

The Magazine of Alternative Education

Education Revolution

Issue Number Thirty Nine

Fall 2004

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The Magazine of Alternative Education

Fall 2004 - Issue Number Thirty Nine - www.educationrevolution.org

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The mission of *The Education Revolution* magazine is based on that of the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO): "Building the critical mass for the education revolution by providing resources which support self-determination in learning and the natural genius in everyone." Towards this end, this magazine includes the latest news and communications regarding the broad spectrum of educational alternatives: public alternatives, independent and private alternatives, home education, international alternatives, and more. The common feature in all these educational options is that they are *learner-centered*, focused on the interest of the child rather than on an arbitrary curriculum.

AERO, which produces this magazine quarterly, is firmly established as a leader in the field of educational alternatives. Founded in 1989 in an effort to promote learner-centered education and influence change in the education system, AERO is an arm of the School of Living, a non-profit organization. AERO provides information, resources and guidance to students, parents, schools and organizations regarding their educational choices.

Education Revolution

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417 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577

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Phone: 516-621-2195 / 800-769-4171

Fax: 516-625-3257

Email: info@educationrevolution.org

Web Site: <http://www.educationrevolution.org>

Executive Director: Jerry Mintz

ER Editor, Illustrator and Designer: Albert Lamb

Advertising: Isaac Graves

Mail and Communications Editor: Carol Morley

Printer: Brenneman Printing Inc., Lancaster, PA

AERO Advisory Board

Alexander Adamsky, Mary Addams, Chris Balch, Fred Bay, Patrice Creve, Anne Evans, Patrick Farenga, Phil Gang, John Gatto, Herb Goldstein, Dan Greenberg, Jeffrey Kane, Dave Lehman, Mary Leue, Ron Miller, Ann Peery, John Potter, Mary Anne Raywid, John Scott, Tim Seldin, Elina Sheppel, Andy Smallman, Nick Stanton, Corinne Steele, Tom Williams

Welcome to the Education Revolution!

At the heart of this magazine we have a report on last summer's AERO Conference in upstate New York, written by an AERO intern, and also three essays by alternative school students, which were delivered as speeches at the conference. And on page 38 Mary Tasker makes the case for smaller schools.

albertlamb@bigfoot.com

Albert



A Word from Jerry

At the Brooklyn Free School meeting a while back the adults had introductions and discussion for more than an hour. During that time the children entertained themselves as well as they could. I took a few pictures and did a little videotaping. This seemed to catch the attention of the two- and four-year-old brothers who were in the room. I had never met them before and they never said anything to me but they made eye contact. At one point they left the room. But a few seconds later I realized they were in back of me as they reached through a crack in the double doors and tapped me on the shoulder! We played a little game with that while the meeting was going on.

Later in the meeting it was suggested that we hear something from the children in the room, or have a small 'meeting' with them. The discussion started with the two 6-year-olds who had participated in the last meeting and a 13-year-old. The issue came up about what age students should be at the new school. The three doubted whether anyone younger than five could understand the meetings. At that point the four-year-old, Teseo, was playing in the other room. I suggested we invite him in to see if he could understand. I had confidence that he could. One of the kids went to get him.

I explained to him briefly what a meeting was all about, what voting was, and about raising your hand to be recognized. We continued the discussion about ages. Sylvan, the 13-year-old, blurted out that he thought people from age 1 to 34 should be able to come. The

6-year-olds said they thought one was too young. The one-year-old would require too much attention, would mess things up, and would not understand the meeting. The 13-year-old said he hadn't said that. The four year old raised his hand and said that *he* had clearly heard him say one-year-olds could come!

Later there was a discussion about the age at which students could safely go outside the school by themselves. The six-year-olds thought 7 would be OK. The 13-year-old thought 8 would be safe. But the 4-year-old thought 10 would be safer. He was worried that younger kids might wander over railroad tracks or be hit by a car.

Nobody after that brought up the idea that four year olds were too young for the meeting!



Posing for School Picture at Summerhill in England, Summer 2004

Looking for News

with Albert Lamb

Any Children Not Left Behind?

Let's start by looking for news where it is bound to be painful and difficult, and get it over with for the rest of this issue. The No Child Left Behind package of laws that President Bush pushed down everyone's throats is now in the process of being swallowed. This, inevitably, won't be a pretty sight. First, from the front line:

Back to school.

Will it be business as usual?

Will teachers eagerly anticipate meeting a new group of students?

My, how things have changed in just a few short years! Now it's hard to find a teacher or administrator who looks forward to the requirements of "No Child Left Behind." Each school year gets more dismal as elementary teachers are forced to spend much time drilling for standardized tests in the three R's and reduce, or leave out, the arts, sciences, physical education and social studies — the subjects that make school interesting and learning fun — the subjects that make the three R's meaningful. *Lynn Stoddard* Author of *Educating for Human Greatness*

In the two years since the law passed there has been scattered resistance to the NCLB law in school systems around the country, on the grounds that living with these new requirements is too costly and difficult. Federal money that was supposed to help schools with this process was never allocated and states are having to foot the entire bill to fund this questionable enterprise themselves. Under the new system if the students, teachers, or schools don't meet annual targets, established through the kids' test scores, they are penalized. Good schools are having to dumb themselves down and chronically under-funded schools face a whole new crisis. But schools all across the country are being snowed under with red tape:

No Child Left Behind Meets Resistance, by Sam Dillon, NY Times: Three Connecticut school districts have rejected federal money rather than comply with the red tape that accompanies the law, and several Vermont districts have shifted federal poverty money away from schools to shield them from sanctions. Some analysts see the scattered actions as the front end of a backlash that will probably swell next year, when early penalties are likely to be imposed on thousands of schools across the nation.

Under the law, every racial and demographic group in each school must meet rising goals on English and math tests to make "adequate yearly progress." If any group fails to reach targets for two years running, a school is labeled "needing improvement," and must provide transportation for students to transfer to higher-scoring schools or pay for tutoring. Continued shortfalls trigger escalating sanctions that culminate in removal of the staff. It is an accountability system with myriad ways to disqualify schools. This year 26,000 of the nation's 93,000 public schools failed to make adequate yearly progress, according to a teachers union tally, fueling predictions that the law could eventually label nearly all schools as failing.

By the nature of things the response to this law has been local, as different states find themselves having to face their own problems in playing by the new NCLB rules. So far the most active resistance doesn't seem to be on the East Coast:

Utah Bill to Reject Education Law and Federal Money by *Ronnie Lynn*, The Salt Lake Tribune: Utah legislators advanced a bill that rejects No Child Left Behind and the \$103 million-plus it brings to the state's revenue-starved schools. The House Education Committee unanimously forwarded House Bill 43 to the floor, a move that has national implications and the potential to devastate more than 200 Utah schools that rely on federal dollars to improve achievement among disadvantaged students. Rep. Margaret Dayton said her bill sends Washington an unmistakable message that it is overstepping its bounds in a domain historically left to states.

Nebraska Schools Skip Mandatory Tests, by *Tracy Dell'Angela*, Chicago Tribune: With criticism mounting over implementation of the federal accountability law and states scrambling to overhaul their testing systems to comply, Nebraska alone has succeeded in saying no to mandatory statewide tests. The state has persuaded federal education officials to approve the nation's most unorthodox assessment system, which allows school districts to use portfolios to measure student progress. Nebraska's system is far from perfect; it is expensive, it is time-consuming for teachers and it makes comparisons among districts difficult. The system works here in part because of the state's small school districts and homogeneous population. But critics of No Child Left Behind — and the high-stakes testing mania it has spawned — say Nebraska's example proves that educators can create a different kind of accountability system that meaningfully measures student learning. Federal education officials said Nebraska's system passed muster because the state's constitution guarantees local control over school accountability and the state was able to demonstrate that the assessments were valid and reliable.

Oregon May Challenge No Child Left Behind Law by *Betsy Hammond*, The Oregonian: Gov. Ted Kulongoski

is weighing a pitch by the nation's largest teachers union to make Oregon a plaintiff in a court challenge to block parts of the federal No Child Left Behind school accountability law. The National Education Association has been looking since July for a state to sue the Bush administration, arguing that the law requires sweeping changes in schools without paying for them. No state has signed on, despite widespread complaints by educators that the law requires too much of schools. The Oregon Education Association, the NEA affiliate in Oregon, has urged the governor to take up the cause, said Mark Toledo, the group's general counsel..

One response to NCLB may be built around the fact that the federal demands being made on local schools are not properly funded:

Wisconsin's attorney general has issued an opinion that the federal government can't force states to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act without fully funding it. The opinion was the first in the country from a state attorney general on the education reform measure, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager said "clear and compelling" language in the law itself says the federal government can't make states or school districts pay the law's mandated costs for improved education. The opinion could be the first step toward a lawsuit challenging the law, said Scott Young, NCSL education policy associate. *Todd Richmond, AP.*

It looks as though the Bush administration has been prepared for a certain amount of backlash and is ready to make some small compromises, in order to establish their new program:

A rebellion against the federal No Child Left Behind law in more than half the states' legislatures has fizzled out, for now, with only a handful of Vermont school districts following through on threats to ignore the new education law, *reports Eric Kelderman*. At the height of this year's backlash against President Bush's signature domestic policy initiative, 27 state legislatures drafted 54 bills to protest the costs, penalties and unprecedented federal oversight of school policy under the 2002 act. U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige and his deputies crisscrossed the country on scores of trips to smooth over differences with state legislators and educators. In the end, only the Democratic governor of Maine and the Republican governors of Utah and Vermont signed bills critical of the act, which is staunchly defended by the Republican Bush administration. <http://www.stateline.org>

No Child Left Behind Standards Being Changed by *Michael Dobbs*, Washington Post: Education Secretary Roderick R. Paige said he is planning more changes over the coming weeks, including a new, more flexible interpretation of the requirement that all students be assigned a "fully qualified teacher." He previously agreed to changes in the way students with disabilities are treated under the law, allowing the most seriously disabled to be tested separately from other students. Under the new regulations announced February 19, states will be permitted to grant a one-year transition period for English-language learners in their first year in U.S. public schools, which means that these students will be temporarily excluded from their schools' test results. At the other end of the performance spectrum, students will continue to be counted as members of the "limited English-proficient" subgroup for two years after they learn English. About 5.5 million students, or 12



John Aitkenhead and his beloved Killy (Page 7.)

percent of all U.S. K-12 students, are covered by the new regulations.

The next step may be for states in different parts of the country to get together and form a united response to the new NCLB régime.

Fourteen states have asked the Bush administration for permission to use alternative methods for showing academic gains under the No Child Left Behind law, *reports Diana Jean Schemo*. The 14 states, most of which had their own systems for raising academic performance in place before the federal No Child Left Behind law took effect two years ago, charged that as currently written, the law would brand too many schools "in need of improvement," and thus squander limited resources. They asked for permission to use "growth models," in which schools would avoid the federal law's remedies and penalties if they showed academic gains, even if those gains fell short of the amount required by 2014, as the law mandates. *The New York Times*

In the meantime the more disadvantaged kids are the first to feel the effects of the new arrangements:

Schools Pressured to Drop Bad Students: In the 2001-02 school year, 17,400 students – 17.6 percent – dropped out of Chicago schools, according to an analysis of state data by the Greater West Town Community Development Project. That is up from 13.5 percent in 1992. The numbers are too high and the pressure on schools to push out truant, low-performing students is only growing, several experts, including Illinois Education Supt. Robert Schiller, testified at a state Senate Education Committee meeting in Chicago. *Kate N. Grossman, Chicago Sun-Times.*

A national study on the "hidden crisis" of low minority graduation has been released by two nonpartisan groups, the **Civil Rights Project (CRP)** at Harvard and the **Urban Institute (UI)**. The results of the study should help small-schools educators and activists in explaining the need for change. The study concludes: "America's minority children are being left behind when it comes to high school graduation. High school graduation rates now are alarmingly low for most minority groups, particularly among young males. In 2001, only 50 percent of all black students, 51 percent of Native American students, and 53

percent of all Hispanic students graduated from high school. Black, Native American and Hispanic males fare even worse: 43 percent, 47 percent and 48 percent, respectively. This compares to about 75 percent of all white high school students graduating on a nationwide basis. "The drop-out problem for minority school children in the U.S. is likely to get even worse due to an overemphasis under 'No Child Left Behind' on test-based accountability. Under such an accountability system, it may be easier and more cost-effective to raise overall test scores by removing low performing students from the test-taking pool than it is to invest in the resources and programs needed to improve the academic performance of the struggling students. Mike Klonsky.

It is hard not to get the feeling that there is something built into this legislation that will make thriving under the new rules almost impossible. Gordon Vars, of the National Association for Core Curriculum, has something to say about this:

First of all, what is it that is impossible to do?

Probably most obvious is the NCLB requirement that all students reach 100% "proficiency" by 2014. Bruce M. Smith, editor of the Phi Delta Kappan, put it succinctly in his editorial in the October, 2003, issue. He reminded us of "the natural range of human variation" and "the simple fact that children are in school for just a fraction of their lives. To require schools to make up for all the differences in children's nature and in the conditions of their nurture is absurd"

Schools must demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP). For a school to show AYP, all ethnic groups, all socioeconomic groups, English-language learners, and

special education students must make AYP separately. Ninety-five percent of each group must be tested, and if any one group fails to make AYP, the school as a whole fails. The official phrase is "needs improvement," but headlines across the nation reveal how everyone actually thinks about it. Schools must continue to make AYP until, by 2014, 100% of a school's students must score "proficient."

So why set up a situation where most of the public schools in the country are bound to fail. Is this legislation part of some sort of corporate sponsored conspiracy? Gordon Vars:

A Conspiracy? To those who suspect a conspiracy, NCLB is merely the "coup de grace" of a war against public education that was declared in the "Nation at Risk" report of 1983 (NCEE). In that rhetorical tour-de-force, corporate interests and the politicians they controlled launched a deliberate campaign to degrade and dismantle public education. Their aim? To turn education of the young over to private schools and for-profit corporations.

So what can we do about it? Gordon Vars again:

Protest, Get Political. Before NCLB was passed, I was urging educators to fight the high-stakes testing mania. Individuals like Alfie Kohn and groups like FairTest (www.fairtest.org) were trying to mobilize educators and the public to pressure legislatures to modify state testing laws. Now the stakes are even higher, involving much more than your individual career, the success of your school, or even the fate of the middle school movement. The struggle is nationwide in scope; the future of the entire public school system is at stake. With all its limitations, publicly-

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supported education has served for decades as the “bulwark of democracy” and a ladder for economic betterment for countless thousands of people. I doubt very much that democracy, as we know it, could survive the demise of public education.

One group standing up against this law is The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). To add your name to their effort or download the “Take a Stand” online action kit, visit: http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/about/create/ces_hst

Another group criticizing the bill is the National Center for Fair & Open Testing.

Killy Reopening!

In the 20th Century two men in the UK held up the banner for freedom and democracy in education – both of them Scots. A. S. Neill had his Summerhill on the East coast of England and John Aitkenhead had Kilquhanity House School up in Southwest Scotland.

Kilquhanity was started early in the dark days of the 2nd World War, in 1940, by John and his wife Morag. For 56 years it took in boarding students from around Scotland and around the world, until it was finally closed under pressure from government inspectors. John died the following year, aged 88.

Now it is to reopen under the auspices of another of the most famous names in democratic education, Shin-Ichiro Hori. Many years ago Professor Hori began translating Neill’s books into Japanese and then went on to start the first democratic school in Japan, Kinokuni, in 1992. Now he has bought the property at Castle Douglas and plans to get Kilquhanity going again, at first as a summer camp. The school is in a beautiful spot out in the country and it should be an ideal place for Japanese and Scottish kids to spend happy summers. Once the school is restored to its former glory Professor Hori hopes to run it year round. This last summer he worked there with a group of 20 Japanese kids, rebuilding a tree house.

Windsor House Threatened

The wonderful Windsor House School, after flourishing for 33 years tucked away in Western Canada, in North Vancouver in British Columbia, has been forced by the provincial government to change itself in ways that threaten its continued existence. Windsor House is perhaps the longest running state supported democratic school in the world. Here is how the school describes itself on it’s website:

Windsor House is a parent-participation, democratic, academically non-coercive school with about one hundred and seventy students and twelve staff people. It is situated in a 60’s style elementary school on a lot with trees, a playground, a field and a blacktop area. The students are aged 5 to 18, and the hours are from 9:00 to 3:00, 4 days a week. On Tuesdays the regular school stops at noon and there is a Staff meeting in the afternoon. Students may ask for classes and activities, and efforts are made to provide



Windsor House kids playing Bottle Game

what the students have requested. Staff and parents also offer classes and activities that they enjoy doing themselves. Students are not made to go to classes, nor are they stigmatized for non-attendance. The main focus of the school is for people to run their own lives and be engaged in undertaking of their own choice. (<http://whs.at.org/index.html>)

The Windsor House community are being forced to “come into alignment” with new British Columbia Ministry Of Education regulations that insist on letter grades for the kids, plus testing and grading and full regular attendance. If they can’t comply they must lose their essential funding. Within this process they have also been forced to move out of their old home into an inappropriate and temporary space, shared with an adult education facility. Meanwhile it looks as if the North Vancouver School District has had secret plans all along to sell their property for financial gain, assuming that they would fold under all this pressure. Canela Michelle, of Windsor House, writes for us of how the school came into being:

Windsor House came into existence when a group of parents wanted to become involved in their children’s educational lives more fully than was accepted by the school system at the time. Helen Hughes, one of the founders, wanted to provide for children who do not fit into the regular public school system for a variety of reasons.

Children who have been labeled ‘poor learners’ since they were not able to do as well as other children in the regular curriculum, would be forever attempting to overcome this label and fall into apathy or rebellion. These children, once adapted to the supportive environment at Windsor House, do very well and are often found to be extremely creative and intelligent people, not ‘poor learners’ at all. Also covered at Windsor House are children who are advanced in their academic abilities yet have been held back in the regular curriculum as they do not fit into their age group. Windsor House’s system enables them to be with their friends and peers as well as advance as far as they would like in any particular subject. So they are supported emotionally, appropriately, and yet able to follow their interests with gusto.

Coincidence?



Gal Friedman – The first Israeli Olympic Gold medallist – is a graduate of the Hadera Democratic School

On Wednesday 24th of August Gal Friedman won the Olympic gold medal in wind surfing in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

Gal started training as a child. At age 13 he won second place in the youth world championships. Later he won the bronze medal at the Atlanta Olympic Games and came in third in the 2002 world championships in Thailand. His

latest achievement is the gold medal at the 2004 Olympics.

Gal was born to a family of sea and surf lovers. Both his father and uncle were Israeli champions at sailing and spent much time on the sea.

Gal studied at the democratic school in Hadera as did his sister Maayan and brother Yuval. His mother was an active parent in the school.

Gal loved the sea, He had a special arrangement with the school, his family and sailing club – on days with a good wind he went right to the beach instead of school, on days with no wind he came to school.

In addition to training at windsurfing Gal spent most of his time at school playing. Academics didn't interest him and school served the purpose of calming his parents (not too difficult a task), and immediate environment, enabling them

to see the beauty in enabling Gal to do what he loved and was interested in.

In my opinion, the main factors contributing to Gals success were: his personality and the support of his family.

The role of the school was to enable the existing talents and desires to manifest and not hinder his talents and love for the sea, surfing and sport, the

school helped to waver the anxieties surrounding “how will he succeed without trigonometry etc...” School helped to strengthen his belief in himself, and encourage him to develop in doing what he was passionate about – windsurfing.

At some stage, at age 14 Gal decided to quit windsurfing in favor of building remote-operated cars and airplanes. The extended family was up in arms – how can such a great talent go to waste? But his parents were adamant about supporting Gal in doing only what he chose and did not pressure him to return to windsurfing. And of course, Gal did return – he returned a different Gal.

Once again, after winning the Bronze at the Atlanta Olympics, Gal quit windsurfing in favor of biking. Today he does both sports.

All the Israeli newspapers have been assessing Gals victory: the first Israeli to win a gold Olympic medal. The papers noted his willpower and his clear goal as well as his ability to achieve under pressure. The story that left the deepest impression on me was that a year before the Athens Olympics, Gal and the Greek windsurfer Conconstus, who were the two leaders in this sport, decided to train together. They agreed that the best way for both of them to reach their highest achievements would be to train together and take the gold and the silver at the Athens games, leaving the race for the gold to the last minute. And that is indeed what happened.

