapped in the curriculum-as-goal tradition. Our culture firmly embraces GPAs as the main indicator of student accomplishment. The numerals, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, don't really measure anything at all except, perhaps, a learner's ability to play the game. Studies have shown no correlation between grades obtained in school and later success in the workplace; there is no correlation between grades and dependability, creativity, honesty, job skills, human relations, or any other valued trait. Grade

point averages only reflect our culture's need to shape students to a common pattern and compare the learning of each child with others. Some parents have a great need to brag to their neighbors — "My child graduated with a 4.0 grade point average!" It's a tradition that will die hard, but with a different purpose for education we will find a much better way to assess and describe student learning.

There is a way to break out of our mental jail. We can simplify and make crystal clear the purpose of education so parents and teachers can unite as full, equal partners. I've already related how we surveyed thousands of parents in six school communities to determine their needs for children – and were surprised to learn that achievement in curricula was not the top priority. I believe we discovered some universal truths that put students, parents, teachers, and subject matter content in a correct relationship. These truths make possible an alliance that is not possible when the system is trying to standardize students.

The Power of Purpose

The following simple purpose statement provides a way to unite parents and teachers in harnessing subject matter content to serve the needs of children: "The purpose of education is to develop great human beings who are contributors to society."

This purpose makes it possible for parents and teachers to unite as full, equal partners. It's the kind of objective that can bring parents and teachers together in a new way. Up to now parents have had a subservient role — as infrequent volunteers to support teachers as they desperately try to serve the needs of the state. However, when we unite to grow human greatness, the roles are reversed. Parents are the ones who are primarily responsible for a child's education — after the child himself, of course. With human greatness as the main goal for education, teachers become servants to parents as they endeavor to meet the needs of children.

This arrangement does not diminish the role of teachers, nor does it exalt the role of parents. It makes them equal partners, united to bring out and magnify the greatness in a child, a purpose that enables a child to find his or her unique purpose for living. When parents and teachers unite to serve the core needs of children they embark on an exciting journey. We will find these special needs as we look at what it means to be a contributor.

Contributor or Burden?

Being a contributor is the opposite of being a burden to society. It reflects the difference between a happy person and a miserable person. When we do an act of kindness it makes us happy. The result of acting selfishly, thoughtlessly, or mean toward others often makes us sad or miserable. It's as simple as that — The great law of human relationships: we reap what we sow. If we do good deeds, good will return to us with interest. If we do hurtful deeds, we will reap misery.

Unfortunately, there is a large number of people in our society who have never discovered the great law of beneficial interaction. They often do things that are burdensome to those around them. While I don't want to dwell on the negative, I want to call attention to some statistics to support my case for helping each child acquire an attitude of wanting to be a contributor, of wanting to fulfill his special purpose for living. The Bureau of Justice Statistics recently reported another increase in America's prison population. In 2002 there were 2.1 million people in state and federal prisons costing taxpayers about $40 billion a year. This was a 2.6 percent increase over 2001, mostly from drug offenders.

I know about this first hand. During the time when our school was formulating the purpose of education — to develop great human beings who are contributors to society — our county was in the process of building a new, larger jail and court complex. Soon after it was completed the county commissioners announced a need to add a $25 million 400-bed addition to the new jail and court complex, which caused the largest tax increase ever. This fueled our conviction that it is much better, and less expensive, to spend taxpayer money on schools to develop great human beings who are contributors to society than it is to incarcerate/rehabilitate them. When we consider the enormous costs of supporting lawyers, judges, policemen, hospital care for drug addicts, and many other related costs, it should be obvious that prevention is far better than the often fruitless effort to cure people of many social aberrations. In other words, it's much easier to build a fence at the top of the cliff than it is to supply ambulances and hospitals at the bottom, much easier to create an education system like that described in this book than to remedy the many afflictions brought on by a defective system.

The problem is very serious. Many of those who are alienated from standardized education often become burdens on society. Elaine Jarvik, in a newspaper artcle, The Rise of Rudeness, tells about an epidemic of

rude behavior exhibited by many high school students. She writes that "teachers complain that the number of students who are openly rude is on the rise and that, in administrators meetings, the principals are constantly talking about the deterioration of respect."

