

HOME EDUCATION NEWS

A new information resource about homeschooling has just been published, called *The Homeschooling Book of Answers* by Linda Dobson. The answers to 88 questions concerning education at home are answered by well-respected leaders in alternative education and by homeschoolers themselves. Among the contributors are Cafi Cohen, the Colfaxes, John Taylor Gatto, the Hegeners, Dr. Raymond Moore, and many others. Legalities, costs, special considerations, socialization, curriculum development, assessment, and the teen years are all covered in detail. The book also contains a resource list and state requirements and laws. Prima Printing, PO Box 1260BK, Rocklin, CA 95677. Tel: 916-632-4400.

The revised and expanded second edition of *Homeschooling in Oregon* by Ann Lahrson-Fisher is now available. While it covers Oregon's state laws and requirements, the book also addresses dozens of topics of interest to all homeschoolers. It contains lists of resources broken down into subject areas; i.e., reading, computers, math, science, music, art, and so on. It is available from out of the box publishing, PO Box 80214-G, Portland, OR 97280-1214.

Ron Richardson has created a new free publication called *Readers Speak Out!*, which gives teens an opportunity to get published. The format of this newsletter is teens' responses to questions, which cover topics in education, politics, the arts, and more. Request three sample questions from Ron at 4003 50th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98116.

Postcard from John Taylor Gatto: "Malacca, Malaysia. Dear Jerry, What a place to change someone's perspective on the real questions about school or anything else. These are lovely, brave, funny people the government is trying to school apparently so they can be like us. How strange."

MAIL AND COMMUNICATIONS

A recent report has found that charter schools, on the whole, have improved student performance on standardized tests and applied performance measures. The report, *Making a Difference? Charter Schools, Evaluation and Student Performance*, by Stella Cheung, Joe Nathan, and Mary Ellen Murphy looked at 31 charter schools in 8 states. More information about this study is available from Center for School Change, 301 19th Ave South, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Efforts are underway to establish the "first ever self-education foundation" by William Upski Wimsatt. The premise of this foundation is

two-fold: that people don't necessarily need school to learn what they need to know in life, and that more people should be allowed opportunities to educate themselves. There are many areas of development of this endeavor for which Bill requests suggestions, assistance, and proposals. Please contact him at 5484 S. Everett Ave., Chicago, IL 60615.

This year Geocommons International Communities Semester will travel to India, France, and Israel to work with community members in schools, farms, kitchens, and alternative technology projects. Participants will gain skills and inspiration for developing sustainable career directions, practice sustainable, mindful living, and explore sense of place, cross-cultural & world development issues, ecological literacy, community dynamics. For more information of these programs, contact Gaia Education Outreach Institute, Derbyshire Farm, Temple, NH 03084. Tel: 603-654-6705. E-mail: geo @ ic.org.

According to an article in Rethinking Schools, filtering programs that block Internet sites from children block access to thousands of websites do so using the most cursory of checks, often based on a simple key word. This often results in blocking legitimate educational material, such as sites about HIV, NOW, the Holocaust, Islam, and gay rights, while allowing possibly objectionable material. Rethinking Schools editor Barbara Miner recommends educating schools and libraries to teach children to use the Internet safely and responsibly. 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212.

I*EARN (International Education and Resource Network) is extending telecommunications and use of the Internet to youth who may not be enrolled in schools and for whom accessing the Internet may depend on non-profit organizations serving their interests. It offers forums for interaction and sharing to integrate homeless, runaway, orphaned, immigrant, disabled, and adjudicated youth into global on-line project work. I*EARN is working with Covenant House, the Fourth World Movement, and church groups on this initiative. There will be special workshops for educators, staff members and young people and on-line help in making connections and doing collaborative project work. For more information on this program, contact them at 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 540, New York, NY 10115. Tel: 212-870-2693. E-mail: www. iearn.org.

State takeovers of schools have historically been done for reasons concerning fiscal crises and involved a straightforward process of removing corrupt officials. Now, takeovers are occurring because poor performing schools are "dramatically, persistently" failing their students, according to WestEd, which published a paper entitled Can State Intervention Spur Academic Turnaround? The question of why schools fail and who is responsible is very complex, involving "organizational behavior, community dysfunction, human psychology, legal precedents and larger, contextual

problems of race, class and urban neglect." This paper examines these issues and how states are addressing them. WestEd, 730 Harrison St., San Francisco, CA 94107-1242.