It's intriguing to think where it will lead to...

Yaacov Hecht

For Profit Charters Crash

In August one of America's largest charter school operators went into bankruptcy and had to accept that all 60 of its California schools will not be reopening. Sam Bond, of the New York Times, tells the story from the point of view of the school superintendent whose district licensed dozens of the schools:

“Hysterical parents are calling us, swearing and shouting,” Mr. Larson said in an interview in Oro Grande last week. “People are walking off with assets all over the state. We're absolutely sinking.”

The disintegration of the California Charter Academy, the largest chain of publicly financed but privately run charter schools to slide into insolvency, offers a sobering

picture of what can follow. Thousands of parents were forced into a last-minute search for alternate schools, and some are still looking; many teachers remain jobless; and students' academic records are at risk in abandoned school sites across California.

Investigators are sifting through records seeking causes of the disaster, which has raised new questions about how charter schools are regulated.

“Until the Charter Academy went into its tailspin, few people predicted that these crashes could be so bloody, but this has been a catastrophe for many people,” said Bruce Fuller, a professor of education at the University of California, Berkeley. “The critics of market-oriented reforms warned of risks with the philosophy of let-the-buyer-beware, but in this case, buyers were just totally hung out to dry.”



Being There

with Jerry Mintz

A day after he won, Gal's mother, Dganit Friedman, published the following letter in the leading Israeli newspaper "Yedioth Achronot."

Dearest Gal,

Yesterday I sat with Dad, Maayan and the rest of the family and our friends – we watched you win the Olympic medal. You made history. I knew you could do it, that you had the ability, but I was scared to imagine it. Since yesterday I cannot stop thinking about Yaacov Hecht, the principal of the Democratic School in Hadera where you went to school. He always said that it doesn't matter what you study and what page you reach in your workbook, that the important thing is to focus on what it is you want and to achieve in your field of choice.

This was the educational motto we followed in raising you and your siblings Maayan and Yuval. When you skipped school, we were not concerned, you had a direction and you followed it. Today we are certain that your principal was right. The small contribution we, your parents made to your gold medal was in giving you the freedom to choose your own way.

I love you my dearest Gal and I am very proud of you and happy for you. You stuck to your desires and made your dream come true. Since you left for Athens I have been sending you hearts over the e-mail and pictures of you with your brother Yuval and girlfriend Michal. I can't wait to see and hug you. I miss you

Mom.

Renaissance School

Beyond the fact that I knew that they wanted some sort of demonstration of the democratic process, I really didn't know what to expect when I walked in to Renaissance School one day this last June. I didn't know what age kids I would be working with, how much time I would have and what they wanted me to do. Actually, I'm never very concerned about that kind of situation, and I wasn't on that day. I got into the building with two minutes to spare.

The class had about 25 students. They were about 11 and 12 years old in the sixth grade. The teacher was excited to have me come in and do this, and it was arranged by Monte Joffee, the principal of the school, who had been at the IDEC in 2003 and who had been instrumental in helping us organize our proposal for the school of democracy, which would have been a public alternative democratic school.

I started out by introducing myself briefly, and asked them a few questions about their class. I took out my book and showed them the title (*No Homework and Recess all Day*), getting a little rise out of that, but in general this group was rather laid back.

They were mostly minority: black, Hispanic, Asian, and some white. I read the poem that I wrote when I was 15 years old to them (from the front section of my book) about how I felt about school at the time. I told them a few stories about the kinds of things that are possible in a democratic school; such as the time we worked our way to the Bahamas and the time we wound up flying over our school. I decided to show them some of John Gatto's video, where he talks about why the public school system was set up; that it wasn't

set up to create poets or scientists but to basically keep people in their place so that there is a much larger group to do the dirty work for society and follow orders, buy things, etc. They really got a kick about the section from South Park about how kids are being misdiagnosed for Ritalin.

By the time we were done with that and had some discussion, there were only about 15 to 20 minutes left, but we decided to quickly demonstrate how the democratic process works. I explained to them that the first thing that we needed to do make an agenda: They could bring up either something that they wanted to see happen – we had just finished talking about the possibility of going to India and a lot of kids expressed interest (but it was not put on the agenda) – or things that they had concerns about. One of the items they put on was about the lunches and the food, and a second really surprised me: naptime! They felt that they weren't getting enough sleep and they wanted to have a chance to take a nap. Another was freetime, another was homework. So, we started with the lunches for discussion.

They complained for a period of time about how bad the lunches were, how little choice they had, how much of the food was unidentifiable, how the portions were small, and how they liked it better when there were vending machines. Finally, a proposal was made that they at least have a choice between milk and juice instead of just milk. The next proposal had to do with the portion size, and someone pointed out that they are allowed to be served what would be considered to be 2/3 of a proper portion. It was passed that someone research why exactly this was.

This brought us pretty close to the end of the period, but what happened then was interesting. The kids all said that they wanted to sit in on the next section and that they wanted to join the next class and keep on doing this. That would double the size of the number of people in the room to 50. That took us to about 11:30, and then we broke for lunch.

During lunchtime, I met with the principal and three other teachers from the school. The teacher of this class commented on how this group was quieter and less responsive than the later group, and they asked me what kind of things you can do about that. I said, "Well, you know, when you have a set group like this, it can develop a certain culture, and so those were the kinds of cultures from the group. That kind of thing was impossible in my school because each class was attended by the people from the whole school that wanted to attend." This seemed to startle them a little bit because it became clear to them that this was a different paradigm that I was talking about.

When we got back from lunch, there were 50 kids packed in the room. First, we tried to summarize what had happened in the morning, and I showed a little more of the video. We then continued the meeting, and several items were added to the agenda. We now had a little more time to work. What was amazing and impressive to me was how quiet they were as a big group, and also how much they got into it. There was more energy in the second group, but of course they were now all combined. A big discussion came up about bringing back the vending machines. Monty was now in the classroom and he said that he thought that they were taken out because of some regulation that stated that they could not operate in competition with the school lunches. There was a possibility that they could lose the school lunch program because of a lack of participation. Then the idea was brought up that the vending machines could be shut off during meal times. A vote was taken and it was unanimously in favor of bringing the vending machines back with the possibility of having them serve some healthy food.

Part of the system I demonstrate includes polling of the minority in all

votes, and the possibility of a revote with more discussion. When asking for the minority opinion, Monty expressed his concern about it. Then people mentioned that they had bake sales often and that the kids would take their money and spend it on bake sale stuff, and that that was legitimate. And so I pointed out that instead of doing just bake sales, make healthy food and sell that. One of the proposals was that they have bake sales up to once a week and sell healthy food, and have the profit go to the class. Another proposal was brought up regarding the vending machines, but both of the proposals were shot down. They decided that vending machines were not practical to bring back, and that they didn't want to do bake sales every week.

We continued on to the next item on the agenda, and by acclimation, the next thing that they wanted to talk about was naptime. They said that they weren't getting enough sleep, that they had to be in school at 8:30 and so they had to get up at 6-something. If the younger kids could get naptime, why couldn't they get naptime? They needed it! Someone else pointed out that, for a while, meditation had been done in the class, led by a teacher. One of the teachers, pointed out that they had plenty of time to get to sleep when they got home. The kids reacted by saying that "No! we have all kinds of things to do!" One of the kids said, "I don't get home from softball until 7 or 8 o'clock, and then I'm supposed to do homework, and when am I supposed to sleep?"

What was cool was that sometimes, when the noise level got up a bit, their teacher tried to shut them up, and I told her that she was out of order! The kids got a kick out of that. The same things happened when Monty spoke out of his turn. They learned to raise their hands. Monty again voiced a certain amount of opposition to this proposal that they have 10 minutes of naptime every day. He said he was afraid of the flak that he might get from the parents or other people that the kids were allowed to sleep all day, or from taking visitors around and seeing all the kids sleeping in the room. So, one of his amendments was that they put a sign up that said that this was an experiment by the 6th grade class to see if learning is enhanced. Another proposal was that

they find some way to see if learning was going to be enhanced by this process. A third proposal was that it be tried for one month. The girl who made the original proposal reluctantly accepted the amendments and it was passed.

There is less than one month left of school; it would be interesting to see if they follow up on any of the things that we passed. At one point, one of the kids said, "Is it true? Are these things really going to be put into effect?" And I said, "Well, in a proper democracy yes; in a class democracy where things were being decided, yes! However, since this is more of a demonstration, then this would be more in the form of recommendations. That didn't seem to daunt them at all; they were pleased to have some sort of voice.

At that point, I gave up being chairperson and said that we should have an election, and that one of the students should take over as chairperson. Many people wanted to chair, but it came down to two kids: one was a black girl and the other was an Asian boy. The black girl got more votes, so she started to chair and did a pretty decent job. We didn't have much time left, because the meeting had been going on for well over an hour. The topic that they were talking about was homework, and it basically had gotten to the point of the kids complaining bitterly about the amount of homework that they had. We hadn't yet made any proposals when we had to stop it. I went ahead and summarized the process, and asked the kids if they wanted to do this kind of thing. Somebody was afraid that we were going to take too much time away from class time, and one of the kids said, "We may just wind having to pay for this *alone* because we've taken this time here." They really had the concept that they would get punished for doing something interesting and fun by having more work loaded up on them. I said that I considered one of the most educational parts of my school to be the school meeting. They liked the idea of doing a meeting once a week. I hope that we can demonstrate democratic decision-making process to many other public and private schools and programs. Anyone interested can contact us in the USA, at 800 769-4171 or at info@educationrevolution.org

Mail & Communications

Edited by Carol Morley

Notes from **National Coalition of Education Activists**: Our regular e-bulletin is back! We took a few months off to reorganize our communications systems (web, email, and database). This project remains a work in progress with many exciting new features to be added in the coming months. On a related note, please take a minute to update our contact information in your lists: NCEA, 1420 Walnut St., Suite 720, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Tel: (215) 735-2418. Email: info@edactivists.org.

I just learned about research from several educators that documents the benefit of using a **person-centered approach in education**. The studies were published in the 1970s and 1980s by highly trained researchers (David Aspy and Flora Roebuck) using statistical terminology. Luckily they also describe the results in a way anyone can understand. In short, the findings were that teachers who use the person-centered approach (for the study this was defined as having empathy for the students, respect for them, being genuine or real with students, and treating them as capable of self-direction), had students who missed fewer days of school, had higher measures of self-regard, made greater gains in academic achievement and I.Q. scores, presented fewer disciplinary problems, committed fewer acts of vandalism, made gains in creativity scores, were more spontaneous, and used higher levels of thinking. Here is a website that explains a little bit of this research (the website is for an organization that conducts workshops and training for businesses): <http://www.ridge.com/art-trsel.htm>. *Dana Bennis*

Puget Sound Community School is celebrating our 10th year this year, completing 10 school years of innovative, imaginative education. We have defied the odds, starting a small, independent school and keeping it going for 10 years. PSCS is fully enrolled right now with 35 happy students. We are thrilled to be getting established in our new home base, the University Heights Community Center. In addition, PSCS is now an officially approved State of Washington private school. Students interested in pursuing a state-recognized high school diploma can now do it right at PSCS. Between now and June 30th, the end of our 2003/2004 fiscal year, every dollar raised at PSCS will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$20,000. For more information: Puget Sound Community School, 5031 University Way NE, #111, Seattle, WA 98105.

We're delighted to report that **Blue Mountain School's** charter proposal was approved by a 6-1 vote of the South Lane School District Board. It has been almost two years in the process. We presented the proposal last November and it was denied in January (2-5). The Oregon law requires that the criteria for denial be spelled out and that we had

the right to resubmit with responses amending the proposal, which we did in May. By the time we were done, except for the one Board member, the other Board members who voted no in January changed their position and by their favorable vote they indicated that they understand that the Blue Mountain students are free to control their own education. Now that the proposal has been approved and when the charter is signed and submitted to the state, we'll be in line for our \$300,000 implementation grant and a much greater sense of security. The process has been long and arduous, but it brought the fractious Blue Mountain School community together. And that's good. Laura Stine, Chair, Charter Proposal Committee, Blue Mountain School, Cottage Grove, Oregon.



From **Wal-Mart Pours Riches into Education Reform**, by Jim Hopkins, USA Today: Wal-Mart's founders transformed U.S. business. Now they are taking on a very different subject: the nation's public schools. The Waltons have quietly become top philanthropists in education reform, including controversial charter-school and school-voucher causes. They have donated at least \$701 million to education charities since 1998. The Waltons' giving could soar to as much as \$1 billion a year as they shift more riches to charity. The shift could spur far-reaching education reform, say experts on philanthropy and education. "That could totally

transform public education in this country. It's a mighty thumb on the scale," says Chuck Collins, co-founder of Responsible Wealth, a group critical of the influence of the megarich. Already, Walton money has helped pay for 62,000 scholarships for needy children in private schools across the USA. Walton money also extends to education politics. Allies say the family's giving is injecting competition between public and private schools that will produce better-educated children, and so reduce unemployment, crime and other social ills. Critics say the Waltons could do the opposite: weaken public schools by encouraging the flow of tax dollars to less-regulated charter schools and to religious and other private schools through vouchers. The prospect of the Walton billions is "alarming," says Marc Egan, head of anti-voucher efforts at the National School Boards Association.

From **Two New Reports Urge that Policy Makers Critically Examine Virtual Schools and their Curriculum**: Two reports, each examining a company that promotes "virtual" education, were released by the Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) at Arizona State University. The reports conclude that "virtual" education needs to be more carefully scrutinized by policy makers. "Knowledge Universe and Virtual Schools: Educational Breakthrough or Digital Raid on the Public Treasury?" by Gerald Bracey (George Mason University), and "The K12 Virtual Primary School History Curriculum: A Participant's-eye View" by Susan Ohanian explore the



"I wouldn't bother anymore with the piano.
You're too old to get really good at it!"

workings of Knowledge Universe, or KU, a little-known but increasingly influential investment firm that supports a number of for-profit companies involved in education; and K12 Inc., a corporation that provides curriculum and related services to "virtual" charter schools. Knowledge Universe is headed by Michael Milken, the former junk-bond promoter who spent two years in prison on charges of insider trading. K12 Inc. is headed by William Bennett, former secretary of education under President George H. W. Bush. The Bracey analysis of KU warns that although KU has the potential for significantly influencing the nation's public education system through its investment in publicly funded for-profit education activities, its role has not been carefully examined by policy makers. Bracey reports that KU is subject to far less scrutiny than public education institutions. K12 provides "virtual" curriculum at taxpayer expense to students enrolled in "virtual" charter schools. Ohanian, a former teacher, reviewed K12 Inc.'s history curriculum for grades K-2 and reports that the curriculum is unimaginative and inappropriate for its target audience. Taken together, the Bracey and Ohanian reports raise important questions about the policy implications of companies that significantly influence public education policy and practice, but that operate with relatively little public oversight.

Spotlight on Small Schools: A new education website, funded by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is now online. The spotlight for the site's debut is on small schools. Future topics include Race and Education, Standardized Testing, and Literature for Young Readers. Features include excerpts from books, and, currently, an interview with Thomas Toch author of "High Schools on a Human Scale: How Small Schools Can Transform American Education." The site also contains links to model small schools and other resources. <http://www.beacon.org/education/>

From **Daley Set to Remake Troubled Schools**, By Tracy Dell'Angela and Gary Washburn: A decade of highly touted reforms have failed to fix the city's worst schools, Mayor Richard Daley [of Chicago] said Thursday, and the only solution left is to shut them down and start from scratch. With that blunt acknowledgment, Daley officially launched the most ambitious effort in a decade to remake the nation's third-largest school system, a campaign that will lean heavily on the private sector for ideas, funding and day-to-day management of more than 100 reorganized schools. The switch to smaller, independently operated schools will focus on chronically poor performing high schools. By 2010 the mayor intends to re-create more than 10 percent of the city's schools – one-third as charter schools, one third as independently operated contract schools and the remainder as small schools run by the district. This latest reform wave will put the responsibility for the city's most difficult cases on the shoulders of

businesses, non-profit organizations and freelance educators, giving them taxpayer support and wide latitude to operate the kinds of schools they think can deliver better results. The plan presents a serious threat to the teachers union, which is not guaranteed a role in staffing the charter and contract schools. The plan also could signal an end to the influence of already diminished local school councils and could exacerbate the district's projected \$100 million deficit. Given the outcry surrounding the closing of a handful of poorly performing schools in recent years, such a massive overhaul may also trigger widespread community protests. The mayor acknowledged that closing schools and then reopening them with new staffs and programs would cause considerable disruption. But he said that is better than prolonged failure. Chicago Tribune.

Starting a School Foundation, a helpful new primer, subtitled, "What you should know before you start fundraising," was developed by the National School Boards Association to assist school board members in thinking broadly about education foundations at a time when these effective school reform organizations are becoming increasingly popular due to decreased tax revenues, budget cuts, and rising expectations. As Kate Coventry reports, K-12 education foundation activities run the gamut from funding scholarship and innovative programs to improve teaching and learning, to reinvigorating community participation in public education and spurring parent and citizen activism. The downloadable publication also includes key steps to consider in starting a school foundation, local education fund case studies, and an article by PEN's president Wendy D. Puriefoy on the growing partnership between local education funds and school board leaders. <http://www.nsb.org/site/docs/32800/32703.pdf>

Audubon Expedition Institute is an academically rigorous alternative to traditional colleges and universities for undergraduate or graduate students pursuing a deeper ecological understanding of environmental education, leadership and advocacy. Our goal is to create experiential learning communities that inspire informed and compassionate ecological leadership. This past summer Audubon Expedition Institute found itself in the largest financial crisis of its 30-year history. Lesley University, which has accredited AEI for nearly 25 years, offered AEI a merger deal that required the school to raise \$300,000 in about 75 days. The successful grassroots effort involved contrabands, an auction, personal letters to alumni and friends, garage sales and appeals to major donors and foundations. AEI is now working with Lesley University to become a division in one of their five schools. For the foreseeable future, AEI will keep its office in Belfast although some of the administrative will now be done in Cambridge, Massachusetts where Lesley is located. Audubon Expedition Institute at Lesley University is excited about the potential for greater impact and stability. www.getonthebus.org

Citizens' Endowment for Education and Democracy (CEED) is the working name for a budding campaign to transform K-12 education in America. Participants are an emerging coalition of progressive and holistic education organizations and people in "green" and "socially responsible" business networks. After an initial gathering in February 2004, members of the group are developing an Internet-based campaign to educate voters on education policy issues in the months leading up to the election. A second outcome is working with Harmony Education Center to develop long term strategies to form a coalition for "schools that kids want to go to". Joan Jaekel, Director. Tel: (818) 430-2580. www.whole.org (temporary web site).

CORE is the national non-profit organization of residential education programs for economically and socially disadvantaged youth. Founded in 1994, CORE's mission is to promote residential education for youth whose homes or communities cannot meet their needs, and to strengthen both individual programs and the field of residential

education. To accomplish its mission, CORE is enhancing and sharing professional practices and standards by running an association of residential education programs; leading a national advocacy movement to develop policies supportive of residential education; increasing public awareness of this educational alternative; stimulating and assisting the development of new residential education programs. CORE: The Coalition for Residential Education, 888 16th Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006. Tel: (202) 496-9189 Fax: (202) 496-0006. Web: www.residentialeducation.org.