We now have a golden chance to reverse a trend toward lawless, burdensome behavior in America with the adoption of a crystal clear goal for education, human greatness, a greatness than can be evidenced by the millions of ways there are to be valuable contributors to our schools, churches, homes and communities. I will soon tell about a big way to nurture contributive behavior and, at the same time, reduce the number of burdens. First, an example of one small way:

I've found it easy to help even young children understand the contributor/burden concept. When children see the benefits and satisfaction of being a contributor, versus the misery of being a burden, they soon change their attitudes and behavior. In my own family, after explaining the concept, occasions would arise when I could point out how glad I was to see a child being a contributor. Conversely, whenever a child was being obnoxious, I would sometimes ask, "Are you now being a contributor or a burden to our family?" Oft times this question brought about some introspection which was embarrassing to everyone concerned — and I am now sorry to say, may have been used more often than the first. If I could do it all over again, I'd try to call attention to contributive behaviors more often than the burdensome ones. Fortunately, I've been able to apply this idea many times in school and with grandchildren since my own children have grown up.

Nearly all readers are aware of a slogan that was supposedly coined by Nancy Reagan. Young people are urged to "Just say no" to drugs, premarital sex, and other things that would get them in trouble. Throughout the country, the DARE program has been introduced to help youngsters dare to avoid drugs. In this program prominent people, policemen, and recovering addicts visit schools to lecture about the harmful effects of doing drugs.

Are these things working? There is no evidence that they are. As I see the problem, a great many young people have not acquired the strength of character to say "No." I use the word "character" advisedly because it is much more than that. Neither have many children developed the strength to say "Yes" to contributive behaviors. Our children and youth have not been properly introduced to themselves. The school system of our culture, working in isolation from parents, with curriculum as a false

goal, has failed to help many of our youth see themselves as valuable contributors to society. Youngsters do not picture their own potential as individuals with unique gifts that the world needs. It all boils down to what I call spiritual strength and stamina — a strength and power that comes from having children's deep, inner needs attended to.

Core Needs — The Dimensions of Greatness

We now come full-circle, back to where we started to introduce the pivotal principles. The first principle, Value and Nurture Positive Human Diversity, coincides with the need of children to discover who they are and what they can become. It's wonderful and exciting to discover that the central needs of all humans coincide with the marks of greatness, which, in turn, are the pillars that produce contributors. People come into this world with three deep yearnings or needs:

- the yearning to know who we are and what we can become
- the need to feel loved and show love to others
- the yearning for truth and knowledge.

These are the yearnings of greatness that, when fulfilled, result in behaviors that genuinely contribute to society. A person who knows herself, can feel and show love, and knows how to learn is likely to find joy in being a contributor. By now you surely recognize these yearnings as Identity, Interaction and Inquiry, the three dimensions of human greatness. They can be portrayed as strengths or powers that will give some idea of their significance:

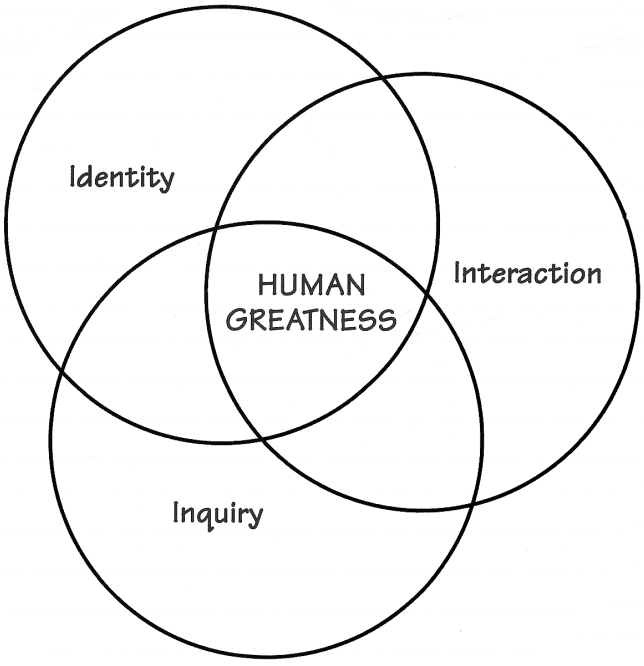
- Identity — I know who I am and can sense my unlimited potential.
- Interaction — I love every member of the human family, as well as myself.
- Inquiry — I am in charge and responsible for my own learning and behavior.