In 1996, a publication called The Inkwell was started as a forum for young authors to publish their short stories, essays, poetry, and art. It is offered as an alternative to currently available teen literary magazines, which tend to be more school-oriented. The magazine is published quarterly and accepts submissions from writers between the ages of 12 and 19. Write to Inkwell, c/o Dori Griffin, 920 Kennington Hills Dr., Hixson, TN 37343.

After having broken ground on April 25, Fairhaven School is hoping that their school building will be ready to open this fall. It will be a Sudbury-type school with 30 students between the ages of 4' to 17. Thirteen of those students are from the school's part-time co-op. Money and building materials have been donated and a variety of fundraisers were held over the last few years in order to raise the needed funds. Box 184, Davidsonville, MD 21035.

The National Education Service publishes a journal called Reaching Today's Youth, which is research-based, provides practical applications of positive approaches for reaching children and youth, and provides "strategies that recognize the inherent worth of all young people. It is published quarterly and welcomes original contributions that focus on these themes. Volume 2 Issue 3 focused on "Kids of Survival: Real-Life Lessons in Resilience" and featured stories of survival and lessons learned, fostering environments of resilience, and teaching what matters. For more information, contact RTY at 1252 Loesch Rd., Bloomington, IN 47404.

Gordon F. Vars, editor of The Core Teacher commented on the book Curriculum Design 1928-1998: After Fifty Years We Still Don't Have it Right by Ellis & Stuen in the Summer 1998 issue. Vars notes that, overall, the book is "out of touch with current theory, research, and practice of curriculum integration." The authors take the position that themes should be "selected by teachers and not by students," justifying this position on the basis of teacher interest in the topic and the teacher's responsibility to select "what knowledge is of most worth for the young." "Student choice is limited to 'finding themselves' in whatever content the teacher(s) have chosen. Most amazingly, they assert' this is the strategic balance between anarchy and authoritarianism in a course of study. It is called democracy." The Core Teacher, NACC, 1640 Franklin Ave., Suite #104, Kent, OH 44240-4324.

PUBLIC ALTERNATIVES

The Massachusetts charter school movement was given \$500,000 via anonymous donors. The grant will give certain charters the opportunity to receive a \$50,000 matching grant. The schools, including Commonwealth and Horace Mann charter schools, have until December 1 to raise the matching funds. This story was published in the Charter School Newsletter, Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, 85 Devonshire St., 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109.

Richard Milburn Academy, a "second chance" school for students who have been unsuccessful in traditional classroom settings has been approved to establish four charter schools in Texas. The Academy will recruit students who have dropped out or are at-risk of dropping out of high school. The school, established by Richard Milburn High School, will open this fall with 100 students at each location. Richard Milburn currently works with 43 public school districts in Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The school offers smaller classrooms, lower pupil-to-teacher ratios, qualified faculty and consistent counseling and tutorial sessions. For more information, contact Rosica Mulhern & Associates, Inc., 615 Franklin Tpk., Ste. 1, Ridgewood, NJ 07450-1929. Tel: 201-445-7606. Fax: 201-444-2048.

The Center of Education Policy states in Public Schools and Citizenship that schools have traditionally prepared students to be good citizens in four ways: teaching the role of the US government; upholding civic values; teaching civic skills for effective participation in a representative democracy; promoting tolerance and respect for diversity and different points of view. Regarding teaching skills for democracy, the article says, "Educated citizens have many important responsibilities in a representative democracy. They select able leaders, understand the issues upon which they will vote, act as a check on the potential excesses of the government, recognize corruption in leaders and take appropriate action, and are not swayed by those who would undermine our democracy." The article goes on to say that teachers can demonstrate participatory democracy by having students vote on classroom issues, lead discussions, and work in teams. CEP, 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 619, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-822-8065. Fax: 202-822-6008. E-mail: ctredpol @ ctredpol.org.