From *Beating the Bubble Test: The Cost of Becoming an NCLB Success*: Literacy first, canoe trips later, is the new bargain at Garfield/Franklin elementary in Muscatine, Iowa. But with increases on standardized tests come other more substantive losses, reports Amanda Ripley. Creative writing, social studies and computer work have all become occasional indulgences. Now that the standardized fill-in-the-bubble test is the foundation upon which public schools rest — now that No Child Left Behind mandates that kids as young as 9 meet benchmarks in reading and math or jeopardize their schools' reputation — there is little time for anything else. Franklin is one of the new law's success stories. After landing on the dreaded Schools in Need of Improvement list two years ago, the students and staff clawed their way off it. Through rote drills, one-on-one test talks and rigorous analysis of students' weaknesses, Franklin has become a reluctant model for the rest of the nation. It has also become a very different place. The kids are better readers, mathematicians and test takers. But while Democratic presidential candidates have been lambasting the law's funding levels, Franklin's teachers talk of other things. They bemoan a loss of spontaneity, breadth and play — problems money won't fix. The trade-off may be worth it, but it is important to acknowledge the costs. <http://www.time.com/>

The Eight Year Study, considered by many educational researchers to be one of the best program evaluation studies ever conducted, followed the students from more than 30 experimental high schools during the 1930's. It was originally published in 1942, and is now available online at <http://www.8yearstudy.org/index.html>.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management has ended 37 years of continuous operation at the University of Oregon. We'd like to express our appreciation for your cooperation and support. We also want to inform you about steps we are taking to keep the Clearinghouse's extensive information resources accessible to our clientele. We've decided to keep this Clearinghouse in operation indefinitely, after shedding its ERIC affiliation, so that our clientele can continue to have access to our resources. We will take on a new identity as the Clearinghouse on Educational Policy and Management (CEPM), operated by the College of Education, University of Oregon. Users may go to the website address below for access to all the resources formerly produced by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. Our shipping and mailing addresses will remain the same: Regular postal delivery: Clearinghouse on Educational Policy and Management, 5207 University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-5207. Physical delivery: Clearinghouse on Educational Policy and Management, 975 High Street, Suite 100, Eugene, Oregon 97401. Phone (541) 346-5044. Email: sales@cepm.uoregon.edu. Website: <http://cepm.uoregon.edu>.

Senate approves landmark school voucher plan: The Senate approved the country's first federally funded educational voucher scheme, which will enable some poor public school students in Washington, D.C. to attend private schools. The controversial voucher

plan, so-called because it gives the families of around 2,000 eligible Washington students vouchers worth up to \$7,500 each for private school tuition, was part of a delayed 2004 budget bill that passed 65-28. The five-year pilot project approved for the capital will be the country's first such federally funded plan for primary education. A handful of locally funded voucher programs across the country have stirred deep controversy. The federal government plans to monitor the results of the Washington voucher pilot to see if it should be expanded to other cities with troubled school systems. *Reuters*, CNN.com.

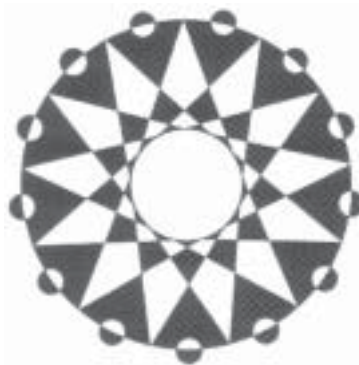
Montessori Attitude Tests Well, by Suzanne Pardington: Eagle Peak Montessori School downplays the battery of standardized tests all California students must take every spring in public schools. No pressure. No drill-and-kill test prep. Children are simply told to relax and do their best. The 2-year-old charter school is a somewhat reluctant participant in the state's school accountability program, because high-stakes tests contradict the individualized approach of Montessori education. Yet the school outpaced all the more conventional public schools in the Mt. Diablo school district on the state's Academic Performance Index for the 2002-03 school year. Now in their third year, Eagle Peak's founders and teachers attribute the school's academic gains to its growing stability, high academic expectations and students' increasing familiarity with Montessori's hands-on style. They are pleased at making progress on the official scale, but they say the scores don't tell them as much as daily evaluations of student work in

the classroom. For Eagle Peak and other charter schools that are breaking from mainstream public education methods, the state testing program poses a unique challenge: how to maintain the integrity of their vision while complying with state law. The issue creates a constant tension for charter schools that believe assessments should be more individualized, said David Patterson, a former director of government relations for a statewide charter school organization who now heads Rocklin Academy charter school in the Sacramento area. Formal tests are rare in Montessori schools. The school adopted a new Montessori math curriculum last year and started to align the school's entire curriculum to the state standards to ensure that students were learning what the state expected

them to know on the tests. Most of the same skills are covered in Montessori classrooms, but they sometimes come in a different order.

Using Students as Substitute Teachers: Sound scary? Eighth grade math teacher Bob Brems has prepped student volunteers to teach his classes for several years. Unhappy with inconsistent results and lousy reports from substitutes, Brems came up with a new strategy for his planned days off. He turns over the teaching reins to one of his students. In this Education World article, Brems describes his system and its benefits. Of course, there IS an adult sub in the room, but his student-volunteers do the teaching. <http://www.educationworld.com>.

Free-choice learning is the type of learning guided by a person's needs and interests. As the world transitions from an industrial society to an information society, learning across the lifespan becomes increasingly important. Adults and children are spending more and more of their time learning, but not just in classrooms or on the job, but through free-choice learning at home, after work and on weekends. The Institute for Learning Innovation is committed to better understanding, facilitating and advocating for this historically understudied and under-appreciated mode of learning. Access to quality free-choice learning should not be a privilege of the affluent but a right of all citizens. Currently, there is a free-choice learning divide. There is evidence that when provided the opportunity, economically and



socially disadvantaged populations equally utilized and benefited from free-choice learning situations. Only through greater public recognition and support can we hope to insure that free-choice learning will truly be accessible to all citizens. Any public education reform effort that does not embrace the benefits of free-choice learning is incomplete. Contact us at info@ilinet.org, heimlich.1@osu.edu, or heimlich@ilinet.org.

From **Educators Flocking to Finland, Land of Literate Children**, by *Lizette Alvarez*, NY Times: In Finland children do not start school until they are 7, spending is \$5,000 a year per student, there are no



“Maybe we should just go and sit down somewhere.”

gifted programs and class sizes often approach 30. Finland topped a respected international survey last year, coming in first in literacy and placing in the top five in math and science. The rankings were based on reading, math and science tests given to a sample of 15-year-olds attending both public and private schools. United States students placed in the middle of the pack. Finland’s recipe is both complex and unabashedly basic. If one trait sets Finland apart from many other countries, it is the quality and social standing of its teachers. All teachers in Finland must have at least a master’s degree, and while they are no better paid than teachers in other countries, the profession is highly respected. So long as schools stick to the core national curriculum, which lays out goals and subject areas, they are free to teach the way they want. They can choose their textbooks or ditch them altogether, teach indoors or outdoors, cluster children in small or large groups. Students must learn two foreign languages: Swedish, and most also take English. Art, music, physical education, woodwork and textiles (which is mostly sewing and knitting) are obligatory for girls and boys.

From **Students Are in No Place to Judge Quality Education**: Students would resume giving feedback on their teachers if officials reinstate a program that has attracted strong opposition from SchoolMatch consultants evaluating the school district. The practice of having parents and students give written evaluations on classroom teachers was stopped last June amid concerns that the process was unfair and the results were used inconsistently from school to school. Six months later, an Ohio-based education auditing firm that has been studying the city’s schools for the Chamber of Commerce and many local businesses recommended ending the process permanently, noting that in some cases, the results were allowed to creep into official teacher evaluations. “We’ve audited over 1,000 school districts nationwide and we’ve never seen anonymous surveys used in the teacher evaluation process,” said Dr. William L. Bainbridge, president

and CEO of SchoolMatch. “We thought it was repugnant.” Nevertheless, a majority of the school board is ready to approve a new response form, with the only snag being who would collect the forms and compile the data. “I completely disagree with them,” board member Vincent Capasso said of SchoolMatch’s position. “That’s the party line. That’s not very forward thinking.” Capasso is among a group of board members who think teachers, like many professionals, should be reviewed by their customers. Just as a sales manager for a car dealer should know if a customer had a good or bad experience with a sales clerk, Capasso said school administrators should know what parents and students think about a teacher’s performance. But SchoolMatch officials argue that students are the products of a school system, not the consumers. The company doesn’t seek student opinion during their audit process, and they don’t hide that fact. “We frankly don’t care about their opinions,” Bainbridge said when questioned about the absence of student voices in the company’s analysis. “I’m not particularly interested in what minor children have to say.” Bainbridge believes that when given a chance to evaluate their teachers, some students inevitably will call a challenging teacher one of their worst, but years later will change their minds.

First Amendment Schools: Educating for Freedom and Responsibility, co-sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the First Amendment Center, is a national initiative designed to transform how schools model and teach the rights and responsibilities of citizenship that frame civic life in our democracy. The project has four primary goals: (1) Create consensus guidelines and guiding principles for all schools interested in creating and sustaining First Amendment principles in their school; (2) Establish project schools, in every region of the nation, where First Amendment principles are understood and applied throughout the school community; (3) Encourage and develop curriculum reforms that reinvigorate and deepen teaching about the First Amendment across the curriculum; and (4) Educate school leaders, teachers, school board members and attorneys, and other key stakeholders about the meaning and significance of First Amendment principles and ideals. To achieve these goals, the First Amendment Schools project serves as a national resource for all schools – K-12, public and private – interested in affirming First Amendment principles and putting them into action in their school communities. <http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/>

Brain Waves Used to Work Computers: New computer technology has been invented to allow hands-free steering of sail boats to help students with profound multiple disabilities use computers. Students who cannot walk or talk and have limited use of their arms and legs, wear a headband equipped with three sensors and use brain waves, eye movement, facial muscles and teeth to operate computers. The technology is called Cyberlink Brainfingers is at Cal State Northridge. For more information, visit www.brainfingers.com.

Theatre for Living uses the language of theatre as a means of creating change. It gives a community the opportunity to investigate alternative approaches to controversial issues. Based on “Theatre of the Oppressed” theories and tools originated by Brazilian Director Augusto Boal, TFL is a way of communicating that invites the “living community” to tell its own stories. TFL techniques have been applied to mainstream theatre, interdisciplinary work, personal, community and team development, anti-racism and violence prevention, environmental action, education and counseling. Using a symbolic language, participants develop “emotional intelligence”, move towards open communication and begin to create their desired realities in an active and entertaining way. This training will be invaluable for anyone who seeks skills and techniques to use theatrical language to explore community dialogue. Headlines Theatre is a multi-award winning world leader in developing community-specific, issue-oriented theatre.

We have 22 years of experience working in over 320 communities throughout Canada and around the world. Please contact Jennifer Girard, Outreach Coordinator, at 604-871-0508 or outreach@headlinetheatre.com. 323-350 E Second Ave., Vancouver, BC Canada V5T 4R8.

From **Study Says U.S. Should Replace States' High School Standards** by Karen W. Arenson: A patchwork of state standards is failing to produce high school graduates who are prepared either for college or for work, three education policy organizations say in a new report. The solution, they say, is to adopt rigorous national standards that will turn the high school diploma into a "common national currency." Working through what they call the American Diploma Project, the organizations — Achieve Inc., the Education Trust and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation — consulted with higher education officials and business executives in five states to develop standards they say will ensure that high school graduates are equipped to move into either college-level work or a decent-paying job. "For many kids, the diploma is a ticket to nowhere," Kati Haycock, director of the Education Trust, said. "In this era, where some postsecondary education is essential, that's no good." The report charges that employers and postsecondary institutions "all but ignore the diploma, knowing that it often serves as little more than a certificate of attendance," because "what it takes to earn one is disconnected from what it takes for graduates to compete successfully beyond high school." The diploma project recommends that the N.A.E.P. tests be realigned based on standards in the report. Some critics of high-stakes testing say the challenge is not determining what students ought to know, but in teaching them. "They're saying that if we have one set of standards, students will meet them," said Monty Neill, executive director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing in Cambridge, Mass. "But if you are not going to provide the resources to help students meet the standards, they're not going to meet them, whatever the standards are." *NY Times*

Private Kennebunk School to Celebrate its Return Home, by Beth Quimby, Portland Press: The New School, a private high school in Kennebunk, was founded in 2000 as an offshoot of The School Around Us, a private school in Arundel for students in kindergarten through grade 8. There are no grades. Instead, students must provide evidence that they have met learning standards. The courses are largely interdisciplinary and often include work outside of class. The New School has 30 students, three full-time teachers and more than 60 people from surrounding communities who provide instruction. After months of wandering, The New School is back in its building. The small, private high school had to abandon the building last fall when a renovation project at the 38 York St. facility went haywire. Principal Marylyn Wentworth said the school received a \$450,000 loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to buy and renovate the building, which was built as an automotive parts store in 1968. The idea was to continue to meet in the school throughout the project. The roof had been removed and replaced with a tarpaulin during Thanksgiving vacation when a powerful rainstorm reduced the tarpaulin to tatters. The students and teachers suddenly needed alternative quarters. St. David's Episcopal Church in Kennebunk opened its doors to the school for a month. St. Martha's Catholic Church took in the school for a week. River Tree Arts offered space at the Kennebunk train depot, where the school continued to operate until May 1, when it finally moved back to 38 York St. The renovation has transformed the moldy former auto parts store into an airy, brightly lit space. The project was helped along by a lot of volunteers. Students also got involved in the project.



Yaacov Hecht came to New York and held a weekend-long lecture and workshop series at Calhoun School in Manhattan. Many people came — from New York City, Albany, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Canada, and even one person from Switzerland, Marco Bichsel. The responses from those who came were extremely positive, and connections were made for additional workshops in the future. Yaacov toured around Calhoun on Friday, along with those of us who will be traveling to Israel to spend 5 weeks working with Yaacov and the Institute for Democratic Education. The Calhoun School is a private college preparatory and distinctly progressive school. It has a small size, teachers go by first name, and there is a strong relationship among students and staff. The lower school director, Kathleen Clinesmith, had been instrumental in organizing this event along with the five of us going to Israel. She set up meetings for Yaacov with the head of Calhoun School, who discussed the possibility of Yaacov returning and conducting more intense workshops with the school community. Eighty-five people showed up at the Friday night lecture, including over 25 teachers/parents from Calhoun, several teachers from the Renaissance Charter School in Queens, two groups of democratic school starters in the New York City area, and many other teachers and students. Larry Hutchinson from Pennsylvania brought five grandchildren, who said they had life-changing experiences. A core group of thirty-five people attended the full events, including the two-day-long workshop. The thirty-five were grouped into 5-person groups for much discussion and interaction about pluralistic learning, school creation, and personal goals. Each group produced pictures and statements that were hung up in the "gallery" and viewed by all. *Dana Bennis*.

From **The Real-Life 'School of Rock'**: David Wish started the Little Kids Rock program to bring together professional musicians and school children. As fans flock to "School of Rock," the hit movie about a rock 'n' roller masquerading as a teacher, Wish and friends are doing it in real life. The year-old program called Little Kids Rock reaches about 2,000 children in 130 public schools in New York, San Francisco, Memphis, Tennessee, and Newark, New Jersey. The goal is to fill a void where music education has been cut, while building a curriculum based on improvisation and participation. Children are treated to classroom visits from stars like Bonnie Raitt and Tom Waits, who recently showed up at the Spring Valley Elementary School in San Francisco. Harmonica virtuoso Norton Buffalo, former Metallica bass guitarist Jason Newsted and singer-songwriter Austin Willacy have also turned up in classrooms. In the mid-1990s, when he was a regular first-grade teacher in Redwood City, California, Wish noticed that music as a subject was falling between the cracks. That's when he first tried out his spontaneous style of teaching in after-school lessons for a few kids. Wish started Little Kids Rock with \$60,000 in foundation and individual contributions. Most of the 200 teachers volunteer their time, although some get a small stipend from their schools. Some classes are part of the school day, although many sessions are scheduled after regular school hours. Wish has enlisted a number of stars by sending them samples of the children's music. CDs of Little Kids Rock were mailed to the likes of B.B. King and Carlos Santana. Some have lent their names to the project; others have volunteered classroom time. Wish hopes still others will record some of the kids' songs for a fund-raising CD to be released next year.

From **Concord School Lets students Rule, At Diablo Valley, Kids Guide the Curriculum**, by Jason B. Johnson: There is no bell to start the day's classes at the Diablo Valley School in Concord. In fact, there isn't even a principal or teachers in the white stucco building. Instead, the school's 18 students do what they want when they want.

As a group, they make and enforce school rules and mete out justice in a youth-run court. Diablo Valley is a Sudbury school, one of about a dozen in the nation modeled after the Sudbury Valley School, which opened in 1968 in a Boston suburb. Concord residents Ofer and Amy Erez started the school in 1997 as an educational alternative for their son Yo'e'l, now 10 years old. The private school is not accredited by the state. The students range from 6 to 16 years old. There are similar schools in Santa Clara, Marin and Sacramento, Amy Erez said. Sudbury schools – there are about 20 worldwide – are private schools where students are free to study whatever subjects interest them at their own speed. There is no imposed class time or structure and no age-based classes. Since the state department of public education only deals with public schools, it does not collect data on the Sudbury school format or its results. Lori Shepard, dean of the School of Education at the University of Colorado at Boulder, said the Sudbury system could benefit students who don't do well in traditional schools. Usually the younger a child is enrolled at Diablo Valley, the longer he or she stays, according to school officials, noting that older kids often tend to transfer after a year or two because of the stark contrast with traditional schools. Because it is a private school, no standardized testing is required. The schools run counter to many accepted ideas



“Our program is designed to actively discourage the development of non-lucrative attributes.”

about education because they eschew structure and heavy reliance on standardized testing. Instead of teachers, there are three “staff” members who help guide the children in planning and carrying out daily activities and long-term projects. Two are mothers of students in the school, while the third staff member, Anthony Burik, previously taught at a San Francisco middle school. Students are required to be at school at least four hours a day. They are free to attend activities and classes elsewhere, but must sign themselves in and out. E-mail Jason B. Johnson at jbjohnson@sfchronicle.com.

The information resource you have published on the Internet: **Alternative Education Resource Organization** (<http://www.educationrevolution.org/>) has been cited in The Infography as one of the six superlative sources of information about the subject of “Education – Alternative – United States.” This is truly an honor for your online resource because it has been selected for citation by an expert who is a specialist about this subject. Based upon this independent scholar’s recommendation, we at Fields of Knowledge are proud to refer students and librarians to the information you have made available to the learning public. Congratulations, Howard Chesshire, Fields of Knowledge, 27 West View, Springfield, VT 05156. Email: hchesshire@fieldsofknowledge.com. Web: <http://www.fieldsofknowledge.com>.

Ananda Institute of Alternative Living is looking for students interested in attending our summer camps (located at the institute) and also high school students and college students interested in attending an alternative university. We are located in the Sierra Nevada foothills near Nevada City, CA. Our students learn in the experiential method—for instance they learn traditional physics and math and then learn to apply this through actually creating fuel cells and other alternative energy projects. We also teach meditation & yoga and “Education for Life” methods to help students with self-discovery and finding happiness in their lives. Email Sara Cryer at registrar@anandauniversity.org. Tel: (530) 478-7612.

Public Alternatives

From **Charter Distinction Saves Small Schools** by Julia Silverman, AP: Just about all 80 students in Paisley Oregon gathered to cheer their superintendent as he headed to the state capital to try and save their school from extinction after \$286,000 in budget cuts. Mark Jeffery went to Salem that day looking for a last-ditch miracle – and now, two years later, with his school richer by \$350,000 in federal funding, he believes he’s found one. Paisley saved its school by turning it into a charter school, bringing in federal money earmarked to get these new institutions off the ground. It’s an increasingly common option among the small, rural schools in the West as they struggle to survive budget cuts, declining enrollment and forced consolidation with other schools. In Paisley and communities like it, charter startup money buys the chance to breathe life into an existing school. Paisley, a town of about 250 people in south-central Oregon where the big event in summer is the Mosquito Festival, has been fighting for its school ever since a local lumber mill closed in the early 1990s. Residents even built a dormitory for foreign students to boost enrollment, and for a while there were Albanians and Koreans in town. But by 2002, Jeffery had to close the school’s cafeteria and library, cut out languages and the business program, and fire the janitor. Even that wasn’t enough, and families began considering the possibility they would have to bus their kids to another school, 50 miles away on a bumpy two-lane road that ices over from November to March. One concern that was voiced was that a charter school would collapse when the federal startup money runs out and it had to return to reliance on shaky state funding. Paisley’s federal grant stops flowing in May 2005. Jeffery thinks enough has changed since the charter began to allow the Paisley school to survive past the end of the federal funding. “We believe what we have built here is a system that can continue to operate,” he said. “As long as we don’t lose too many more students. Our hope is to last long enough to see changes in funding and tax structures that could enable rural education to survive.” <http://www.ruraledu.org/>

Our school opened in Sept ‘03. We are a charter school, free, public, for grades 6-9 (eventually through 12) called **Imagine Academy**. We began with 65 students, grew to 89 during the year and have 140 enrolled for next year. We see ourselves as moving toward a collaborative governance system. We have students, parents and staff on our board. We are scaffolding parents and students into more active participants. Our educational program is project based, experiential, and constructivist. We took on a great deal and are very glad to be nearing the end of our first year with many personal and professional successes for students, parents, faculty and administration. Tel: (818) 368-1557. Fax: (818) 368-1935. Email Sue Bryan at: imagineacademy@hotmail.com

Pacifica Community Charter School and The Center for Nonviolent Communication are pleased to announce that they received \$50,000 in funding from the Tides Foundation for a 2-year project that will contribute to Pacifica’s mission by providing

Nonviolent Communication training and workshops for the entire Pacifica Community. The Pacifica teaching staff is receiving extensive training. The Parenting for Peace Workshop Series is this year's offering for parents, board members & families. Parenting for Peace Workshops are designed to contribute to meeting parents' needs for support, connection, understanding, acceptance, growth, hope, inspiration, and more, thereby supporting parents' ability to nurture a generation of people who grow up with a peaceful paradigm. Each workshop provides a combination of short presentation with fun exercises for practicing communication skills that help create more connection, cooperation, harmony and fun in relationships with children (and people of all ages). Our request and hope is that you can come to all of the workshops as each one will focus on a different theme, and your skills will grow with repeated exposure and practice. Web: www.cncv.org.