Suppose for a minute that every person in the world had these qualities. What would it be like? Suppose that, from this time on, parents and teachers unite to help students grow in the three dimensions of greatness throughout a child's public school life. Would we increase the number of

Education for Greatness

The Three Dimensions of Human Greatness

IDENTITY	INTERACTION	INQUIRY
High self-esteem, confidence	Compassion, love, empathy	Curiosity, zeal for learning
Development of individual gifts, talents, and potential	Respect, kindness, consideration for other people	Ability to acquire, process, and use information
Responsibility, self-discipline, self-reliance, honesty	Cooperation, healthy communication skills	Ability to gain knowledge and foster understanding
Sense of the spiritual, humility	Responsible citizenship	Ability to solve problems successfully
Health and fitness		



contributors and decrease the number of burdens? Could we soon convert our jail space into schools, hospitals, or care centers? With a focus on greatness, will children develop the skills our society feels are important to succeed?

It is significant that the primary needs of people, when fulfilled, become the preeminent strengths leading to contributive behaviors. It makes the job of parents and teachers much easier if children want the same things that we want for them. There is a sharp contrast between this and traditional education where children often have no interest in the material being fed them by teachers — which often creates an adversarial relationship between teacher and student. On the other hand, a warm, cooperative relationship develops when students know that parents and teachers want the same things they want.

The Power of Unity

With human greatness as a crystal clear purpose we can free ourselves from thinking of student achievement in curriculum as the main goal of education. Perhaps, even more beneficial is the power of unity that comes from this different perspective. Students, teachers, and parents can now join hands as full, equal partners to grow greatness in one another. If we want children to become contributors, we must help them grow in self-awareness (Identity), love (Interaction), and knowing how to learn (Inquiry).

There may be some who will say, "This is too simple. It doesn't include everything that's needed for a full education." To them I say that every skill or knowledge that a student needs to learn easily fits under at least one of the three dimensions of greatness. Each of the three dimensions merges with the others and is part of a comprehensive design (see chart). Just find another thoughtful, committed citizen and begin. Unite with a partner with a commitment to hold the three dimensions as goals constantly at the front of your minds. Your brains will automatically begin to create strategies and curricula for accomplishing the goals.

The New Order of Things

This is the new order of things that we propose for education: Aim for goals that can be kept constantly in mind and make subject matter content work for us. It is in stark contrast to the present system wherein everyone is in subjection to curriculum and the multibillion-dollar testing industry. With Identity, Interaction, and Inquiry as goals, curriculum be-

comes the servant, not the boss — it changes everything! If parents and teachers want to develop contributors, they will unite as full, equal partners to fulfill the spiritual yearnings of children. This attitude helps children and youth gain the strengths they need to say No to burdensome behaviors and Yes to the myriad ways there are to benefit the world.

The act of placing the three dimensions at the front of the mind as main goals gives marching orders to the brain to develop strategies for accomplishing the goals.

It is not necessary to keep all the elements of each dimension in mind. The elements will fall in place as you go along. What is important and fairly easy is to keep asking yourself three questions.

- How can I help this child discover his greatness — his unique gifts, talents, and abilities — and see his amazing potential to make a difference in the world? (Identity)
- How can I help this child grow in love, respect, kindness, and the power to communicate with others? (Interaction)
- How can I nurture my child's curiosity, hunger for knowledge, and zest for learning? (Inquiry)

The answers to these questions will come as we continue to think about them and as we talk to others on the partnership team. What can we do to help this child realize his great worth — to our school or our family? This is a very poignant question, especially if this child is included in the deliberations. The partnership team can consist of as few people as a parent, a child, and a teacher.