A study conducted by Pioneer Institute's Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center reports that teachers find it easier to participate in decision-making at charter schools than at other schools. Further, the study reveals, that teachers cite as the most common reason for seeking a job in a charter school is the school's mission and educational philosophy. "Overall, the study paints a picture of charter school teachers who are active stakeholders in their schools." For a copy of the complete report,

contact the Center at 85 Devonshire St., Boston, MA 02109. Tel: 617-723-2277. Fax: 617-723-1880. E-mail: pioneer @ pioneerinstitute.org.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS

An article in an English newspaper by Phil Davison told the story of Felicity Simpson who in 1980 at the age of 16 left home and joined a circus in France. She has performed around the world since then but "can now be found, with some difficulty, in the lawless, drug and violence-infested shanty slums of Cali [Columbia], teaching glue-sniffing street children how to juggle, play the concertina, ride a one-wheeled cycle or walk a tightrope." She and her partner run what is probably the world's only professional circus school for homeless kids in slums that "the police and the army do not dare to enter." What a great story, Emiko, thank you for sending it to us!

CHANGING SCHOOLS

Ways of Learning

Roland Meighan argues that bullying may be a symptom of a coercive and institutionalized schooling system.

WHERE THE BULLYING STARTS

The trouble with most discussions about bullying is that they are concerned with the immediate "first aid" problem of how to deal with the latest outbreak of persecution. There are now plenty of books, booklets and articles that try to deal with this (see below).

What about looking beyond the symptoms? The root causes of bullying are usually overlooked, or passed off as some weakness of character. Alice Miller, in books like *For Your Own Good*, however, proposes that people learn the bullying mentality.

She concludes from her research that "every persecutor was once a victim". She shows how every member of the Third Reich had the same kind of upbringing and education, based on unrelieved domination. She calls this "the poisonous pedagogy".

But I want to come closer to home than Hitler's regime. School in the UK, based on the current model of the compulsory day-confinement center, is itself a bully institution.

In a democracy, people are not supposed to be detained against their will unless they have committed an offence. So what offence have children committed to justify detention? It would appear that their "offence" is to be young.

Having confined children by compulsion, apart from those who opt for home-based education, schools employ a bully curriculum a compulsory National Curriculum, or some other imposed program.

We could employ a democratic curriculum if we wanted to. The catalog curriculum, which offers a more-or-less unlimited range of learning possibilities and is learner-driven, is just such an approach.

Just how ingrained is the idea of adults imposing their ideas of "proper" learning is indicated when a school does it differently. Sudbury Valley High School in the USA has no timetable and no lessons until the learners request them, or set about organizing them. It operates a learner-driver curriculum.

The bully curriculum is enforced by the increasingly favored bully pedagogy of teacher-dominated formal teaching.

Alice Miller's view that this is a "poisonous pedagogy" is supported by others. Rosalind Miles entitled her book *The Children We Deserve*. Paul Goodman chose the title *Compulsory Mis-education*, and Chris Shute used the idea of *Compulsory Schooling Disease*.

In another book, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, John Taylor Gatto says: "I began to realize that the bells and the confinement, the crazy sequences, the age segregation, the lack of privacy, the constant surveillance and all the rest of the national curriculum of schooling were designed exactly as if someone had set out to prevent children from learning how to think and act, to coax them into addiction and dependent behavior."

He decided to change his style of teaching, to give children space, time and respect and to see what happened. What happened was that the children learned so much, he was nominated for teacher of the year in New York State several times.

Gatto recognized that what he was really paid to teach was a hidden, unwritten, curriculum. He decided it was made up of seven basic ideas.

The first was confusion. He was required to teach disconnected facts, not meaning, infinite fragmentation, not cohesion, and a toolkit of superficial jargon rather than genuine understanding.

The second basic idea was class position. Children were to be taught to know their place by being forced in to the rigged competition of schooling.

A third lesson was indifference. He was paid to teach children not to care too much about anything.

The fourth lesson was emotional dependency. By marks and grades, ticks and stars, smiles and frowns, he was required to teach children to surrender their will to authority.

The next idea to be passed on was intellectual dependency. Children must learn that good people wait for an expert to tell them what to do and believe.