Home Education

African-American Unschooling is the Internet resource for African-American Homeschoolers with an Africentric approach to learning all the time. African-American Unschoolers encounter math, science, reading, writing, art and history in the Real World because real living leads to real learning! Visit African-American Unschooling for creative ideas on incorporating African and African-American culture into your homeschooling, articles and resources on unschooling, and networking with other African-American Unschoolers and Homeschoolers. Website: <http://www.afamunschool.com>. African-American Unschooling Press. Contact: S. Courtney Walton, Editor. Email: editor@afamunschool.com. Voice: (623) 205-9883.

Yahoo Group for Home-Educated Students at University: I recently gave an interview to the Times Higher Ed supplement and realised that we had virtually no info regarding the experiences of home-educated students at university. It then occurred to me that a Yahoo group created for this purpose might be very useful for both our selves, our children as they reach the age when university is becoming an issue for them and as a forum for home-educated students actually at university. So I've created a yahoo group for this purpose: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HE-Uni/>. This group could help close the information gap we have regarding home-educated children at university. Mike F-W

From Unschooling: No rules for free-form education: Close to 3,000 children are being home-schooled in New Jersey, according to the latest figures available from the state Education Department. Traditionally, home-schooling parents follow a set curriculum, plan lessons and set aside time to formally instruct their children. But there are others who reject even that much structure. They are part of a movement known as "unschooling," a loose-yet-legal amalgam of learning, exploring and "everyday life" activities that replace the classroom for an undetermined number of home-schooled youngsters. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates about 850,000 American children are home-schooled, and some advocates believe roughly 5 percent to 10 percent of them are unschooled. New Jersey law requires only that parents who teach their children at home make sure they receive academic instruction equivalent to that in public schools. If concerns arise that parents might be failing to educate a child, the burden is on the state to prove it in court. Some unschoolers don't start reading until they're 12, and some educators warn that unschooled children risk growing up without basic reading, math and

social skills. But unschooling's supporters claim the process works because children, so naturally curious, have more motivation to learn if they are free to follow their own interests rather than languish in regimented conventional classrooms. Copyright 2003, The Associated Press

Since 1994 the **Family Resource Center (FRC)** been working with over 2,500 organizations, museums, zoos, aquariums, historic sites, science centers and theatres of New England organizing educational programming and group visits for homeschooling families. Homeschooling families interested in exploring regions of beautiful New England would enjoy FRC's Extended Stay Program multi-day mini trips. The best Museum and Community Education programs are arranged by the Family Resource Center and you are welcome to join us for any or all of the trips. Families are responsible for arranging their own lodging, meals and transportation to and from each site. http://www.homestead.com/prosites-bigbear001/FAQ_New~ns4.html.

Driver Education for Homeschoolers: I currently have a bill in the Vermont legislature that is an alternative to traditional driver education offered in the public schools. The current language allows for state approval of driver education course for homeschool use by parents and their teens. Homeschoolers would know that the course would

contain the necessary components that a Vermont driver would need to know. Homeschoolers find it hard to get into driver education in the schools. We are then left with expensive commercial schools or the children wait until they are 18 and take the road test anyway. The bill passed out of House Education and is now in House Transportation. I have found that the so-called driving "experts" can't agree how driver education should be delivered. Graduated driver licensing works to save lives and parents are the enforcers of it. Graduated driver licensing works, with or without traditional driver education. I do not want what the schools use moved into my car. I want an alternative that is written for parents to guide them as they apprentice their teen in a car through graduated driver licensing system. Retta Dunlap



From Does Homeschooling Impact Your Neighborhood Schools? Your Wallet: The creative adaptation of school choice policy has beset state officials with troubling questions. Cyber and homeschool charter schools have become a prominent part of the charter school movement and begun to challenge conventional learning by delivering curriculum or instruction through the Internet and by minimizing the use of personnel and physical facilities. Most controversially, these institutions use taxpayer dollars to help families provide unsupervised instruction within a private residence. A recent paper by Luis Huerta and Maria Fernandez at Teachers College, Columbia University, and sponsored by the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, examines how alternative charter school designs impact state policies, with particular attention given to developments in California and Pennsylvania. In these two states, the public scrutiny of cyber and home school charter schools has led to demands for public accountability, legislative debate, and litigation. Of pressing concern is the need to construct a regulatory framework to accommodate these new models of schooling. Blurred definitions of non-classroom charter schools may lead to exploitation by speculators and budget crises in local districts. Huerta and Fernandez conclude that it is important to determine the appropriate financial allocations for schools that operate with reduced personal and facilities, as well as, establish the division of financial responsibility between state and

International News

BELGIUM/HOLLAND

This weekend I was in Holland where people who are starting up an Iederwijs school got together; there were 50 people from probably 23 schools in the making. It was just amazing to be able to exchange ideas with so many interesting, enthusiastic people. Basically, Iederwijs is like Sudbury Valley – 3 people ‘invented’ the same model as Sudbury some 3-4 years ago, and called it Iederwijs; later they read about SVS and saw the similarities. Iederwijs uses sociocracy instead of democracy, this is voting by consent, which means that every person backs up the final decision, as to not have discontent persons. To me, it is the same as democracy in a SV school, where, if the voters are divided, people talk until there is a better decision. Iederwijs used to be directed by children, staff and parents, but since the start of the first schools 2 years ago, they’ve had a lot of problems with too much parent involvement. As a result they now want to change it to people who are in the school during the day make the decisions, and the basic concept is that children have the right to do what, when and where they want, respecting others and the environment. From Maaike Eggermont. Email: maaike@alternative-learning.org

BRAZIL

From **Learn What You Want**, *Telegraph*: Business guru Ricardo Semler gave workers in his family business power to run the firm – now he is adopting the same approach at his own school, reports *Andrew Downie*. The Lumiar School in Sao Paolo throws children together in an open, unstructured environment and allows them to study only what interests them. There are no classrooms, homework or playtime and in place of teachers, there are full-time mentors to impart “love, wisdom and values”, and part-time experts who teach singular skills such as piano, painting or Japanese culture. Learning is



“What are your 24/7 daycare options?”

based on the Confucian principle: “I listen and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I learn.” The school is the latest project of the unorthodox business guru Ricardo Semler. The Brazilian achieved worldwide fame a decade ago with his million-selling book *Maverick!*, in which he described how he revitalised his family firm by giving employees the power to set their salaries and working hours and to choose their bosses. Semler has set about the school system with similar revolutionary gusto. Armed with University of Chicago

statistics showing that 94 per cent of what we learn in school is never used in later life, he decided to ditch what he calls the “unsuccessful teaching methods” used in millions of schools around the world. “We are trying to prove that by giving kids freedom, they will in the end be better educated, with much more residual knowledge than the kids in the disciplined schools. They can have a much happier existence and be much more prepared for life if we don’t teach them the stupid things that traditional schools do.” Seven years of research into “democratic schools” convinced him to open an institution in Sao Paulo and last year, 24 children aged between two and six were enrolled. Sixteen older children joined them last month, and Semler hopes to have 110 pupils of both primary and secondary school age by 2006, 75 per cent of whom will be underprivileged and brought in on scholarships. Semler wholeheartedly believes the experiment will work – he even sends his four-year-old son to Lumiar – and state schools in nine Brazilian cities have asked him to transform their classrooms into democratic ones, with more toying with the idea.

GERMANY

PISA means “Programme for International Student Assessment” or “School Assessment”. It’s the scientifically most elaborate international comparison of student achievements. It compares key competences of 15 year-olds. PISA is a series of studies; the first one was published in 2000. Germany was approx. on place 16 of 25 countries, which has been perceived as a shock by almost all Germans. So there was and is a large discussion after PISA; two main problems are: 1. Even after the PISA results, it is still politically extremely difficult to successfully change something more fundamental in the school systems; and 2. PISA doesn’t provide a direction for changes and never intended to do so. However, one thing that quite a large majority of groups and lobbies of professionals agree on is that it seems to be important to stop sorting students into three or four different kinds of schools already after grade 4, as is the practice in Germany. Finland and many other countries school all their children in the same kind of school until grade 9. The whole discussion is obviously mainly economically motivated. It is not because of the individual people that they are discussing, but rather in the interest of Germany’s chances in the global economical competition. On the other hand, today it seems that PISA will bring more rather than less human schools. This is my most important reason for being for standardized testing for such purposes and not against it like almost the whole alternative schooling scene seems to be. Patrick. patrick.schimpke@uni-bielefeld.de.

INDIA

Vidya Ratna Award 2003 Citation: Dr. (Mrs) Usha Nayar, an acclaimed academician, an undaunting social activist and crusader for upliftment of the under privileged through educational initiatives, occupies a prominent and challenging position in the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, a Deemed University of international repute. She is the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Dr. Usha Nayar, for the last four decades, has been contributing her knowledge and experience through sustained participation in international seminars, symposiums and conferences. Over a hundred scholastic presentations backed with extensive research explorations and findings in the field of social sciences are easily reflective of her dedication and devotion to encourage. Dr. Usha Nayar has entered into international collaborations, brought about strategic integration of human resources with a mission to empower and enable the disadvantaged to realize their dreams. Dr. Nayar is doing exemplary social work in the field of transformational education for the downtrodden through Technology and Social Health Foundation of which she is the founder Chairperson. Dayanand Institute of Education Management and Research recognizes and appreciates her contribution in the field of education philosophy, research and management. For her meritorious services and

contribution, Dayanand Institute of Education Management and Research (DIEMR) is pleased to confer her with the Vidya Ratna Award 2003.

ISRAEL

Once again, the **Hope Flowers School** cafeteria is faced with a severe threat of demolition. Although we are still in the process of fact gathering, we now have sufficient and credible information to ask that you help us in our efforts to prevent any demolition to the school cafeteria. The latest demolition notification was issued by the Israeli Civil Administration and Planning Council and received by the school on November 5, 2003. The notification specifically outlines plans for the demolition of the school cafeteria (still under work of completion). The reason the Israeli authorities have issued the latest demolition notification is directly related to building of the "Security Fence." The route of the fence is displayed on the official Israeli defense force website (www.mod.gov.il), and can be seen to be passing through the area where the school is located. However, it is impossible to accurately calculate the exact path of the fence and is also impossible to find out this information from the Israeli authorities. If the fence were to pass behind the school it would isolate us from Al Khader and Bethlehem areas, and consequently from the children who attend the school, and would result in the closure of the school. If the fence passes in front of the school, there is a chance that it will be built on the land now occupied by the school cafeteria (the building that is under threat from the demolition notification). Your help at this time is very much needed and would be appreciated by all who are involved with Hope Flowers School and the Middle East peace process in general. For more information, please contact Ibrahim Issa at The Hope Flowers School, Bethlehem, P.O. Box 732, West Bank, Via Israel.

NEW ZEALAND

A group of us spent a 'wicked' week in Christchurch, NZ. The week was planned by Yaacov Hecht and coordinated locally by a mother, Rose, who is involved in Playcentre – a unique New Zealand playgroup/preschool network and a parent at Tamariki School. The group gathered in the city at Discovery1 School for a week of lectures, dialog, workshops, dialog, laughter, dialog and tears to explore issues within our learning communities, help strengthen them and perhaps most excitingly for IDEC/AAPAE folk, form the foundation of the NZIDE; New Zealand Institute of Democratic Education (non official name.) It is the intention of the Institute to support the building of pluralistic learning opportunities and communities, within our schools and beyond. Integral themes: 1) recognising individual uniqueness and the resulting foundation of strength – both as people and as organizations; 2) using such strengths to optimise our co-operative work process – contributing each where possible and sharing knowledge, skills and beliefs; 3) forever learning/ teaching – using strengths, vast array of human and other resources and a growing toolbox to value the past and consider the future as means to make appropriate decisions for each distinctive community. A website has just been started up: <http://www.nzide.org.nz>. From Juli Gassner Gering, Learning Advisor, Discovery1 School, The Crossing, Christchurch, NZ. Email: juli.g@discovery1.school.nz.

NORWAY

We got permission from the government to start up our school. This is a big victory and means there will be a new democratic school in Oslo this fall. Our school will be private but it is funded 85% by the state. It is illegal to start schools in Norway without permission from the government. We are starting with elementary kids, from the age of

6 and up. Later we are planning to extend the school to include middle school kids also. We have 30 kids starting in the fall. We have a nice building available in the east of Oslo. I am a member of a Norwegian group called "Forum ny skole" (new school). The leader of the group is Mosse Jørgensen; she is 83 years old and was one of the founders of "Forsøksgymnaset" that started in 1966. Forsøksgymnaset is the only democratic school in Norway. It is a high school for kids 16-19 years old. Mosse was a good friend of John Holt and of Rasmus Hansen in Friskolan 70 (friskool 70) in Denmark. Jostein Strømme. Email: diskujen@nrkpost.no.

SCOTLAND

Cautious Welcome for Home Education Guidance: Schoolhouse, the national support charity for families who educate their children out of school in Scotland, has given a cautious welcome to the statutory guidance released today (Friday) by the Scottish Executive. Schoolhouse Convener, Jennifer Laing, said: "Schoolhouse welcomes the fact that the Scottish Executive has taken on board many of the issues we raised following the disastrous first draft, which can only be described as a gross insult to home educators in Scotland. Rather than improving relationships between our community and local education authorities, it effectively destroyed our trust overnight." First issued in draft form in December 2001, the initial guidance document drew overwhelming criticism from Schoolhouse, who attacked it as a "bullies' charter" and warned that it would be open to legal challenge for seeking to override both human rights and data protection legislation. Many education authorities and children's organisations agreed that it was unworkable, and the strength of feeling from the home education community was such that Schoolhouse predicted "untold damage to relationships between home educating families and education authorities" - the opposite effect to what the guidance was designed to achieve. In the face of universal opposition, the Executive entered into further discussions with the home education community, eventually agreeing to re-write the document from scratch and re-issue it for full consultation.



SWEDEN

The **Skarpnacks Free School** in Stockholm is in its fifth year as an NVC inspired school. With seventy students and nine teachers. Founding director, Marianne Gothlin, reports that she is very pleased to see that their careful attention to focusing on everyone's needs, establishing democratic processes and modeling compassionate communication has created a non-coercive, participatory, respectful culture, where teachers, students and parents enjoy a very natural way of relating with each other. Voluntary participation is evident in all aspects of school life: students choose their learning experiences; parents choose how they contribute to the organization, programs and maintenance of the school. NVC trainings are offered to teachers, parents and students throughout the year.

Conferences

October 8 – 11 8th Annual **International Montessori Conference** will be held in Clearwater Beach, Florida. A series of special seminars will be held after the main 4-day conference. Lots of information about the conference at: www.montessori.org

October 21 – 24, **In Commune with Ourselves, Each Other and Nature**, Budapest, Hungary. A four-day international gathering for inspiring innovative thinking and practice in all those who are

committed to fostering the development of consciousness in our relationship to ourselves, to each other as human beings, and to nature. Welcome to all those who are interested: learners, educators, researchers and others. Web: www.emk.hu/pathstopeace2004. For further information and bookings, please contact: SEAL-Hungary, Tel: (36-1) 2742687. Email: hava@emk.hu

October 27 – 29, **Persistently Safe Schools: The National Conference of the Hamilton Fish Institute**, Wyndham Hotel, 1400 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. The conference is designed to highlight and review past and present school violence prevention milestones and to propose directions for future research, practice, and partnerships. The projected plenary and concurrent sessions will be organized around the following subject tracks: Alternative education; Bullying (student-on-student, student-on-teacher, teacher-on-student); Gender-related violence and issues; School-based mental health; Model interventions (universal, selective, and targeted); Risk and protective factors; School security (including school bus safety). <http://www.hamfish.org/conference/>. Email: mailto:HF12004@hamfish.org. Hamilton Fish Institute, The George Washington University, 2121 K Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20037-1830.

November 5 – 7, **Three-Day I.L.R. National Meeting with International Participation**. I.L.R. is a Czech non-profit organization, which tries to push ahead the ideas of free education, innovative and effective pedagogical accesses and generally influence educational policy by own drafts of documents both in theory as well as in practice. The main topics are principles and experiences with global view on the content of education (subjects integration, topics for teaching, multicultural orientation, compact view on the world, etc.). Web: www.pau.cz and www.upce.cz. For more information contact Prof. Dr. Karel Rydl at 00420-723 527 784 or email: rydl@cbox.cz.

November 11 – 13 **CES Fall Forum** San Francisco: Equitable Schools for a New Democracy. This year's conference will focus on creating a system of schools in which students of all races, classes, and backgrounds achieve their full potential, gain the skills they need, and develop a passion for contributing to an active democracy. The Fall Forum, CES' primary networking and professional development event, attracts several thousand educators, parents, students, and leading thinkers in education from around the world to exchange ideas, ask

questions, and share insights about effective school practices and designs. www.esentialschools.org

November 12 – 13, **What Will it Take to Move A Proactive Racial Justice** Agenda, The University of California, Berkeley, CA. Join activists, academics and policy advocates in setting priorities for issues such as public education, media concentration, public services and benefits, and civil rights and liberties. Contact: RAPP@arc.org.

November 20 - 22, Join the best thinkers on education at **SepCon2004**, at the lovely Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC. SepCon2004, sponsored by the Alliance for Separation of School & State, is the conference for those who recognize that school-by-government simply cannot be reformed. If we are to ever achieve honest education—where teachers can honestly tell parents what they are teaching—we must end government involvement in schooling. For details: <http://sepcon.org/index.php>

December 3-12. **International Democratic Education Conference 2004**, Bhubaneswar, India. For further information go to www.idec2004.com. There will be an AERO group going from New York.

The fourth annual **Small Schools Planning Institute** will be held January 12-14, 2005 in St. Pete Beach, Florida, on the Gulf of Mexico at the Sirata Beach Resort. This institute is aimed at persons who are engaged in creating new schools which are small by design. Many participants come from public schools which have received private grants or federal "Small Learning Communities" grants to restructure large and poorly performing high schools. There will also be a large contingent of folks from large middle schools, as well as folks from charters and other small schools. Speakers will include: Deborah Meier (founder of Central Park East Secondary and Mission Hill School, author of many titles including *The Power of Their Ideas*); Pedro Noguera (*Urban Schools and the American Dream*); Steve Jubb (Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools). There will be loads of interactive small group sessions. Information and registration forms can be found at our web site: www.smallschools.com. Thanks! *Susan Klonsky* Small Schools Workshop

Jobs and Internships

Jefferson County Open School, a public school of choice in Colorado, is seeking unique administrative leadership (two Co-directors to serve as principal). Applicants should be dedicated to a vision of progressive education, have a love of learning, knowledge of k-12 child development, and experience with guiding a passionate community. Our school has, for nearly 30 years, stood as an example of experiential education dedicated to educating the whole child. Visit our website at <http://jeffcoweb.jeffco.k12.co.us/high/jcos/> to see why the Open School has been called "a national treasure," and if the challenge inspires you. The full job description and application will be posted at <http://jeffcoweb.jeffco.k12.co.us/hrs/index.html>.

The Renaissance Charter School is seeking a high school science teacher for the upcoming school year. A BA is required with a major or minor in biology. The school places a high priority on self-reflection and humanistic relationships between students and teachers. Contact Monte Joffee, Principal, 35-59 81st St, Jackson Heights, NY 11372. Email: mjjoffee@yahoo.com. Fax: (718) 803-3785.