Why should children be involved in questions and decisions that concern them? Why should parents? Teachers? The answer seems obvious, but traditional education seems to hide its purposes from students as well as from teachers and especially from parents. If a child knows that the purpose of education is to develop great human beings who are contributors to society, she will approach learning with a totally different attitude. Furthermore, if a youngster knows that parents and teachers are trying to help her fulfill her deep, core needs — her unique gifts and talents (Identity), her power to love (Interaction), and her zest for knowledge (Inquiry) — she will be more likely to join the quest. It makes a big difference whether or not a child is included in questions and decisions that affect him or her.

The realization that curriculum should not be considered the goal of education allows us to start thinking outside the cultural box. Thinking of curriculum as a *means* of accomplishing higher goals is a revolutionary way of thinking about education. This different way of thinking is made possible by having a crystal clear purpose that it is so simple it can be kept constantly in mind to guide us. Without this kind of purpose, curriculum becomes a relentless taskmaster. It's the whip used by bureaucrats to control what teachers and students do.

When parents and teachers employ curriculum to work for them, instead of them working for curriculum, they reverse the order of things in education and begin to transform the system. The three I's, Identity, Interaction, and Inquiry, are much easier to keep in mind than a wordy mission statement. It is this ability to maintain the primary purpose of education constantly in mind that changes curriculum from boss to servant. With this mindset we ask such questions as:

- What curriculum will we choose to help this child discover and develop personal talents and gifts (Identity)?
- Will this curriculum foster positive Interaction?
- How will this subject matter promote the child's intensive, energetic Inquiry?

Some habits are very hard to break, especially those that are habits of culture. To go against the dominant culture of a country is particularly difficult. In this book I have tried to explain how a different mental focus changes the way we use curriculum, or subject matter content, in schools and homes. By now you probably sense the sweeping changes implied by such a view. Even if you can break your own mental habits, powerful political forces will assuredly arise to try to thwart any attempts to change public education in the ways we suggest. Each alliance of thoughtful, committed citizens must be prepared for attacks by special interest groups, including local boards of education and even educators who have bought into the program of higher standards or No Child Left Behind and invested much time and money to help perfect the conveyor belt system.

This is where Uniting for Greatness becomes a powerful force. I've found, on several occasions, that an extraordinary teacher, supported by a fiercely determined group of parents, can go before the Board of Education and get permission to do almost anything he or she wants to do.

Evaluation

The right kind of evaluation is a critical element in changing a school from one bent on meeting the needs of politicians and business leaders to one that is tenaciously trying to meet the needs of children. Do we evaluate student growth in curriculum, or do we assess student growth in the dimensions of greatness? If the report card is geared toward student growth in curriculum — if curriculum is our boss — it forces teachers to try to shape students to fit a common mold, an impossible assignment. On the other hand, if the evaluation instrument calls for student growth in greatness — if curriculum is our servant — it makes teachers accountable for doing that which is possible, meeting the needs of children. The evaluation instruments in Appendix B, one for young children and one for older, were used by the courageous teachers and parents united as partners in two schools to begin changing their small part of the world. Parents, teachers, and students all mark these "report cards," inasmuch as all are responsible, and use them in evaluation meetings. You can use these or develop your own to begin the process of making a mighty change in your heart and in our system of public education. The main thing to remember is to evaluate what we are trying to accomplish: growth in student greatness. Because assessment drives teaching, we need to change to a form of assessment that calls forth great, inspired teaching, teaching that nurtures positive differences and draws forth the latent potential of every precious person.

In our new system of education for greatness there is an important concept that must be kept in mind: Evaluation is an important part of the learning process. This means that students should evaluate their own work and make revisions accordingly. External, authoritarian evaluation is useful only to the extent that it facilitates student self-evaluation. Parents and teachers can ask questions that result in student introspection and self-awareness. The worst kind of evaluation is that which separates the student from his work and then is stamped with only a letter grade.

Education for human greatness is sorely needed, not only in the United States, but also all over the world. There are unique gifts, talents, and abilities lying dormant in millions of children and adults waiting to be awakened and developed for the benefit of humankind. There are many artists on the order of Rembrandt, writers on the level of Shakespeare, scientists equal to Einstein, musicians even better than Mozart,

Bach, and Beethoven, and humanitarians like Mother Teresa — millions of people with latent gifts waiting for the special love that you and others like you can use to draw them out. Every one of us has special qualities of greatness that we can begin to use immediately.