The sixth idea follows on from this provisional self-esteem. Self-respect is determined by what others say about you in reports and grades. People learn to be told what they are worth, and self-evaluation is ignored.

The final, seventh, lesson is that you cannot hide. You are watched constantly by teachers, parents and other students. Privacy is frowned on.

Responses to his analysis have been predictable, Gatto says. The assertion is that there is "no other way". He comments: "It is the great triumph of compulsory government monopoly mass-schooling that among even the best of my fellow teachers, and among even the best of my students' parents, only a small number can imagine a different way to do things."

School, Gatto concludes, is a 12-year jail sentence, where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned. School "school" very well, but it hardly educates at all.

All this schooling, however, is good preparation for being gullible to the other institutions that control us.

Currently the school system in the UK is reinforced by the bully compulsory assessment system and an aggressive school inspectorate. The unwritten, but powerful, message of this package is that adults get their way by bullying.

There are at least three types of outcome to this model of schooling. The "successful" pupils grow up to be officially sanctioned bullies in dominant authority positions (assertive politicians, doctors, teachers, civil servants, journalists and the like). They start their own career as persecutors.

Next, a majority of the "less successful" learn to accept the mentality of

the bullied the submissive and dependent mind-set. Such people need someone to tell them what to think and do, because they have been prevented from learning how to do "joined-up" thinking.

A third outcome is the production of a group of freelance bullies, who become troublesome and end up in trouble of varying degrees of seriousness.

Until we replace this domination approach with a different model, the root causes of bullying will continue.

As Jerry Mintz reports from the US: "American kids like watching violence on TV and in the movies because violence is being done to them, both at school and at home. It builds up a tremendous amount of anger_

"The problem is not violence on TV. That's a symptom _ the real problem is the violence of anti-life, unaffectionate and punitive homes and disempowering, deadening, compulsory schooling, all presented with an uncomprehending smile."

We can do better than schooling based on domination. I applaud the work of teachers, like John Taylor Gatto and Bernard Trafford (see below), who begin to move away from domination towards participation, power sharing and democratic relationships.

They organize school councils that work. They have parental involvement that is genuine. They devise lessons and classrooms based on cooperative principles. They make it possible for children, in the words of my son, "to find bits of treasure in the wreck."

But knowing that it is a wreck is crucial to positive survival in it. As one young person said to me, after reading a book of educational quotations: "Now I know that there are other people who think school is crackers, I can cope with it."

Parents faced with problems of bullying at school can find help in Preventing Bullying: A Parent's Guide by Kidscape, 152 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9TR.

The Cooperative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough has been running weekend courses for many years on cooperative learning in schools. Telephone Alan Wilkins at 015090857220.

Bernard Trafford's book, Participation, Power Sharing and School Improvement, is available from Educational Heretics Press, 13 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ.

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Mail and Communications
Edited by Carol Morley
Public Alternatives

Home Education News
perspective on the real questions government is trying to
school,

International News and Communications
Teachers, Jobs, and Internships
From the AERO Web Site

Note: AERO now has a new domain, courtesy of the Foundry, which is a non-
profit adjunct to the Speakeasy Cafe in Seattle. It is <http://www.edrev.org>

E-mail addresses are: jmintz@iris.nyit.edu, jmintz@igc.apc.org, and
JerryAERO@AOL.com

AERO now manages the alternative education list-serve. If you would like to
join, send an e-mail message to majordomo@edrev.org. Leave the subject
line blank, and in the body type "subscribe aerolist"
Special Section:

CHANGING SCHOOLS

_____Since 1973: The Journal of Alternative
Education_____

by Roland Meighan

Ten Signs That You Need to Find a Different Kind of Education for Your
Child

by Jerry Mintz

In trying to figure out ways to increase the exposure of AERO, I began
contacting some of the local papers that deal with parents and education.
On Long Island there are two such publications: Long Island Parenting and
Parent Guide. Initially I thought that I could place some information on
AERO in a resource section, but it became apparent that both of these
papers were advertising-based only. One of the editors, being sympathetic
to what AERO was attempting to accomplish and seeing the benefit of
informing parents of their options in their children's' education,
suggested that we write an article, "Ten Signs That Your Child Might Need a

Different Educational Approach,” and I asked Jerry Mintz to write the following article. I thought it might be interesting to encourage everyone reading this to find similar papers in their communities that might reprint this article. This will accomplish two things: It will help AERO get more national recognition and help us to become a clearinghouse for educational alternatives. It will also help increase awareness of your school, and interest in innovative educational approaches. –John Sauer, AERO director of development and communications.