Liberty School, a democratic learning community in Blue Hill, ME has a one-year opening for a science teacher. Someone with experience in agriculture would be a good candidate. If interested you might look at our website at www.liberty-school.org. You can contact me at grnbrg@downeast.net.



“Miss. Glyn, we don’t think Mary looks right doing ballet.”

Play Mountain Place is one of the oldest humanistic alternative schools in the U.S. We are hiring nursery and elementary teachers, as well as looking for interns to train with them. Play Mountain Place emphasizes deep respect for children, support for their social and emotional growth, child-initiated curriculum, and team-teaching using a consensus approach to decision-making. Preference will be given to teachers already trained in this philosophy. Interns are individuals interested in receiving intensive, hands-on experience, fulfilling a practicum or working toward a teaching position. For teacher or intern positions, contact: Judy Accardi, Play Mountain Place, 6063 Hargis Street, Los Angeles, CA. 90034. Tel: (323) 870-4381. Web: www.playmountain.org. Email: playmountain@sbcglobal.net.

Sagemount School is a new independent non-profit school based on the Sudbury Valley Model, and Ottawa's first democratic school. We are looking for creative and flexible part-time and full-time facilitators who are familiar with the Sudbury Valley Model. Potential staff members who are interested in creating a learning environment which will empower children, ages 5 to 18, to becoming independent learners within a democratic community should contact Sheila DeGroot at s.j.degroot@sympatico.ca or phone (613) 835-3635 or write to Sagemount School P.O. Box 809, Embrun, ON, Canada K0A 1W0. Web: www.flora.org/sagemount.

I am sending you this message because I'm hoping you can spread the word about two staff openings we will be having at **Puget Sound Community School** for the 2004/05 school year. I want to cast our net wide in order to get as diverse of a set of applicants as possible. To learn more, please visit <http://www.pscs.org/jobopening/>. If you have any questions, please let me know. Andrew Smallman, Director, Puget Sound Community School. Email: andy@psc.org. Web: <http://www.pscs.org>. Tel: (206) 324-4350.

We are looking for 6 creative, experienced, elementary teachers and a school nurse to join our family of learners (90 children K-8). We are **Ridge and Valley Charter School**, a public school, located in a rural setting in northern New Jersey. Our mission is to educate children for a hopeful, sustainable future. A NJ teaching elementary certificate, or in process of obtaining one, is needed. Please feel free to contact me for more information. Jean Edwards, Academic Coordinator, Ridge and Valley Charter School, Kerrs Corner Road, Blairstown, NJ 07825. Tel: (908) 362-1114. Email: jeanedwards@access4less.net. Web: www.ridgeandvalley.org.

This fall, the **Los Angeles Leadership Academy** will establish its high school program. Serving the Koreatown/Westlake communities, we are a small, progressive school with a focus on social justice. The middle school presently serves 195 students in grades 6-8. In September 2004, the high school opens with grade 9, adding a grade each year until seniors are graduating. Teachers are being sought. For more information, contact Susanne Coie at (213) 381-8484, x105, or by email at s_coie@yahoo.com. Los Angeles Leadership Academy, 668 South Catalina Street, Los Angeles, CA 90005.

A head teacher is wanted for 3-5 year olds at a private school in the Red Bank, New Jersey area. Knowledge of Reggio Emilia and Progressive traditions. Sense of humor, passion and commitment preferred. Email inquiries to: acpoffice@nac.net. Alba DiBello, A Child's Place School

Science, Math & Social Studies teachers are wanted at the **Pablo Neruda Academy for Architecture and World Studies**. We will be

going into our second year with a 9th and 10th grade at the Stevenson HS Campus Complex. As a small and progressive New Century High School in the Bronx, students explore their academic subjects through the lenses of architecture, the natural landscape, off-site community service and internships. Check out our website for a broader understanding of our culture and mission. <http://pablonerudaacademy.org>.

Two positions available: High school science and/or math teacher and a high school social studies teacher in a well-established, highly respected alternative program. These positions provide a unique opportunity to integrate science/math or social studies with other disciplines, create innovative science curricula, and use experiential learning through travel, wilderness experiences and other field trips. Email: jbarickman@bedford.k12.ny.us

Oakland Kids First is seeking a full time (100%) or part-time (80% FTE) Membership Coordinator to run the membership component of our youth organizing program. KidsFirst works to create opportunities for Oakland youth to transform our schools and communities through organizing, alliance building, creative arts, and advocacy. Send resume and cover letter to: Kim Miyoshi, Executive Director, Oakland Kids First, 1625 Broadway, Oakland CA 94612. Tel: (510) 452-2043. Fax: (510) 452-2075. Email: kim@kidsfirstoakland.org.



Unity Charter School is looking for staff reflective of our community's racial diversity in all disciplines, from teachers to administrators to support personnel. We need elementary and middle school instructors. Individuals who are qualified as subject matter specialists for both middle and high school would be ideal. The ideal candidate will have strong sympathies for our mission and one of the following: A New Jersey teaching certificate or teaching certification from another state; significant teaching experience in private schools; or an advanced degree with significant work experience. Experience or training in alternative, democratic, performance-based education, Goddard, or Sudbury model school is a plus. Teachers work on ten-month contract with good benefit package. Background check and proof of U.S. citizenship or legal resident alien status is required. Director, Unity Charter School, 340 Speedwell Ave, Morristown, NJ 07960. Email: unityexpansion@atweb.net. Web: www.unity-nj.org.

I am looking for a Reading and English teacher with a Special Education license for **Christa McAuliffe Alternative Middle School** in Evansville, IN. Christa is a small public alternative school serving mostly expelled students. We typically have 30 students in attendance with 4 teachers and myself. We work to help these students learn academics and new behavior patterns through a non-coercive caring environment. Our beliefs are heavily influenced by William Glasser and our practice by challenge and experiential education. The teacher who retired from the position was also the only minority member of our small staff. So, I would love to hear from minority candidates, but need to find the right person to care for our students regardless of race. Anyone interested may contact me at this email address: drqwbrown@aol.com. Greg.

Horizons School is seeking a dorm parent and interns. The dorm parent is an ideal situation to supervise dorm students at night and on weekends and work or go to school during the day. Looking for interns in the following areas: music, assistant to drama program, teaching assistant in elementary grades, to explore possible outreach activities

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My name is **Felix Dethier**, 16, and I am looking for an English-speaking family to welcome me into their home for a few weeks or months sometime in the near future. I would also like to have the possibility to participate in a school a few hours a week for English classes or two other subjects like math or physics or geography/history or others activities, where I could practice my English. I am homeschooled and have traveled widely with my family. My brother and I belong to the French homeschooling association, Les Enfants d'abord in France. I do my homeschooling via the Internet, so I am self-sufficient in that regard. We will pay all expenses in advance. We could also do an exchange with a young member of the welcome family who could accompany us on one of our trips. My email address is: felixdethier@yahoo.fr.

Arthur Brenner. I am seeking an opportunity to work at a Sudbury-model, free, democratic school. As a high school science teacher with five years of experience in public schools, I am painfully aware of just how ineffective (and damaging) traditional schools can be. A coercion-free, grade-free school environment would be a refreshing new challenge. I also homeschooled/unschooled my on for four years (grades 3-6), so I have seen the benefits of a less rigid approach to schooling. My New Jersey certification is in Physical Science, but my original (Wisconsin) certification also included "Broad Field Science." I'm sure that I can also be useful in the areas of math, computers, and English language/writing skills. I currently live in central New Jersey but am open to considering other areas. Tel: (732) 297-0402. Email: brenner@tenet.edu.

My name is **JB Wright**. I am a certified teacher with over ten years of experience in the field of education. I am looking for an alternative school/teaching/learning environment, where I can teach classes indoor or outdoors, and have flexibility in time schedule and pacing of classes. I have extra training in teaching reading, as well as working with gifted and learning disabled students. I have training in AIMS Earth Science, and the Globe Project, and other hands-on methods for teaching math

and science. In addition, I have multi-grade limited resource teaching experience, and have worked with small and large class sizes of various age levels and abilities. I can teach anywhere but I'd rather be in a place where there is respect and acceptance for diversity, and where I can really make a difference in my students' lives for the greatest good of all

Our circular designs appeared as crop circles on the English landscape, in Wiltshire, during the summer of 2002. Their origin is entirely mysterious. These diagrams, made by Rob Seaman, come from the Crop Circle Calendar of 2003, published by the Wilshire Crop Circle Study



concerned. My phone number is (817) 301-5130 and my e-mail address is jbiswright@yahoo.com.

I am seeking a position in a democratic and free school program, or a role in helping to start one. I am not tied to a geographic location at all. For the past six years, I have worked in traditional school environments as a teacher and counselor. Please email me if you are interested in talking to me about your school, a prospective school, or anything else that has to do with Democratic Education. **Brian Cheek**. Email: bricheek@yahoo.com.

Waldorf trained, Masters in Education with elementary public certification seeking a healthy learning community to live and teach. Also open to Assistant Teaching positions until the Fall of 2005. My name is Carrie Daily and I can be reached at 206-920-1329 or cndaily2000@yahoo.com

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2004

Peace in Education

India

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The 12th International Democratic Education Conference - IDEC -

will be held this year
from
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Sun 12th Dec
at Bhubaneswar,
the capital city of the
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THE ALMANAC OF EDUCATION CHOICES, with over 6,000 entries by state in zip-code order, and a dozen informative essays about how to start a new alternative, how to start homeschooling, use of computers by alternatives, etc. Includes the Montessori, Waldorf, Quaker, charter, public choice, and at-risk schools. **\$19.95**

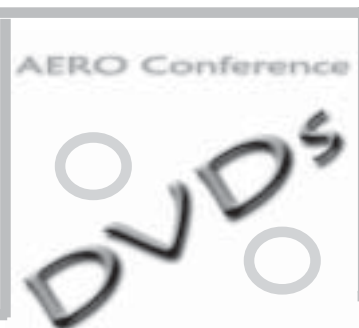
My Friend Lenny: A Memoir of my Life in Music, with personal stories about Leonard Bernstein, Mike Wallace, Paul Simon and others. By Ouida Blatt Mintz - Ouida, long-time AERO volunteer, tells the story of triumphs and tragedies in her life. www.myfriendlenny.com \$14.95 including postage!

The Underground History of American Education (412 pages) **By John Taylor Gatto** - Gatto's thesis is that the American public school system is efficiently doing what it was intended to do: Creating a docile, trained, consumer-oriented population. **\$28.95**

Creating Learning Communities In the past several years, there has been a proliferation of cooperative community life long learning centers, learning co-ops, and other forms of collaborative non-school learning organizations forming. This phenomenon is explored in this new book. **\$11.50.**

A Free Range Childhood: Self-regulation at Summerhill School By Matthew Appleton -An updated, insightful account of everyday life at **Summerhill**. **\$18.95**

Summerhill School, A New View of Childhood, A.S. Neill, Edited by Albert Lamb. This is a new editing of Neill's writings, an update of the original book, **Summerhill**. **\$12.95**



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was captured on 3 DVDs

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GREEN REVOLUTION, the newsletter of **the School of Living** - a 60-year-old organization that pioneered the environmental protection movement, consumer protection, and is involved with land trust and communities movements (AERO's sponsor). **\$10 (half price)**

What are Schools For, by Ron Miller \$19.95 **The Homeschool Book of Answers**, Linda Dobson, \$15.95 **Making It Up as We Go Along**, Chris Mercogliano's book about the history of Albany's **Free School**. \$14.95

AUDIOCASSETTES:

AERO has an expanded list of over 100 tapes from our show, The Education Revolution on the TalkAmerica Network and Cable Radio Network. Contact AERO for a list of programs, featuring interviews with people such as Mary Leue, Joe Nathan, John Gatto, David Colfax, Andy Smallman, Pat Montgomery, Chris Mercogliano, Bob Barr, Arnie Langberg, Zoe Readhead, and many others **\$10 apiece**

VIDEOS

DEMOCRATIC MEETINGS. A two-hour tape of demonstrations of various democratic meetings. **\$25**

HOMESCHOOL RESOURCE CENTERS. A video of three homeschool resource centers featuring the Snakefoot Education Center, at Common Ground Community, Puget Sound Community School and Clearwater School, in Seattle. **\$25**

SUMMERHILL VIDEO. Two videos in one: a 1990 conference at Summerhill, with interviews of Summerhill students and alumni as well as vivid footage of the Summerhill end-of-term celebration and Summerhill's 70th anniversary celebration in August, 1991. We also have a 1995 tape of Sands School and Summerhill. **\$25 each**

Nellie Dick and the Modern School Movement. A fascinating two-hour interview with a 96-year-old pioneer in the alternative education movement. Born in the Ukraine in 1893, she started anarchist schools in England back in 1908, went to the US in 1917 and taught at and ran Modern Schools until 1958. **\$25** Transcript of Nellie Dick and the Modern School! **\$5**

CODE CRASH—For quickly learning the Morse Code. People interested in getting their amateur radio license will be amazed. It works. **\$20**

The 3 DVDs available for sale are:

1. John Gatto's talk, "*Weapons of Mass Instruction*"
2. Pat Farena's keynote on the future of education, and his three hour post-conference workshop on unschooling
3. The four student essay winners; Chris Mercogliano's talk on his new book, "*Teaching the Restless*," Jerry Mintz's talk and film about AERO history; the auction, talent show, networking exercise, etc.

Revolutionary Times



Rudolph Steiner
Home Education Pioneer?
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John Taylor Gatto

....How *Small* Is Small?

Page 38



A Russian 14-year-old
Considers Romance
Page 40

A Day in the Life of an AERO Conference

By Dima Klyuy

“Dima, we’re leaving in 15 minutes!” was the sound that awoke me from my not-so-deep sleep in the den of 417 Roslyn Rd. It was only about 8 AM and the warm bed was so seducing, I didn’t get up and dozed off.

“DIIIIIMAAAAA!!!!!!” It seemed like not 20 seconds had gone by. Jerry yelled again, “I got two hours less sleep than you did, so you had no excuse.” He was right; I had no excuse. I stumbled out and about. That thought was reconfirmed in my mind when I entered Jerry’s/AERO’s bedroom/office. There he sat in front of a four-year old

iMac computer, the hub of the Alternative Education Resource Organization. He was still in his underwear, with the only other notable feature about his appearance being his wild, fraying grey hair going in all directions. Jerry was intently focused on the phone conversation that he was having with Isaac Graves, the 17-year-old on site conference coordinator.

I looked into his eyes hidden behind the high diopter glasses, framed by bushy eyebrows and a shadow of grey facial hair. They were weary, tired eyes showing many cycles of hope and



Arnold Greenburg and Jon Scott

disappointment. Funny, I thought: Jerry's eyes are not bloodshot. I don't think I've ever seen them bloodshot.

After he was done with his conversation, he told me that he had spent most of the night finishing editing the video. We fooled around trying to transfer the video from the computer to a VHS cassette for a while; then Jerry checked his email; then he packed. By the time we left, the humble abode of JerryAERO (that was like a spec of dust on an otherwise pristine lens of suburbia-America) it was almost eleven AM. Registration would start at 2 PM, so Isaac would have to tread water by himself for a little while. That was the collective agreement in the AEROvan between Jerry and his two sidekicks: I, for one, and Ouida Mintz, for the other.

A little bit of background on Robin and Catgirl:

If Jerry had been introducing me, this is what he would say (almost word for word): "Uh this was Dima. He's from Ukraine and he just finished his first year at Cornell. You know, he went to the Stork School before he came to this country." If the person to whom I was being introduced would show any interest, genuine or otherwise, Jerry would come up with some other readily accessible preferably impressive

information about me or the Stork School. He might say, for example, that the Stork school was one of the first Alternative Schools in Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union, or perhaps that the Stork school hosted the 1998 IDEC (International Democratic Education Conference), "one of the very best ones that he's ever attended." All the while, I'd be standing there awkwardly and nodding my head and smiling a crooked smile until Jerry was done with his monologue and we can all move on.

In actuality, I'm just a very average guy who liked to hang out with Jerry, play tennis with him, listen to his stories of the years gone by, and philosophize on the various strategies that AERO should peruse to expand and become great ALREADY!

Ouida Mintz is sidekick number two. For those of you who do not know, she is also Jerry's mother. This is a pretty typical way of Jerry introducing, or perhaps starting a conversation about his mother: "This is my mother. She wrote a book about being friends with Leonard Bernstein and playing violin duets with Mike Wallace." Boy, he should just stamp that on her forehead! But really, Ouida is a wonderful woman who's main role for AERO is answering the phone during the wee hours of the

morning and writing down messages. Despite being in her eighties, Ouida is still in relatively great shape and spirit.

The drive up to Albany went rather smoothly, and we rolled up to Russell Sage just in time to see Isaac Graves, who was wearing a beret and a plain t-shirt. His eyes were intently following every move that Jerry made from a distance; Isaac was not moving at all, only his eyes traveling and storing everything in a mental archive.

Salutations were brief; Isaac got right to the point: he wanted the information packets and name badges that are to be given out to conference participants. We dug them out from underneath all the crap, err...stuff that we brought up with us to sell at the conference and ran back inside. If Jerry had any hope of soliciting Isaac to help bring the boxes in, it was

long gone. Jerry and I ended up running back and forth with the boxes as the folks from all over the country piled into the registration room and tried, unsuccessfully, to overwhelm Isaac. I thought that our most important job for the conference was done; we had successfully delivered the paperwork, and now Isaac was running the show.

Isaac's charisma did not fade when he had to speak in front a full auditorium of nearly 150 at the opening of the conference. It was clear that communication and presentation was a skill that Isaac had, and was perfecting by the minute. After the usual plethora of requisite welcomes and announcements, the student keynote speakers were well on their way.

There were three such speakers, ages 15-17, with another one dutifully on the way. Their speeches were considered to be inherently interesting and elevated *because* they were students of some sort of an alternative system. Although certain parts of all the speeches were a little dry or boring, what really set this group apart was the way that they were able to field a long Q&A panel following their talks. All kinds of things were asked from how the respective schools dealt with drugs, to what some idea schooling models would

be for some of the presenters. Not having been prepped or helped out in any way at all, these young men and women did an admirable job of discussing issues that went far beyond the scope of what their original speeches were about. All of the newcomers who had paid their \$200 to come to this conference were pumped up and ready to pounce on any morsel of knowledge about alternative education and they ruthlessly bombarded the students with various questions, but the students confidently lifted up their chins and explained whatever was asked of them. This was recognized and applauded enthusiastically, and it really set the tone for the entire conference.

Following the opening presentation by the keynote student speakers, Chris Mercogliano, director of the Albany Free School, came up on the stage. For those of you have not heard Chris Mercogliano speak, it is really a privilege and I would highly recommend at least watching him on video. He came onto the floor wearing open sandals and shorts, his shoulder-length hair tucked behind his ears, with no speech in hand, and just began to talk to the audience as if he were talking to a grandson by a fireplace. "This is not the way that we do things in my school, by lecturing. We usually do everything through discussion, in circles." And so he *discussed* the school, *discussed* the way that he "found" his love of writing, and his experiences writing his first book, *Making It Up As We Go Along*, and his second book, *Teaching the Restless*. Chris also gave us a sneak preview of his upcoming book about "best" 100 alternative schools in the country, how they got their start, and how they operated. He fielded some questions from a heart-throbbing and very much infatuated crowd, and assured everyone that the documentary video about the Free School will answer people's questions much better than he ever could.

Chris was right! The documentary provided for an incisive view of the school, much like cutting up a rare stake and having the blood juices ooze out.

(Or if you are not of the meat-eating orientation, a semi-cooked beet is just as good an analogy.) The film makers were former staff members at the Free School, and this allowed them to blend in almost seamlessly into the walls as they documented the trials and triumphs of that brick building on Elm Street. For those of us familiar with the freeschooling or even unschooling environment, this video would have been no revelation. It principally showed kids being kids, following their own wild ideas, growing, meeting, discussing, playing, learning. Overall, this professionally-done video was a fascinating, if only a bit drawn out (over one and a half hours), watch.

Following the video – remember now, this was the video to end all questions – was a panel of Free School students and staff. Ironically, and not in very good judgment in my opinion, Chris did not partake in this panel discussion. This made it all the more irritating for me and probably for others in the audience as well because when Chris was fielding questions after his own talk, he refused to answer any questions about the Free School. "We'll leave those for the movie and the panel discussion to answer," he said. Well, quite a lively discussion did

ensue with this panel, in which Chris, unfortunately, did not partake.