In this book I have tried to build a case for refocusing education. I have tried to show that nurturing positive human diversity is immensely better than trying to do the impossible task of standardizing students. With six pivotal principles, I have set forth a vision of education that sees latent, potential greatness in everyone. It is a vision that invites parents, teachers, and children to get acquainted with their own wonderful selves and use their unique gifts and talents to benefit the world. I believe this focus is urgently needed to save our public schools from the tight grasp of people who have lost sight of what schools are really for. You are invited to take the lead in introducing this focus to the people of your community. When enough people become committed, we will soon reach the critical mass that is needed to transform education in the schools and homes of our country.

Appendices

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Appendix A
Parent Priorities

Priorities

for the education of _____
student

for the_____ school year

Please rate the following educational goals 1 through 10, according to your child's needs, in terms of what you feel is most to least important for the school to help you accomplish:

___ **Health and Physical Development**
Nutrition habits; physical fitness; strength, endurance, agility, and skill in sports, games, and life activities.

___ **Human Relations and Communication**
Getting along with others, leadership, cooperation, courtesy, respect, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

___ **Identity and Individuality**
Self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline, responsibility, moral character, and the development of individual talents, gifts, interests, and abilities.

___ **Inquiry, Thinking, Learning**
Curiosity, eagerness to learn, study skills and habits, problem solving, creativity, and decision making.

___ **Science and Math**
Knowledge and skill in mathematics and the physical sciences.

___ **Arts**
Knowledge, skill, and appreciation for literature, music, dance, and the visual and performing arts.

___ **Work**
Initiative, self-motivation, self-direction, persistence, following through, and evaluating work; understanding of attitudes, knowledge, and abilities needed for various vocations.

___ **Responsible Citizenship**
Respect for and understanding of the workings of a democracy, appreciation for political processes and free enterprise.

___ **Environment**
Respect and maintenance of personal and public property, enjoying and protecting nature.

___ **Other** (describe): _____

_____

Appendix B
Assessing Student Growth (Later Grades)

An Assessment of Student Growth in the Three Dimensions of Human Greatness

Date _____ Evaluation for _____

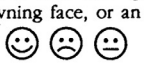
Please indicate how much you feel this child is growing in each of the categories listed below:

	Comments:
Identity	
1. Self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence	
2. Sense of responsibility for his/her own learning and behavior	
3. Awareness and development of his/her unique strengths, talents, gifts, interests, and abilities	
Interaction	
4. Kindness, trust, thoughtfulness, tolerance, and respect for others	
5. Social attitudes and skills — the ability to listen with understanding, express ideas, and get along with others	
6. Enjoyment and ability to express him/herself in writing	
7. Responsible citizenship, understanding of the workings of the democratic process, respect for environment and laws	
Inquiry	
8. Enjoyment of learning	
9. Enjoyment of school	
10. Curiosity, initiative, self-direction, and independence in trying to learn	
11. Studying and seeking information from a variety of sources	
12. Ability and desire to read for recreation and personal growth	
13. Ability and desire to use knowledge to create, invent, think, and solve problems	

_____
Signature of evaluator

Appendix B, Part 2
Student Self-Assessment
(Early Grades)

Directions:

The parent or teacher is to read each question orally to the student, who then draws a smiling face, a frowning face, or an "in-between face" to represent his/her feelings about the question. 

Identity:

		Example Answers
1.	Do you do a good job of learning?	
2.	Are you good at some things?	
3.	Does your teacher like you?	
4.	Do your classmates like you?	

Inquiry:

1.	Do you learn about the things you want to learn about in school?	
2.	Do you ask a lot of questions in your class?	
3.	Do you read outside of school?	
4.	Do you like to figure things out by yourself?	

Interaction:

1.	Do you get along with other students?	
2.	How do you behave in school?	
3.	Do other people listen to your ideas?	
4.	Do you get along with your family?	
5.	Do you like to write?	