Many parents do not realize that the education world has changed drastically since they were in school. Back in those days, schools were smaller, class sizes were smaller, dropout rates were lower, violence in school was almost unheard of, teachers were not terrified of showing affection to the children, or of teaching and discussing moral values. Even through rose-colored glasses, we know that school back then was no picnic and was far from perfect, but at least the teachers and usually the principal knew every student by name, something which is not necessarily true today. Because our public school system now has deteriorated considerably, many parents, teachers, and individuals have taken it upon themselves to create public and private alternatives to that traditional system which is definitely failing. It is important for parents to know that they have choices, alternatives to the neighborhood school. How do you know that it is time to look for another educational approach for your children? Here are some of the signs:

1. Do your children say they hate school? If so, something is probably wrong with the school because children are natural learners. When they're young you can hardly stop them from learning. If your children say they hate school, listen to them.
2. Do your children find it difficult to look an adult in the eye, or to interact with children younger or older than they are? If so, they may have become “socialized” to that very narrow group which many children ordinarily interact with in most schools, and may be losing the ability to communicate with a broader group of children and adults.
3. Do your children seem fixated on designer labels and trendy clothes for school? This is a symptom of the shallowness of the traditional schools' approach, causing children to rely on external means of comparison and acceptance, rather than deeper values.
4. Do your children come from school tired and cranky? This is a sure sign that their educational experiences are not energizing but are actually debilitating.
5. Do your children come home complaining about conflicts that they've had

in school and unfair situations that they have been exposed to? This is a sign that your school does not have a proper process for conflict resolution and communication.

6. Have your children lost interest in creative expression through art, music, and dance? These things are generally not encouraged in the traditional system today and are not highly valued. They're considered secondary to the "academic" areas. In some cases, courses are not even offered in these areas any more. This tends to extinguish these natural talents and abilities in children.

7. Have your children stopped reading for fun, or reading or writing for pleasure? Are your children doing just the minimum for homework and going off for some escapist activity? This is a sign that these spontaneous activities are not being valued in their school and another sign that people are losing their creativity.

8. Do your children procrastinate until the last minute to do homework? This is a sign that the homework is not very interesting, is not really meeting their needs, and is tending to extinguish their natural curiosity.

9. Do your children come home talking about anything exciting that happened in school that day? If not, maybe nothing exciting is happening for your children in school. Would you want to keep working if your job was like that?

10. Did the school nurse or guidance counselor suggest that your children have some strange, three-lettered disease like ADD, and that they should now be given Ritalin or some other drug? I suggest that it is more probable that the school has the disease, EDD—Educational Deficit Disorder, and it's time to get your children out of that situation!

If your children have exhibited several of these characteristics, it is time for you to start looking for an alternative. In most parts of this country today, there are many options to choose from. For example, 30 states have now enacted legislation which allows groups of parents and teachers to create charter schools, schools that are not stuck with having to fulfill the myriad of state regulations but can create their own individualized approach. Four years ago there were only five of these charter schools in the country. By the end of this year there will be more than 1,000 of them! Also, there are 4,500 magnet schools throughout the country, public schools that specialize in an area of expertise, and draw students from a wider area.

PHOTO

Magnet Schools Conference Sign

PHOTO

Students from East Orange School District at Magnet School Conference at Meadowlands, May 2

In most communities there are many private alternatives quietly offering a different educational approach. For example, there are over 4,500 Montessori schools based on the experiential approach designed by Dr. Maria Montessori, and hundreds of Waldorf schools that put equal emphasis on traditional academic areas and the arts. There are hundreds of independent alternative schools, many emphasizing participant control with parents and students taking responsibility for their own educations.