After a night of an intensive bombardment of information, most people's brains were saturated and they quickly retired to their dorm room, whereupon they were probably out within minutes. The rooms were certainly nowhere near a five star, or even a two star hotel. The beds and all other furniture of the room was of industrial caliber; everything in the rooms was either nailed, wedged, or otherwise glued to the room frame. Cozy it was not. On the other hand nothing, including the unisex bathroom, was really dirty (although I am coming from the sex of greater tolerance), and the windows opened enough to allow a fair amount of air circulation.

The next day was filled with more ever-exciting workshops and discussions. Really! There was a very exciting discussion that morning that was called, "Growing a School." It featured two great veteran alternative educators, Jerry Mintz and Chris Mercogliano, as well as an up and coming star Alan Burger – founder and director of the Brooklyn Free School that's opening up this fall. These three men, talking to a rather large and

Thomas Sherer behind speaker Silas Hundt



enthusiastic crowd, basically demystified the school starting process, and showed that anyone with a strong will and some time on their hands can do it. Around noon, the workshop reluctantly had to end because Pat Ferranga was about to speak, but it was agreed that a follow up session would be held later on in the afternoon.

Pat came out swinging. To the dismay of the audio technician and the videographers, but to a roaring applause of the crowd, he ditched his microphone, rolled up his sleeves, and gave a very energetic and informative talk about unschooling. Afterwards, I attended a workshop about the French student revolution of 1968, and another on the dress code of a certain democratic school in Seattle. However, after a few hours, I felt pretty tired of sitting on a floor and picking my brain; I need to work, to get out and do something physical. Thus I walked...no, *ran* to the multipurpose room to see if I could work off those morning sausages. The MPR is a largish gymnasium that housed the child-care center, ping pong tables, and our morning meetings. I ran around,

playing, “Keep the large green bouncy ball away from Jake.” Then I felt bad and tried to make up for it by playing ping-pong with some of the kids and trying to teach some decent strokes in the process.

Right after lunch, I saw a large man by the name of Tom with a bright red shirt come up to the center of the cafeteria to make an announcement that I now remembered was also made during the morning meeting: he was going to drive to one of the local waterfalls in the Albany area and he had room for four in his car. He was leaving immediately. I knew right away that I wanted to go, but as I was running out, Jerry yelled something to me about helping him set up for the next event! I made believe I didn’t hear him, I was in another world of cold green mountain water, culminating at its final destination point, as far as I was concerned, creating a beautiful white mist.

I caught up to Tom, along with three other kids that would be coming with us. Walking to the car, and later descending and swimming in the waterfalls, I couldn’t help but notice that

Tom had a good sense of balance of watching out for the kids and letting them explore the environment around them. I would later learn that he had actually been a teacher at the Albany Free School in the late eighties. We talked about how conferences should not be comprised of a bunch of rather boring seminars and speeches. That was all nice and dandy for a few hours, but we both came to the conclusion that it should not comprise the entire conference. Field trips like this one should be plentiful, along with a good helping of interactive workshops, which might not even be

called a “workshop,” but rather a game or adventure. I made a mental note to myself to go through the rest of the conference, observing to see whether this would be true. As it turned out, it really was!

Saturday night was designated as the AERO night: Jerry’s keynote, the auction, talent show, and AERO party were to be held on that night. I believe that the presentation that Jerry made - both its positive and negative aspects - really embodied what AERO is and what it does. It started out with a video that Jerry had edited the night before, which showed just a few of the things that AERO was involved with such as the various IDECs, the Home Education Sea Side Festival in the UK, and one of the earliest trips that Jerry took as part of AERO to help an American Indian group set up a school in northern Canada. The concluding section featured Jerry having a debate (and winning!) with Hannity and Colmes of the Fox News Channel. All the while, he was standing there at the front, filling the crowd in on some background information about the various things being shown, and how he thought he could totally cream Sean Hannity in Ping Pong. The film was quite humorous in an amateurish cut and paste sort of way, and the crowd received it very well.

Jerry then said something that I thought was very important, which was, “This conference *is* my speech.” I don’t know how many people really registered what this meant, but I read deeper into the message. Knowing a little background about AERO and taking it in historic context, I knew exactly what he was talking about. The IDEC conference last year was a joint venture between AERO and the Albany Free School, although mostly the later was featured and AERO was much downplayed. Many people who attended last year’s IDEC did not even know that AERO had an instrumental role in organizing the conference and arranging that people from 25 different countries were in attendance. Now this was *our* conference, in its own way it was as great as the IDEC was last year. One of the first things that Jerry did was he polled the audience and asked how many people attended the workshops, how many were happy, and how people generally felt. Throughout the room,

Essay winner Miriam Leah Sherwood



hands were going up and it was clear that a lot of people were very satisfied with what was going on. The fact that everything was falling in place, that (almost) everybody's needs were met, that *all* the workshops had good attendance, and that people were leaving inspired was not accidental. It was a finely registered event and the conductor was giving himself a pat on the back that he rightfully deserved.

Jerry continued to put AERO on the forefront when he threw out a rather shameless request for help from the audience. When someone in the audience spoke out and asked exactly what kind of help was being asked for, Jerry was not afraid to stand up and say right of the bat: "Money and connections to the media." At this point, the whole audience turned into a kind of large brainstorming pot, throwing out various ideas.

While some people may have left thinking that they had been tricked into a pass the hat session, they also left with a true sense of AERO. They now knew that the heart of AERO was inspired by one person, they knew that this person worked virtually around the clock, so much so that he did not even have time or energy to sit down and write a formal speech, and they knew that AERO needed both material and emotional support.

The auction that followed Jerry's presentation – also carried out by Jerry – was very well done, although its primary purpose was to raise money. Someone donated a bag of cheap belts, someone a dish set, prints of artwork by someone attending the conference, coffee from Brazil, and of course the usual books and research materials. In a way, the auction turned into a type of networking activity, with people sharing the stories of their donated auction items, carrying out non-competitive bidding on a very fun and sociable level, and helping out AERO at the same time.



Talent Show Party Time at the AERO Conference

The talent show that followed started out with Isaac trying to convince someone, *anyone*, to come up at the beginning, and do *something*. It ended up with a surprising number of people – including kids – coming up to stage and doing something nifty and original that made them special and gave them a sense of individuality. Ouida Mintz at eighty-six years old gave her best shot at playing a couple of piano sonatas, which turned out quite well considering lack of practice. Next, a dude who I think was a staff member at the Free School gave a very good shot at playing the saw (yes, a real full sized one), which he meticulously removed from a special musical saw case. A turning point in the talent show came when a little girl came up and played a very simply piano piece with one finger. Although it was the simplest of melodies, and she played it slowly and deliberately, she was so confident (not to mention cute) in doing so that she really gave off a sense of pride and self worth. Needless to say the crowd was very supportive. After the gateway was opened, another kid had a really wacky skateboard that twisted and turned and he felt proud that he had such good skills in riding it, and thought it would be nice to display this skill to others. People sang, played various musical instruments, performed fantastic feats

of martial arts, and in the end, a large group of students congregated on stage and just started dancing to the music that was blasting from a boombox with accompaniment of nearby drummers.

The AERO Conference talent show ended up being more than just any old talent show. It really connected to the whole theme of the conference by treating and empowering everyone – young people, old people, groups, and individuals. Especially those students that attended alternative schools (and even some that didn't and were just influenced by the ideas of the conference and what they say others around them doing) demonstrated that even little kids are naturally capable of communicating, socializing, and presenting. Being shy and reclusive are features actually caused by the system, not the kids themselves. The audience – comprised of both kids and adults – always clapped and otherwise supported the performer, whoever they happened to be and whatever they happened to be doing. I've only visited the Albany Free school a few times, but this talent show and the dynamic, positive reinforcing attitude between the performers and audience really reminded me of the free school model and the way that everyone is respected and encouraged to be an individual, and dare I say it, loved.

The good vibes and energy from the talent show spilled over to the AERO 15th anniversary celebration that followed. I don't know if this was spontaneous or planned out beforehand, but some people with various musical tendencies got together and organized a smooth jazz band right there in the middle of the gym. Some people played ping-pong or with the big bouncy balls I mentioned earlier. Others just talked and connected over blue plastic cups of sparkling apple cider and nacho chips. I personally wanted to move around a bit, so I organized a dodgeball game at the far end of the gym. Overall, Saturday night was marvelous and Isaac and company's (following) late night/early morning drumming near the sleeping quarters was not enough to ruin it (although it came pretty close).

The next day, Sunday, was the last day of the conference, but in a way it was also the most important and anticipated. Probably the most well known speaker that we were to have at this conference, John Gatto was to fly in and give his talk titled, "Weapons of Mass Instruction." Just like breakfast, the morning meeting, and a couple of workshops, Gatto's designated speaking time had come and gone. People were shuffling around the entrance to the auditorium, huddling together in small groups, whispering and smoking their cigarettes to the filter. Tension was in the air. Jerry made himself available at the conference bookstore, just to reassure people and give them a shoulder to cry on. Isaac was nearby, grasping his cell phone for dear life, the sweat from his hands and forehead dripping profusely onto the floor. It rang. The air around us seemed to freeze as Isaac's trembling hand brought the phone up to his ear. Within a couple of seconds his face was alit and he started frantically out the door, his hands serving the function of a belt for his baggy pants.

He yelled something that I could not quite make out to Jerry, and the both raced outside of the bookstore. Jerry hurried to the nearly nerve wracked educators (and they were all scrawny chain-smoking educational theorists) who were standing by the entrance of the theatre and assured them that communication with Gatto had indeed been established. Isaac ran for the exit of campus as if a starving pack of wolves was after him. Jerry's initial communication to this

hardcore group of educators set off a chain reaction; the group split up radially and everyone ran, not walked, in all of the different directions to inform the more apathetic folk (humph!) that the Great Gatto had just flown into the airport and was being van-lifted directly to our conference site.

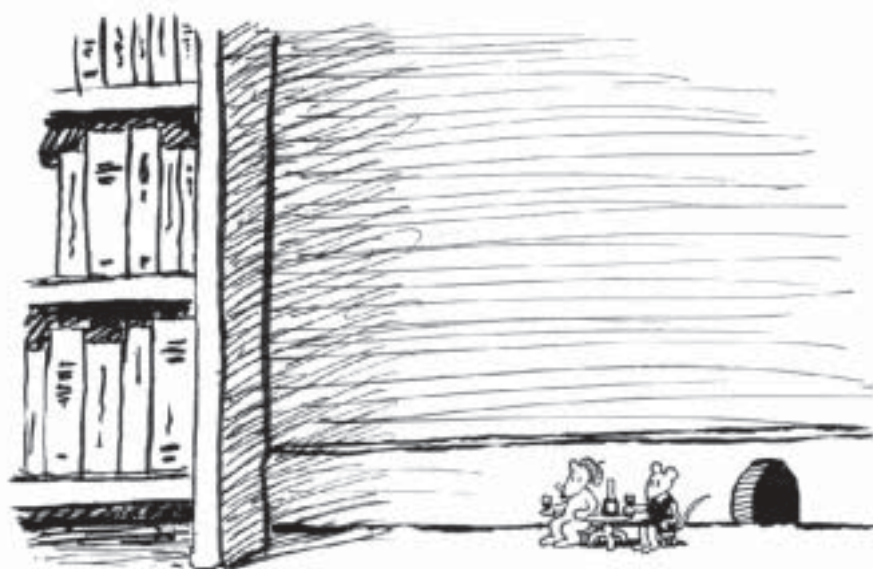
He arrived shortly thereafter to a roaring ovation. Despite the fact that Gatto said that he had not slept for forty eight hours, he delivered a spectacular speech, about why and how the public school is failing our kids. I would unrealistically be overextending myself if I tried to give you any more information about the speech itself; if you want to hear, you're just going to have to buy the DVD.

At one point, Isaac interrupted one of Gatto's numerous tangents to tell him that he had fifteen minutes to finish up. The audience gave him the devil eyes. A half hour later, he had not yet gotten to the Q&A. Isaac interjected again. At the point, the audience looked at Isaac as if they were a bunch of colonial villagers with pitchforks at the stake, ready to do some good ol' fashioned witch-burnin'! He pressed on, saying that due to the interest of lunch (which had actually already been pushed back one hour due to Gatto's untimely arrival), he had to stop now and everyone who wanted to mingle with him would have to proceed to the multipurpose room. Gatto said, "I'm done." What he really meant was, "Get me out of here!"

If Gatto rolled in to a red carpet-walk, he absconded in a shroud of mystery.

While Isaac was trying to save his neck and explain to the crowd turned mob why John Gatto was not their personal counselor, to be interrogated and squeezed like a sponge until he passed out, somehow he had slipped away under a shadow. When everybody came to and realized that Isaac was not one to stay in their way of the great educational patriarch, only the smoke could be seen from Gatto's fleeing chariot. Needless to say, many people were pissed. How a riot did not ensue says much about Isaac's and Jerry's leadership qualities. People did voice their dissatisfaction at the conference evaluation meeting the following afternoon but generally, this criticism was limited and well intended.

Overall, I would say that the most frequently heard comment that people had was that the conference was too short! (Actually, our conference was *longer* than most conferences that start on Friday night and end by Sunday noon. Pat Feranga's workshop only trailed off at about 6 PM). This first, hopefully to be annual, AERO conference came at a time of great momentum in alternative education, and hopefully this will be one of the things to fuel the fire and keep the revolution alive. Since the conference ended two separate grassroots groups have formed in New York City alone. One is starting the Manhattan Free School, the other is starting the School For Democracy (public democratic school) in the Bronx!





AERO Conference

Three Winning Essays

Here are three of the winning essays from last summer's conference, delivered as speeches by Silas Hundt, Thomas Sherer and Chloe Deaken.

Good Evening Silas Hundt

My name is Silas Hundt, and I live in Coon Valley, Wisconsin. The essay that landed me here this evening was about Horace Mann, but what I really want to speak to you about tonight is democracy in education. I have found that the most useful skills I have learned come from my time participating in the government of my school.

Horace Mann was born in 1796 and became a lifelong citizen of Massachusetts. After an arduous self-education (*pause...*) as a child, Mr. Mann entered the government after an easy election to the state assembly at age 37. Maybe it was his own struggle for an education, maybe it was his own thirst for control, but Mr. Mann carried a

passion for creating a public school system. After leaving office, Mr. Mann was named the first ever Secretary of Education in Massachusetts. In his position, Mr. Mann shaped the first government school system in the country, and he is still hailed as the father of American education.

Horace Mann loved order. While researching different public school systems around the globe, Mr. Mann admired Germany's the most. He wrote later about his visit a Munich high school that "An indispensable quality of a fair and free education is the insurance that it will always function like clock work." If Mr. Mann were here today I would like to ask him, should the human mind function like clock work? Does creativity run on a schedule? These are questions that Mr. Mann does not approach because his goal in education was far from fostering creativity or stretching the

human mind. Mr. Mann writes in his Tenth Annual Report:

"Behold the wonders of the educated: the massive locomotive taking up its burden, the dashing power-loom doing the work of millions in one week."

For Mr. Mann, industrialism is the pinnacle of the educated. People who have been trained to do one thing all day are the educated, those whose minds work like clock work. Those who produced something were the virtuous. (*Take a deep breath...*)

Horace Mann had a deep mistrust of human nature and in a sinister paradox, infinite trust in institutions to fix them. Again, from his Tenth Annual Report:

"Massachusetts is parental in her government... She seeks not only to mitigate those great physical and mental calamities of which mankind are the sad inheritors, but also to avert those infinitely greater moral calamities which form the disastrous heritage of depraved passions."

I am certainly glad that my parents don't hold the same opinion of heritage.

Is not every institution a sum of its parts? If humankind is terminally wracked with depraved passions, then how can anything we create be good?

I attend The Youth Initiative High School in Viroqua, Wisconsin. It was started in 1996 by a group of 11 high school students who could not stand the schools they attended at the time. They started thinking and talking in the spring, and by September a school opened. A vision statement was drafted with the parents and faculty, and the seed was planted. As with all life cycles, the first few years focused on survival. In the first year the students raised nearly one third of the budget on their own, but not very much traditional schooling took place. The faculty was dedicated, but was stretched thin. During the summer of 1997, after the first school year of YIHS, there were serious questions about whether school would open its doors in the fall.

Now, eight years later, the school has reached a much more stable state. I am fairly confident that school is going to start in the fall, and there will be teachers there the whole week, as will almost all of the 45 students. Students talk about how to raise money for the school in the fall. They discuss what is wrong with the

school with the full intention of changing something. Even during the summer, school is still on our minds. This is an organism that is vital and in the pink of health.

I attribute this success, this relatively short trek to stability, that we have experienced at the Youth Initiative to many factors, but chiefly, to the consciousness the founders. Every fall, before another school year starts, the whole student body studies the vision statement. They do not read it as a static document, that tells us how the school will run, but instead it is read as a set of guidelines that can be changed. This is what was meant from the first day by the name Youth Initiative. If you take responsibility, it is your school. I quote from the vision statement.

“We encourage each person to come forth in a full expression of their authenticity combined with a strong respect for the rights of the whole. Students need to be aware of their responsibility to the school community, as well as their inherent rights within it.”

Every week the student body at the Youth Initiative High School holds a meeting. There are no adults in the room, and usually there is a thick agenda. Issues include fundraising where the usual car smashing party idea must be silenced or disciplinary problems within the student body, mainly concerning smoking pot. Reports are heard from the student representatives active on both the Board of Directors and the Hiring and Evaluation committee, or affectionately known as the Hiring and Firing committee. Sometimes authority rests in the person who can shout the loudest, but that is only on the bad days. Usually, there is a small group responsible for directing the meeting. This group consists of four people. (1) Keeper of the Agenda, who really runs the meetings, (2) Keeper of the Time to move the meeting along, since we only have fifty minutes, (3) Keeper of the book, to take minutes and record decisions, and the really unique position of (4) Keeper of the heart, to ensure the civility of the proceedings.

These institutions are not codified. Every spring, the new students wrestle with their existence. What our government lacks in institutional strength it makes up for in urgency. The school does not function when this

government fails. Where there is responsibility there is creativity, and there cooperation lives.

After our voices are finally hoarse from shouting we all eventually learn practices such as consensus, compromise and listening to one another and discover that they should be the first choice, not that last resort.

Let me refer back to what Horace Mann valued the most in the educated individual. He writes in the end of his Tenth Annual Report

“But were there any statistics to show the aggregate value of all the thrifty and gainful habits of the people at large, the greater productiveness of the educated than the brutified laborer...could we see a ledger account of the profits which come from forethought, order, and system as they preside over all our farms, in all our workshops, and emphatically in all the labors of our households, – we should then know how rapidly their gathered units swell into millions upon millions.”

Of all the lofty ideals that are expressed in the vision statement at the Youth Initiative the attitude that pervades the Youth Initiative High school can be summed up in the last period of the day—cleaning. No janitor is in the budget at our school, so instead, every afternoon, the entire school is swept, all the dishes are cleaned, and every Friday the floors are mopped. There is always a fraction of soccer players in the hall, those who believe that this is there day to ride the skateboard instead of sweeping. But again, like the student meeting, there is tangible responsibility. Too much skateboarding and the whole school will just fill up with dirty plates. Some days it does, but then the next morning there is a reckoning before class.

The final test for a school is whether or not the students like school. The Youth Initiative must charge tuition, because we receive no public funding, but we firmly maintain that any student who wants to come to the school can. Three students in the past school year paid their own tuition, attending school while working several other jobs.

Horace Mann wished to create the perfect system. Let me return to the analogy of agriculture. The general trend in farming today is toward one genetic strand, one perfect brand of something

that is inherently diverse. Round Up ready seeds are genetically identical, and yet they are supposed to be able to grow on all different kinds dirt; in California, in Wisconsin, in New York. Each year this perfect seed requires more pesticides and more petroleum fertilizers. Whereas the farm that uses no pesticides is inherently small, and requires less every year. The only kind of education that will ever work is that which springs from local dirt and the local streams.

The New American Crisis Thomas G. Sherer

Education for the last 150 years has seen a shift from preparing the youth as independent entrepreneurs to training a workforce of docile assembly line operators, railroad workers, and cotton mill laborers. In the classroom yesterday, your grandparents were being prepared for an industrial revolution. Today the same system is in place, but the situation is drastically different. We no longer live in Rockefeller's or Carnegie's America – and as the unemployment rate rises, the schooling system sincerely needs to adapt. We have no use for an arrangement meant to train tame laborers when we're headed toward an independently based society that we haven't been prepared for.