Name

Appendix C
Shining Stars Possibilities

Arts

painting, oil, water, acrylics
drawing
whittling
carving
sculpting
making ceramics
making puppets
kite-making
paper sculpting
wood constructions
papier-mâché
photography
movie making
video production

Writing

stories
plays
poems
essays
shadow plays
skits

Crafts

cross-stitch
sewing
knitting
crochet
embroidery
quilting
tatting
weaving
textile paintings
cooking
model building
handyman
mechanics

Dramatics

giving humorous readings
telling stories
debating
acting
giving speeches
reciting poetry
being an emcee
performing skits
performing magic tricks

Dancing

ballet
tap
clogging
creative
mime

Misc.

detective
finger math, Chisenbop
pet training
equestrian
checkers, chess

Hobbies

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Musical

singing solo
singing duet
quartet, barbershop
instrument playing
homemade instruments
band

Physical

aerobics
juggling
sprinting
distance running
tightrope walking
high jumping
wrestling
weight training
playing basketball
arm wrestling
frisbee throwing
basketball shooting, dribbling
long jumping
rope jumping
dart throwing
cheerleading
trick bicycle riding
marble shooting
baton
drill
archery
gymnastics
balance
running

This list is not intended to be final. Please feel free to add any talents we may have overlooked.

Appendix D
Great Brain Signup Sheet

The Great Brain Project
Official Entry Blank

On this _____ day of _____ , 199 ___ , I, _____

do hereby enroll in the **Great Brain Project** of _____

School. With my parents' help I have chosen the subject

_____

to study in great depth until I feel qualified and prepared to give a presentation to my friends, relatives, and classmates.

I agree to:

1. Prepare a list of stimulating questions with which to guide my research.
2. Study diligently at school, at home, and in the community.
3. Keep a record of my findings and plan an interesting, creative way to share my new knowledge with others.
4. Let my teacher know when I am ready to make a Great Brain presentation.

I understand that diligent participation in this project may qualify me for a Great Brain award on one of four levels:

Specialist	Expert	Mastermind	Genius

It will also entitle me to membership in the Great Brain Club.

I/We the parent(s) of _____ do agree to become partners with my/our child and the school to assist him/her in the chosen quest.

_____ _____

Student's Signature Parent's Signature

The Six Principles of Educating for Human Greatness

Value Positive Human Diversity
Cherish every person as a unique individual.

Draw Forth Potential
Help learners discover and develop their latent talents.

Respect Autonomy
Restore freedom and responsibility to every learner.

Invite Inquiry
Help students develop an insatiable curiosity and hunger for knowledge.

Support Professionalism
Encourage teachers who live by these principles.

Unite for Greatness
Parents and teachers join to help children grow in human greatness.

Educating for Human Greatness

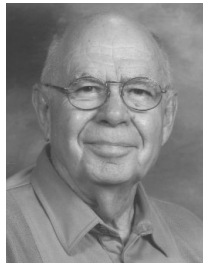
In this wise and perceptive book, veteran public school teacher/administrator Lynn Stoddard surveys the current state of public education in America and concludes that things have gone terribly wrong. His solution is to have parents and educators start by realizing that standardization in education is neither possible or effective. Only then can they focus on creating schools that truly educate for human greatness.

To create such schools Stoddard proposes that parents, teachers, administrators and school board members keep six cardinal principles constantly in mind:

- Value Positive Human Diversity and Cherish Every Student's Uniqueness
- Draw Out and Develop Each Child's Latent Talents
- Respect the Autonomy of the Individual by Restoring Freedom and Responsibility
- Invite Inquiry, Curiosity, and Hunger for Knowledge in the Classroom
- Support Professionalism as Teachers Live by these Principles
- Parents and Teachers Unite to Help Children Grow in Human Greatness

Educating for Human Greatness deserves an honored place on the reading list of every parent who really cares about the future of their children, every teacher and administrator who puts students first in their professional lives, and every school board member who wants schools to be places where student development is a reality, not just a slogan.

Lynn Stoddard is a veteran of teaching and parenting. While shepherding his own large flock of twelve children through the public schools of Utah, he was employed for 36 years as an elementary teacher and principal. He now writes and lectures on the urgent need to design a new system of public education based on ancient wisdom and modern research.



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