Many public school systems have a variety of alternative programs within their systems. These are divided into two general approaches: 1. Public Choice; those programs which are open to any student in the community. Sometimes they are called "schools within schools." 2. Public At-Risk; those programs for children who have had a variety of problems coping with school. These programs run the spectrum from helpful to dumping ground. Examine them closely before making a decision to enroll.

Parents of over a million children in this country have checked off "none of the above" and decided to teach their children at home. It is now legal in every state and does not require teacher certification. Homeschooling has taken a variety of approaches. Some try to create "school at home" with a fairly standard curriculum, the main difference being that parents can teach one-on-one with their children. Some families have signed up with a curriculum designed by an umbrella school that helps parents with the curriculum and, in some cases, grades homework, providing a basic curriculum for parents to follow and helping with any report forms that are necessary. A third approach is one which is called "unschooling," where parents base their educational approach on the interests of the child and build on them, rather than using a pre-set curriculum. In some of these cases families design their curriculum "retroactively," keeping records of their activities throughout the year and, at the end of the process, dividing the experiences into the appropriate subject area.

Most states require some form of testing of homeschoolers, and it has been shown that remarkably, as a group, they average in the 85th percentile compared to the 50th percentile of the average public school student. There are now so many homeschoolers around the country that virtually all homeschoolers are part of some kind of homeschool group. Some of these groups have coalesced into homeschool resource centers, and some operate as often as four or five days a week. Generally, colleges have discovered that homeschoolers make such good students that they welcome homeschooling students to apply to their schools.

As more and more parents become aware of and make these choices, we hope

The obstacles to overcome in creating this conference were very significant. Unlike other European countries, everyone had to obtain a visa who came from the west. Some people didn't make it. Although the Democratic School of Hadera brought seven people, their sister school, the Hope Flower School in the West Bank City of Bethlehem, was not allowed to send its two representatives. The Ukraine consulate would not give them a visa. Two people from the Seedling School in Taiwan who wanted to attend were not given visas because Taiwan does not have diplomatic relations with the Ukraine. One Russian boy who has been living in the US for five years was not able to get a travel visa from the Immigration and Naturalization Service until a day after the trip left and was not able to attend.

So the seven of us who arrived in Kiev and took the train to Vinnitsa did not know what to expect from the opening day ceremonies. I looked at the large hall across from our hotel where the opening was going to be and were concerned that we'd be embarrassed by a turnout of 50 or 75 people in the large hall. As the hall filled up on opening day of the conference it was clear that our concerns were ill founded. The hall was filled to overflowing with more than 400 people and perhaps 75 people involved in the opening ceremonies with performances of a variety of folk-dance troupes, classical music and later on, presentations by the schools themselves that included original pieces that were written just for the opening day. In the end there were 9 countries represented with 35 schools. Two significant aspects of opening day were the presence of a number of teachers, principals and superintendents of schools from the area surrounding Vinnitsa who had been invited to the ceremonies. Some schools were so impressed with what they saw that they went back to their communities and gathered up students to come back and participate in the conference.

A Soros Foundation grant of \$18,000 paid all the costs for the hotel for those who came from distant areas and all the food for the participants. It also purchased a copy machine, a modem for a computer and a VCR to be used for the conference and then afterwards for the Stork Family School. At the end of the opening ceremonies, I and Oleg Belin, coordinator of the conference from the Stork School, were interviewed by Ukraine television. After the interview, the woman around whom the Stork School was originally built and who continues to teach at the school (and who never wanted to be an administrator), came over to greet me with tears in her eyes. She said that had it not been for AERO's help and contributions AERO had solicited from the Edwards Foundation, she didn't think that the Stork School would still exist.

One of the student who came with the American group was Dimitri Klyuy. He had been a student at the Stork School in the first grade, when his family emigrated to the United States. He returned as a 13-year old and served as

a very important and symbolic link.

On the second day of the conference, I was asked by the Stork School to demonstrate the democratic process to a group of some students from several countries. Although the teachers, parents and students have a close working relationship at Stork School, they have not operated as a democracy and wanted to understand how it worked. As a result of that workshop, the teachers and students asked me to lead the plenum of the IDEC in a democratic process. This was done for several days until a student took over the leadership of the meeting.