The inadequacies in our inferior learning methods are painfully clear; the primary goal of schooling in is not to learn, but to be socialized. Bruce Sterling, author of “Tomorrow Now, Envisioning The Next Fifty Years,” points out that students are drilled to sit as quietly as possible, listen for hours, respond well to authority, move with the ringing of bells, fill out forms, and regurgitate what they've been taught when ordered. Children must conform to a dress code and are constantly supervised.

If this procedure were truly in place for children to learn, the smartest kids would get to go home after even an hour. You've heard it said and perhaps said it yourself: school is a preparation for life in the real world, i.e. the real workplace. But this is not a positive relationship when it's the wrong world they're

preparing for. Children punch in, put in their eight hours, and punch out. They realize, just like you do, that there is no reason to finish at three when you know you're stuck until five. Just as we no longer need hordes of field workers, we no longer need armies of paper pushers – the time for breeding the youth into middle management and mass-production was yesteryear. A Computer Age has come upon us, yet the Industrial Age still governs the public method of education.

It cannot be stressed enough; students are going through twelve years of job training for a market that no longer exists! As businesses clean house in favor of automated efficiency, the need for worker-bees and assembly-line operators is nonexistent. Instead, the market requires new employees with new skills, and the obsolete credentials that represent passing through an antiquated high school system may not do the trick of helping you prosper independently. Adequately teaching the students the fundamentals should be the principal concern, along with different abilities for the current trades such as inventing, bartering, negotiating, independent

contracting, and spotting unseen opportunities, among many.

As columnist John E. Shepler notes, "There's a certain wry humor in the current educational battle cry, 'no child left behind.' We've ALL been left behind." And it may seem to be the responsibility of a student to stick with the desperately outmoded institution, but it is your responsibility to see that this institution's old-fashioned follies are corrected... For the individuals in the school system, yes. For all the citizens, taxpayers, out of work engineers, yes. But most importantly, for the advancement and success of American society as a whole – a society whose fate, as you know, rests in the hands of the children.

For the first half of my life, "frustration" will be epitomized by an internal struggle – with education and ambition at the heart. What is lacking when a well-rounded, fairly intelligent young man makes a mediocre student? Are my teachers at fault? My parents? Am I? The truth is that no one has yet done irrevocable wrong. Citizens simply haven't stressed a desire for change, or change hasn't manifested from our

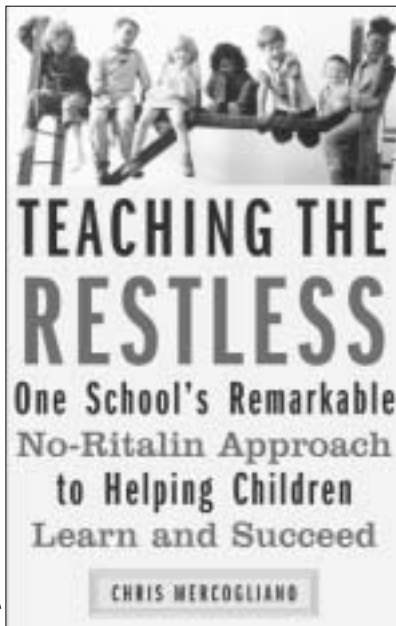
appeals. Educational reform is just another disheartening fish of fact; we quickly see how stubborn the people, how cold the government, how linear and rigid the system of education. It seems a slippery fish indeed. But I look at how schools try to please everyone. Notice that spreading oneself too thin is a mark of the overestimation of achievement, a sign that schools aren't overlooking their holes but rather trying to fill them all with too little putty.

I think we, at least, recognize the inadequacies. It's always just been people, the government; everyone just looking out for their best interest. Some of those people want more than their fair share. I don't want my children growing up too cynical of their government. But if the trends continue on the path that they indicate, our children's criticism is going to be revolutionary.



“A strong case against medicating these children into submission.”

—*Publishers Weekly*



Teaching the Restless is an urgent call for a shift in how our society perceives hyper-active (ADHD) children—away from theories of faulty brain chemistry and toward an understanding of children's lives.

“An encouraging success story that demonstrates an alternative to the ever-growing use of drugs for ever-younger children and calls into question the basis for the diagnostic labeling and use of biopsychiatric pharmaceuticals in the classroom.”

—*Library Journal*

“God bless Chris Mercogliano. He has turned his lifelong commitment to the creation of free learning communities for children and families toward a passionate defense against the oppression of children by psychiatry and the schools. May his longstanding drug-free school zone in Albany extend throughout our country and the world.” —John Breeding, author of *The Wildest Colts Make the Best Horses*

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Windsor House Is A Safe Haven

By Chloe Deaken

Windsor House is a safe haven for anyone who's willing to accept the school's open-mindedness into their life. This means they must be able to grasp the concept of non-coercive education. Non-coercive education is a system where students are given full choice of how to spend their time pursuing what they want. They are given the resources to do so, but are not pressured. I came from a background of "regular" schooling where I was underestimated and told things about myself, which are now clearly untrue. I was told that I had dyslexia. I was also told that I was a slow learner and that I was too sensitive. Now that I am 15, I am not only literate, but also a quick learner. I like the way I

genuinely care for any other human being.

I was an unhappy 11-year-old who had very low self-esteem and courage to stick up for myself. I "was" someone who followed all the rules, which made me basically stuck in a box. I have had to deschool myself and that has taken just about five years. I am now at a point where I can be who and what I want to be and Windsor House has made that possible.

School Council deals with all school business that affects the students. It empowers them by letting them change their school in the way they want. The things that happen at this meeting are the Judicial Committee, Resolutions and School Business.

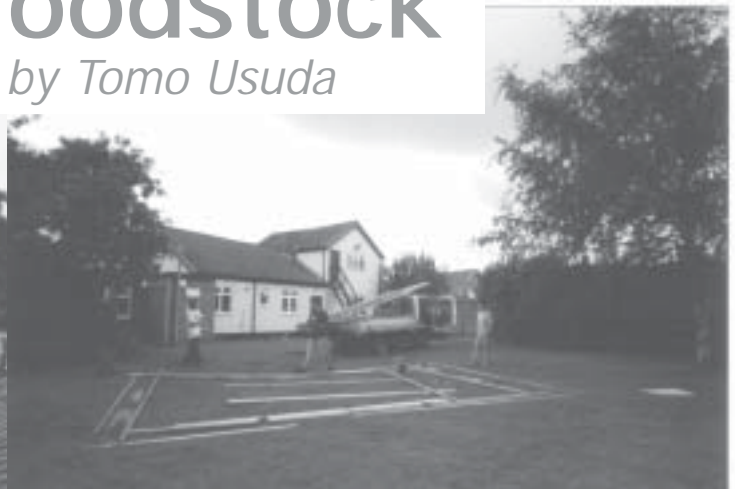
The Judicial Committee is our form of dealing with conflict. To elaborate a bit on that, the J.C. is a group of people (which changes everyday, depending on who shows up) who deals with complaints which have been filed. A complaint is a piece of paper stating a situation of conflict, telling where it happened and suggesting a

consequence. Actually, it can either be a conflict or it can be someone who witnesses another community members actions and becomes uncomfortable and writes a complaint on that basis. A complaint can be filed on anyone (Parent, student, Staff, Visitor) and also by anyone. So the J.C. gets together and decides on consequences for the people who have complaints filed on them. Once a consequence is chosen the complaint is delivered to the person who it was filed on. If the person doesn't agree to the consequence, they are given the opportunity to appeal. If they choose to appeal, they must go to School Council and explain their reasons.

Resolutions are rules or changes to rules that can be either permanent or temporary that are passed by community members at School Council. Resolutions can be silly or serious. Recently there was a resolution which stated that white-out must be called "Multi-Purpose Correction Fluid." This is an example of a silly resolution. This is also a permanent resolution. If this resolution had stated a start and end date, or one specific date,

Summerhill Woodstock

Photos by Tomo Usuda



This last summer, for the first time, a bandstand was set up at Summerhill as part of their End of Term celebration. Then they held a "Summerhill Woodstock" concert

then it would be a temporary resolution. Most resolutions are created with a purpose other than to make people laugh. Some resolutions are for safety, some are to make events happen such as field trips, dances, or pajama days, others are just rules for the school.

Resolutions, no matter what type they are (be they silly or serious, temporary or permanent), are passed using the same process. Someone comes up with an idea for a resolution and they write it down. In order for it to be a resolution, it must be written in the proper format, which dictates you must have B.I.R.T. (which stands for: Be It Resolved That) at the very top of the body of text, and have your name at the bottom as well as anyone else who is passing it with you, if anyone. Then they place it in the resolutions folder in the office. If you write a resolution you, or someone else whose name is on the resolution, must be at the meeting to sponsor it. Resolutions are read at the beginning of the meeting so that all the people present can decide to stay, if they find any of the resolutions to be

interesting or troubling to them, or leave if they don't. Once the chair of the meeting has read all the resolutions aloud they go through the following steps: Are there any questions? Is anyone going to vote against this resolution? and then: All in favour, All against and All abstaining.

A Financial resolution must be voted on at School Council. In order for it to take effect, it must be voted on at both School Council and the evening parent meeting.

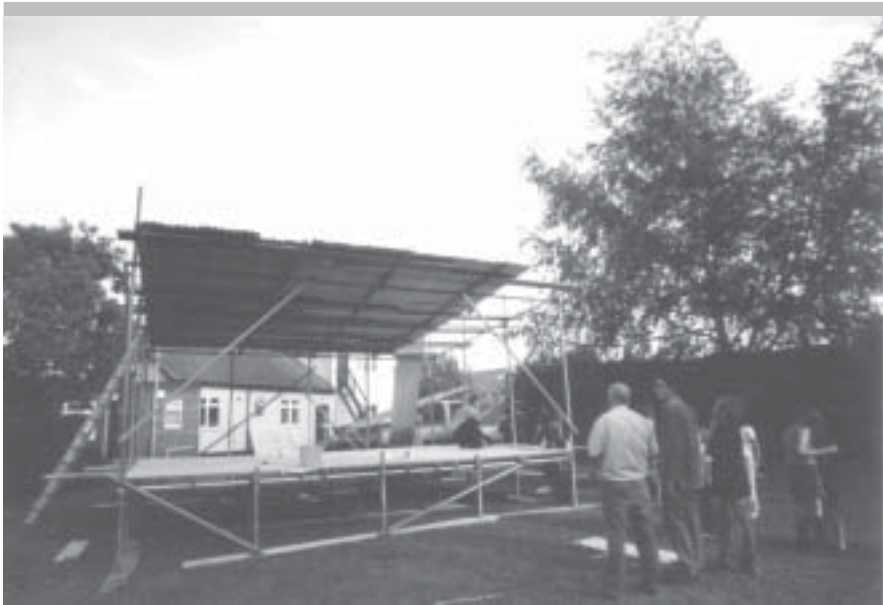
School Business is also dealt with at School Council. If you have any school business you can add it to the agenda which hangs in the office. School Business deals with issues like new students who are still going through our intake process, Staff concerns, and anything else any community members think need to be discussed.

Parent participation is mandatory at Windsor House. Each family has to contribute 2-4 hrs a week duty time, which can be at home or at the school. Work parties are also mandatory, each family must participate in two work parties a year (except single parent

families which must participate in one). I really value having parents involved. It makes the community so much more welcoming and open.

The age span at Windsor House is 5 to 18. It doesn't matter what age your friends are, all that matters is that you have friends. I think Windsor House does an awesome job of modeling a supportive environment among all students. I really like that because it gives me the opportunity to take leadership.

Before I came to Windsor House, I was completely miserable in school and had no real optimism for the future. I didn't think I could ever succeed as I saw other kids around me doing. I always thought that I had some kind of disability. The essence of Windsor House to me is you can be who you are and find who you are both at the same time. It's been my safe haven when all I saw was difficulty and despair. It's always been there whether I'm gone for a day, a week, or a month I can always come back and feel safe, respected and welcome.



Once the bandstand was all ready to go the kids took advantage of it as a backdrop for their annual school photo shoot.





Rudolph Steiner

Home Education Pioneer?

Gareth Lewis

Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian Philosopher who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century is remembered as the founder of the Waldorf school movement, but his ideas may be more applicable to the home than the classroom. This article comes from the August Newsletter of freedom-in-education.co.uk

Rudolf Steiner presents something of an enigma. There are over eight hundred schools around the world that follow a Steiner method of education, which should be enough to make him regarded as the leading educationalist of the twentieth century, but his work is largely unknown outside the confines of the Steiner school movement and has had little impact on mainstream educational provision.

This could be because his humane ideas are at odds with a system that involves taking children away from their homes and keeping them in schools for a large part of every day.

Rudolf Steiner himself seems to have developed his practical understanding of education by working as a private tutor for a boy who had special educational needs. He lived with the family, and dedicated himself full-time

to the task that he had taken on – something that can readily be understood by parents who assume responsibility for their own children's education.

He did not write about the experience, but when he was asked to be the advisor and guiding spirit behind a new school founded by his friend, Emil Molt, for the workers of his cigarette factory in Stuttgart, he had no hesitation in introducing a truly radical educational approach that had very little in common with the schools that were already in existence. Rudolf Steiner was able to justify each of his innovations on sound educational principles and predicted, with almost unflinching accuracy, the dire consequences that would result if conventional schools did not undergo a change of direction.

His first school was staffed by his hand-picked co-workers and could rely on his almost continual presence, but even so, he lamented that it frequently lapsed into the problems that habitually afflict school-based systems of education.

Nearly eighty years after his death and operating in a society in which schools have developed an almost total monopoly over education, it is not surprising that many modern Steiner schools seem, to the pupils who attend them, to differ from other schools more in name, than in practice. This does not negate the validity of their founder's original ideas and their potential usefulness to home-educating families. The following is a personal assessment of some aspects of Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy and how they may apply to parents dealing with modern problems.

Learning to Read

Rudolf Steiner expressed the belief that learning to read before the age of seven or eight can actually be harmful to a person's long-term educational prospects.

This is a slightly disturbing idea for people who learnt to read when they were very young themselves, or who taught their own children to read when they were young, but it is very liberating if you have a child who does not want to read when they are five, six, seven, eight, or nine-years-old (and this is a very common experience in home-educating families). No matter what educational theorists might tell you, the success of Steiner schools over the past three quarters of a century clearly demonstrates that learning to read later rather than sooner, at the very least, does no long-term harm, and may, as Rudolf Steiner asserted, be beneficial.

The only reason for children being taught to read when they are young is that it helps them to get ahead in the school system.

Putting Children First

The apparently serious tone of Steiner's lectures can serve to disguise the human warmth that he brought to his work. It is clear that he was much loved by the children who attended his school, and that they frequently brought their problems directly to him. He always took these problems seriously, raising them at staff meetings, and always placing the blame on the teachers concerned, never on the children. He was deeply shocked when a pupil was expelled from the school during his absence and is on record as saying that when irreconcilable difficulties develop between pupils and a teacher, then the teacher should leave. In a school, this is one of the most challenging aspects of his educational philosophy, but many home-educating parents find themselves naturally gravitating towards a situation in which they place the wishes of their children before everything else. It is reassuring that so eminent an educationalist as Rudolf Steiner should have regarded this as the right approach.

Educational Standards

Rudolf Steiner was the son of a country stationmaster, and although he attended a series of schools and universities, it is clear that he was a self-motivated and largely self-educated student. His intellectual achievements were prodigious; he could speak several

languages, was an accomplished mathematician, and an architect, engineer, designer, writer, lecturer, and scholar of international repute. The pupils in his school were the children of semi-literate factory workers; they had just lived through the horrors of the First World War, and many were under-nourished, and had health problems. It never seems to have occurred to Rudolf Steiner, however, that these children should not be offered the chance to aim for the same educational standards that he had himself achieved, and he dedicated all his efforts to making this possible. Consequently, his school established a reputation not only for being humane, but also for its academic achievements. This can be taken as a source of inspiration to home-educating families who are often told that happiness and educational standards are incompatible.

Homework

Rudolf Steiner never lost sight of the fact that the children in his school had never chosen to go there. He therefore considered it to be an unjustifiable intrusion on their time to set them compulsory homework; if teachers could not do their work in the lesson time allotted to them, that was a shortcoming on their part, and the children should not be made to compensate for it by having to work at home.

He did not disapprove of children doing work at home – his commitment to academic excellence meant quite the reverse – he simply disapproved of their being made to do specific ‘homework’. His idea was that the teacher should be able to inspire the pupils so that they could then go off and study on their own. It would take an extraordinary teacher to make this work in a classroom, but in the home, it can fit into a natural rhythm of working. As a parent, you give what time you can, and if your child is interested in what you have been doing, they follow it up; they explain to you what they have found out, and you pick it up from there the next time you work together.

Main Lesson

When the first Steiner school opened it had a fairly conventional timetable with each class having a series of different lessons per day. It soon became apparent that the children were becoming confused

by studying several subjects at the same time and Rudolf Steiner suggested that the timetable be changed, so that a class spent the first two hours of every day doing a ‘main lesson’. They would study the same subject in this time, each day, for three or four weeks and then move on to the next subject. This has been adopted as the standard timetable in nearly all Steiner schools and it is difficult to understand why it is not used in other schools. It allows a subject to be studied in much greater depth and gives children a chance to become really involved in the work that they are doing.

It is also ideal for home-educating families. Parents often only have time to sit down with their children for one or two hours per day, and sometimes parents have to take turns being at home with their children. Concentrating on one subject at a time prevents them from becoming overloaded and means that that one subject can be discussed on and off throughout the day. The experience of Steiner schools shows that this is not only more convenient than trying to tackle many subjects at the same time, but also more effective.

Crafts

Rudolf Steiner pointed out to the teachers in his school that a real craftsperson would never work on a craft project for isolated periods of time. As an example he asked them to consider how frustrating it must be for a child to pick up a piece of knitting, to work on it for half an hour, and then just as everything was going well, to have to put it to one side until the following week. Such a system could almost have been designed to put people off practical work of any kind.

This difficulty proved impossible to overcome within the confines of a school timetable, but in the home there is no reason why a child should not work at a craft project continuously until it is completed, with all other work being put to one side.

Qualifications

Rudolf Steiner never disguised the low opinion he held of the of the qualifications awarded by the educational

institutions of his time, but he considered that freedom of choice should be one of the benefits that accrued from a real education. He therefore went to extreme lengths to try to ensure that the children who graduated from his school were as qualified to enter the mainstream education system, as they were to follow an alternative course. In order to do this, he added an extra year to his curriculum so that the oldest pupils could work for the state exams with the help of their school teachers and, at the same time, he tried to found his own institution of higher education, which the school graduates could attend if they preferred. Unfortunately, he died before this project could be completed.

This issue may prove to be one that home educators find relatively easy to resolve: hopefully, home-educated children should have little difficulty in passing entrance exams required by universities, but if they prefer to continue studying and working from home, there is nothing to stop them from doing so.

Conclusion

Rudolf Steiner does not appear to have ever tried to establish a particular educational philosophy, he simply sought to discover the methods most appropriate to the children in his care. He would probably be horrified to learn that such phrases as ‘Steiner education’ or ‘Steiner school’ could ever have come into existence.

It is therefore consistent with his work, not to adopt a ‘Steiner’ approach to education, but instead to learn from

Blattitudes



his ideas and to apply them in so far as they are applicable to a particular child in a particular situation. For the modern home educator, one of the greatest sources of comfort that his example provides, is that he flew in the face of all the advice given by the educational establishment, and was still, in the end, proved to be in the right.

Gareth Lewis
*writes about his
personal experience
of Rudolf Steiner's
work:*

I first came across the work of Rudolf Steiner when I was at university, studying plant science. I became interested in organic techniques of agriculture and was intrigued that an Austrian Philosopher, Rudolf Steiner, had pioneered a form of organic agriculture, known as Biodynamic Farming, in the 1920s. I was puzzled that such an influential figure in the organic movement, should receive so little recognition either in academic circles (I had to travel to London to visit a private library in order to pursue my research), or amongst environmental campaigners, and was even more surprised to discover that the same Rudolf Steiner was responsible for the 'Waldorf' or 'Steiner' system of education.

When I had children of my own, they started to attend the local Steiner school, and when the school experienced staff shortages, I worked there as a maths and science teacher for two years. This enabled me to become more familiar with Rudolf Steiner's educational ideas.

Since we started to home educate, we have never tried to follow any particular educational philosophy, but have found many of Rudolf Steiner's ideas helpful and insightful, often providing a solid alternative to conventional techniques when some sort of new approach is needed. Consequently, I have retained a feeling of respect for this remarkable man, and would still like to see his work taken more seriously by the world at large.

How *Small* Is Small?

by Mary Tasker

...who looks after Human Scale Education in the UK...

Writing in Education Week in June 2000 Tom Vander Ark, Executive Director for Education at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, stated that the "great American comprehensive school is obsolete". This is not so. Despite the evidence that big schools do not serve their students well they are still being established across the United States Approximately three-quarters of U.S. high school students attend schools of more than one thousand students and more than half of existing high schools are over 1,500. As the high school age population continues to rise it is estimated that \$84 billion will be spent on school building and it is the hope of many parents, students, educators and administrators that this money will be spent on breaking down the 'mega schools' as well as creating new small schools. There is now a gathering head of steam behind the small schools movement and many large high schools are attempting to restructure into smaller learning communities. The research on which they are basing these efforts is, however, not clear cut largely because of the problem of semantics: what precisely is meant by 'small'?

As research on small schools during the last decade has built up a shift towards 'smaller is better' can be detected. A 1990 study of school size recommended up to 800 students for high schools, a figure which in the United Kingdom would be seen as pertaining to a large school rather than a small school, while in 1996 the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recommended an upper limit of 600 for secondary schools "so that students and teachers can get to know each

other". In 1998 the Chicago Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform set the limits at 350 students for elementary schools and 500 for high schools. In 2001 the Gates Foundation, based in Seattle, gave \$114 million directly to high schools to restructure, defining a small learning community as one of not more than 400 students. But a student body of 400 is seen as still too large by education professionals who have worked in, and conducted surveys of, small schools. Wasley and Lear (2000) argue that the size of a small school should be closer to 200 than to 400 students; once schools get over 400 "they begin to lose their personalisation and focus". With these numbers it is not possible to change the form of schooling, but merely to conduct business as usual. The changes in school organisation, in pedagogy and in ethos that are needed to improve students' academic achievement and personal well being are just not possible to implement. Gregory (2001) agrees with this point. Schools of 400-600 make sense only if the intention is to deliver the textbook dominated transmission of learning model of education that is no longer working in the nation's schools.

In 1964, when Barker and Gump published their seminal studies comparing the achievements and well being of students in small schools of around a hundred students with students in large schools of over 2,000, they found that students in small schools did better on both counts. This provided the springboard for a steadily growing body of research that has accumulated over the past three decades. But despite the evidence that small schools have more positive outcomes than do large

schools, the trend over this period was towards big schools.

This is largely on account of an influential book, 'The American High School Today', written in 1959 by J.B.Conant, then President of Harvard, which concluded that large high schools – from 750 students upwards – offered more comprehensive instructional programmes of greater quality and provided greater student choice at lower costs than smaller schools. It is worth remembering that Conant's study of the American high school came out two years after the successful launching of the Russian Sputnik, an event which raised questions about the American school system's ability to compete with that of the Soviet Union. There may well have been a political agenda behind the dismantling of small schools and the expansion of large schools.

Over the next 40 years big schools of up to 4,000 students were justified on the grounds of their ability to provide maximum student choice together with economies of scale. The 'big is better' principle has led to the development of the comprehensive American high school, characterised by a 'shopping mall' curriculum, streamed classes and, its critics would say, by anonymity, student violence and disaffection. It has also led to the consolidation of school districts and the closure of many small high schools in the name of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

J.B.Conant's case for large schools was based on the concept of 'economies of scale'. The larger the school the more students could be processed through it at lower unit cost. Small schools were to be consolidated into large complexes where savings could be made on staffing, construction and supplies. The flaws in this argument, which has little to do with education, are now bearing fruit as large schools are falling out of favour and their defects in educational terms becoming obvious to all. Unfortunately the 'bigger is better' principle has been incorporated by many states into the regulations, policies and procedures governing school financing. Many state funding formulas explicitly favour large schools (Wasley and Lear 2001). This has led to the underfunding of small schools over the past thirty years.

The shift in attitude that is now taking place could change this situation.

Proper funding of small schools could give them a fighting chance of success. Increasing numbers of state and city education boards are funding downsizing and small school initiatives. They include Rhode Island, California, New York, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, Milwaukee, Philadelphia. The federal government has funded a Smaller Learning Program since 2000 and has increased the grant annually. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has invested more than \$600 million in grants nationwide for the creation of small schools and the restructuring of large high schools on the schools within a school model (Toch 2003). Other charitable foundations – Carnegie, the Annenberg Challenge, the Joyce Foundation inter alia - are also investing large sums into the concept of 'small'.

Research has provided much of the impetus for these initiatives. Unpicking the 'economies of scale' concept as applied to education has preoccupied researchers. In 1992 the Public Education Association turned it upside down by proposing 'penalties of scale' instead. This extensive study argued that the premise that small schools are more expensive has always been false. No research evidence exists to show that the large schools of 1,500 to 4,000 that exist in New York achieve operational cost efficiencies to justify their existence or to offset their educationally damaging inefficiencies. Research studies in fact show penalties of scale in large schools and disproportionate increases in management costs.

The notion of 'penalties of scale' was developed in a research study by the Nebraska Alliance for Rural Education in 1999. Official funding policy in Nebraska rested on the premise that smaller schools were 'inefficient' because they tend to have higher costs per pupil and therefore state taxes should not subsidise these small schools. The research study reframed the debate on costs by looking at student outcomes as a measure of 'efficiency' - in particular, graduation rates and post secondary enrolment rates. On both counts the small schools were superior to the large, 'consolidated' schools. The percentage of students completing high school and enrolling in further education was 25 per cent higher for districts with the smallest schools compared to

districts with the largest schools. The study detailed the negative outcomes likely to be associated with the high school student who failed to graduate or dropped out and failed to enter further education. These outcomes are: low wage earning capacity, unemployment, increased need of public assistance and a greater likelihood of incarceration. In the opinion of the research study these are the hidden costs to society of the large, dysfunctional high school and should be taken into account when considering the slightly higher costs per student in a small school.

The American research shows convincingly that small schools and learning communities achieve results that are superior to those of large schools. In the opinion of Mary Anne Raywid, one of the leading researchers in the field, this superiority has been established "with a clarity and at a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research". The improvement is most marked with black, Hispanic and low-income students. Small schools and small learning communities with a high degree of autonomy seem most likely to succeed. The school(s) within a school model (SWAS) which initially appears to be the most attractive course for small school reformers to follow, seems to be less sustainable than the small learning community with a high level of autonomy or the autonomous stand alone small school. This is especially true if the restructured learning communities fail to make good educational use of small size and merely attempt to perpetuate the practices of a large school with smaller numbers of students.

A fundamental question remains for the American reformers. Can what is a successful but peripheral reform movement ever become mainstream and therefore benefit all children without a massive upheaval of bureaucratic structures? The fear of such an upheaval may be a strong factor inhibiting the development of small schools in the United States. And how many teachers, parents and members of the community appreciate that the drive behind such changes is the intention on the part of the small school reformers to transform the culture of schooling in the US, thereby bringing it into the 21st Century?

Kid's Corner

SOMEONE'S WILL

I'll never forget this trip, because it was the only time in my whole life when I was absolutely, completely happy, that was the trip that changed all my life.

It was the first time when I went abroad on a holiday. The place I was going to visit was called Las Palmas, the administrative center of the Canary Islands. I was twenty-four then, a graduate from Harvard, single and rather well-off. I liked the place at first sight. It was a real resort, with all facilities, such as five-star hotels with swimming-pools and fitness centers, various restaurants with various cuisines, beautiful nature, excellent weather and, certainly, the ocean.

Hardly had I arrived in Las Palmas when I understood that I was welcomed there: the taxi driver, the baggage carrier were all very polite, sociable and respectful. I put up at one of the best hotels of the city and after breakfast I went sightseeing. Frankly, I was not so interested in the history, as in different monuments, mansions, cathedrals and castles which are many in the city. The parks of Las Palmas are real masterpieces, they are unique creations! So well organized, cozy and very, very beautiful. And the palms are national symbols here,

probably, because the name of the city is translated as "the city of palms". Surely, this place can't be famous for the people born there but it is certainly true that almost all famous people had a vacation here, at least once. I was greatly impressed with what I had seen and decided to keep up the tradition of going sightseeing wherever I would be. I was proud of myself for having chosen that very city for my first private vacation.

So, overwhelmed with such high-flown feelings and emotions I



decided to have a dinner in the best restaurant of the city, to make the happiness complete. When I now think why I decided to go to that very restaurant, I come to the conclusion that it was fate that made me choose it, that made me sit exactly in front of *her*. She was Venus-like, she was... she was the only one I was looking at, she was the only one I was thinking about ever since I met her in that restaurant. It was fate that made it happen so that she had put up at the same hotel that I had... We had a good time together, enjoying the place, the food, the sea and

the nights. She was an ideal I had been looking for all my life, she was not only clever, kind and attractive, she was perfect. I understood I had fallen in love. She said that she had also. But her husband, but her child... She said she could not be with me. In a week I left.

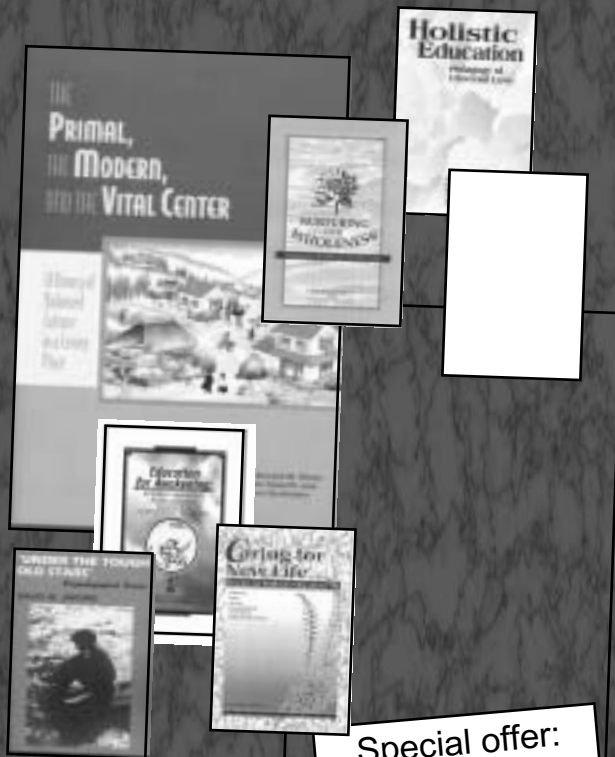
Fifty years passed since that day and since that trip abroad. I've never traveled anywhere else ever since, I've never loved anybody else, I've never kissed anyone ever since. I did not give birth to a single child, I did not make anything to make my name glorious. But can I say I'm miserable? Can I say I'm unhappy? Can I say I don't know what life is? NO. I do think I am happy, I do think I've lived a happy life. Thanks to that one short trip to Las Palmas I filled my life with sense, with love. And I've remembered the city as strongly as I've remembered *her*, I've loved it as strongly as I've loved *her*.

I've been working hard these fifty years, I've never bought anything expensive because I've been saving money for Las Palmas. I want these twenty million dollars to be used to make the city even more green, clean and romantic. Then I'll be even more happy than now, when I'm dying, hoping to see *her* again... there.

Vadim Potomakhin, from Kursk, in Russia, wrote this story when he was 14-years old. Taboon is his nickname. You can reach him at his e-mail address: taboon50@hotmail.com.

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Books etc.

By Aleksandra Majstorac Kobiljski

Inside Job: A Life of Teaching By Robert Boone Yet another life of teaching? Although the book is entitled just like another teacher's journey book, it proves to be more than that. It is a *funny* and entertaining teacher's journey book. Teachers' life accounts cannot be anything else but travelogs, since education and teaching are a journey in itself. In the introduction Jay Amber said that in a way it is all about giving teachers and educators an opportunity to think, re-think and learn from the experience of others, although you really only learn how to teach from your own teaching and classroom time. To the extent that it is humanly possible, this book will give you an opportunity to do that – learn from another person's experience and look at how a top-ten graduate ended up as an educational dissident. But much more than that, it will give you a sense of the dilemmas and details that will help you find your own voice within your own dilemmas as a teacher. It will give you a sense of not being alone or turning your back on teaching in preschools and becoming "freelance teacher". But that is not all there is too this book.

If you are a teacher, "civilian," or a kid, this book has a great potential to make you laugh! Oh, yes... you will laugh about bourbon-smelling Principal Henry and other teachers at Staten Island Academy, characters involved with Young Chicago Authors organization and all other interesting personalities that show up in between. If you are after comical characters or you are looking for a book to put on stage this book will give you just that. You can make a tremendously funny and engaging comedy out of it. It has it all - humor, drama and a promise of a happy end.

What the Rest of Us Can Learn from Homeschooling: How A+ Parents Can Give Their Traditionally Schooled Kids the Academic Edge By Linda Dobson Despite the title that actually accommodates the words "traditional" and "schooled" in its subtitle, it has rather little to do with getting anybody traditionally educated at home. It is more about how to come to terms and live in peace with homeschooling for aspiring parents who are worried about their children's education. It is a well written account of mental, special and conceptual accommodations these parents need to make in order to make their children learn differently and learn more. In short, it helps you create an exciting learning environment for yourself and your child by finding out more about your child's learning style. It offers valuable bits and pieces on the principles of effective/successful learning and strategies to get over hurdles on the way to happy homeschooling. Linda Dobson is a known in the homeschooling community and is the author of *The Homeschooling Book of Answers* and is a source of inspiration for many parents and homeschoolers alike.

One-to One: A practical Guide to Learn at Home Age 0-11 By Gareth Lewis Although this book has been around for some time, the second revised edition is a good choice for parents who are certain they want to start home-schooling right away. Unlike most of what is out on the market, this volume is written by a homeschooler but based on experiences of a family which homeschooled their children. As such, it is full of practical ideas for activities and great tips on healthy consumer habits when it comes to the way you think about toys, gardening, mathematics, crafts, art and reading. It is a practical

guide for parents who have no doubt in their mind they need help in going about their child's education as early as toddler time. However, caution is in place for single parents because much of the book assumes a perfectly functioning and harmonious family with two parents, one at each side. Yet still, single or not, you can benefit from some wonderful tutorials in early homeschooling strategies.

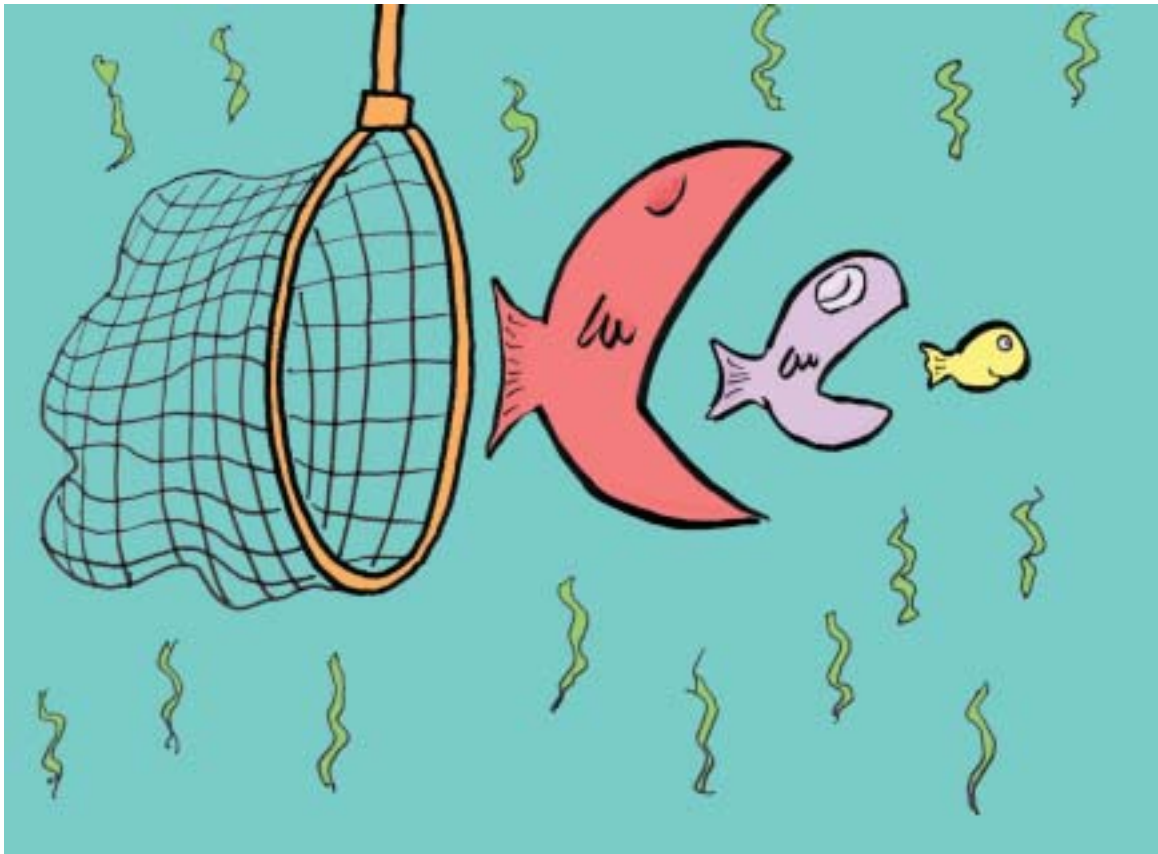
The Home School Source Book By Jean and Donn Reed This third edition of source book comes with a catalog and directory of creative learning materials, notes and creative solutions for homeschooling families. Wide in the scope of options and materials offered it becomes a time-saver for homeschoolers as well as supplementing public education at home. It is a diverse catalogue of materials you can use to homeschool with a directory of homeschooling and it is sprinkled with essays, comments and notes about homeschooling issues such as computers, adolescent problems and transitions, testing, discipline etc. It could probably save a lot of time when searching for materials for homeschooling materials.

Fundamentals of Home-Schooling: Notes on Successful Family Living By Ann Lahrson-Fisher Fundamentals are what we all need, but this book offers much more than that. It devotes attention to the basics of homeschooling such as play and games but it also gives you some really valuable practical advice on how to handle criticism of your decision to homeschool, the disruptions of misbehavior and how to handle the homeschooling of teens. It not only gives you the fundamentals about how to deal with math, science, and avoiding standardized test traps but it also gives an overview of legal compliances, funding support, curriculum as well as a parents' bookshelf. In short, this is a book of not only fundamentals but practicalities essential for a family that is starting homeschooling. It is a valuable source for both parents of young children as well as parents of teens who are about to embark on "the walk on the wild side".

The Challenge of Authentic Education: Joyful Learning in a School Community By Jay and Toni Garland This book offers a glimpse of the educational philosophy developed by the authors over the course of their 34 years directing the Well School in rural New Hampshire. The school was founded as a community that cherishes inclusion and it was positioned in a very important place in the community. Tony and Jay understood early on that their were pioneers of a kind and that meant the raising of consciousness levels, their own, as well as the community's. Focusing on the heart of the community, Joy and Toni look back on their experience and project toward a future transformation of the concept of teaching and a new way of perceiving children and their potential and glory.

Creating a Life Together - Ecovillages and International Communities: Practical Tools to Grow By Diana Leaf Christian This offers a wonderful spectrum of ideas and answers about ecovillages and international communities. Considering the fact that 90% of communities and ecovillages never get off the ground this book is a valuable asset for those who are about to or think about starting an ecovillage or joining one. This book seeks to answer what made the 10% survive and continue. It takes you step by step through the process: from foundation, creating a community vision document, power, policies and decision making, to buying land and financing property. In that regard it is more than just another book on the essence and vision of a community life. It tells you exactly how to get it off the ground so you can live the vision. It is an interesting and user-friendly community-starter book that will increase your chances to avoid many of the mistakes that drive communities into the ground.

Learning Together; Children and Adults in a School Community Edited by: Barbara Rogoff, Carolyn Goodman Turkanis & Leslie Bartlett. The book is based on the experience of the OC School in Salt



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