If there was a problem that could be cited with this conference, it would only be that it was so packed with activities, excursions, workshops, exhibits, competitions, crafts, and other events that there was hardly time for sleep. There was almost no free time. I never found the time in any of the days of the conference to even tape notes on the day's activities. For example, one evening a group of people stayed up till 2:00 in the morning, hammering out a proposal supporting democratic education to be presented to the plenum the next day. Every evening there were long, large organizational meetings. There were side trips that went on a tour of the Tchaikovsky home, around Vinnitsa to discuss its history, etc. There was even a table tennis competition which culminated in a final between me and one of the Stork School students. I lost the final game, 25-23 in overtime, the first time I've lost a tournament at an alternative school conference. But I didn't mind too much because, the Stork table tennis program grew directly out of the experience I had with them at the 1991 conference where I first met them in the Crimea. That was the First New School's Festival of the Soviet Union. It was held in the last days of the Soviet Union. Many strong friendships were established at that conference and the Stork School took me in as part of their family when they discovered that my grandmother was born in Kharkov in the Ukraine. From then on they considered me their "New York Ukrainian." It was also at that conference that I discovered the Eureka Free University. They invited me to three of their subsequent teacher training conferences. Those contacts in the Crimea have led to many exchanges. One example is the International Student Alliance Camp in California (see related story).

Participants came to the conference from Israel, England, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, the US, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine. The largest group was 19 students from Key School, "Klutch" in Russian, from Moscow. Alexander Tubelsky, principal of the School of Self-Determination brought 12 students from his school, a public democratic school of 1200 students. Pat Edwards of the Tamariki School in New Zealand, along with one of her co-teachers, came the longest distance. The American group included Jesse Mumm of the Pedro Albizu Campos School in Chicago. He came representing the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools. He arrived late, not having

realized that he needed a visa to come to the Ukraine. He attended the last two days of the conference, making a presentation about his school.

One of the statements which was passed by the IDEC meeting concerned the fact that various Ukrainian governmental bodies actually take an incredible 85% of the school's tuition in taxes! As a result, the following was passed at the official IDEC meeting:

"The school which is hosting this conference is suffering under the burden of heavy taxes which take most of their funds. We deplore this confiscatory taxing of school funds which robs children of educational opportunities by threatening the existence of their schools. We call upon the legislative and other governmental bodies involved to relieve this and other non-state, non-profit schools of these taxes."

The overall thrust of the IDEC is to encourage schools everywhere to empower students, parents and teachers to design and control their own education

At the conference members the student caucus made the following statements about the ideal of democratic education:

"Students and teacher' rights are equal and their relationships based on mutual trust. Students are full participants in the regulation of school life. They are free to choose both their teachers and their course of study, as well as having a voice in all other areas of school life. In all matters everyone's opinion is taken into consideration."

The United States contingent also included Merrilee Santoro, a thirteen year old homeschooler from upstate New York, Angela Sevin, a founder and staff member at a small democratic school called Diablo Valley, in California, Avery Larned, from the Community School, in Maine, Fred Bay, Executive Director of the Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation, and Bay's daughter Meredith, 13, who has homeschooled. .

After the conference and some tearful goodbyes, the American group spent the last two days touring Kiev. One day they had a meeting at the Soros Foundation offices with Anatolii Oleksienko. They spoke about a proposal to have the Stork School become a training center for democratic education. At the IDEC meeting, people agreed to establish an IDEC listserve and a presence on the AERO website. Plans are underway to set up next year's IDEC conference. The committee is leaning toward an eastern European site so that the new Russian and Ukrainian members will be able to participate. For more information on IDEC, contact the AERO office. One final sad note: the day after the conference ended, the school was planning to put in an alarm system in the secure room where they stored their new equipment, but sometime after the last worker left the office at 2 AM and when people came

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Eighteen-year-old Jordan Noelle Parsons kept a diary of her trip. Below are selections from Jordan's diary alternating with comments from her Spectrum teacher, Phil Davis. In addition Mexican students give brief impressions of the encounter , with comments by Spectrum graduate Tyler Davis.

The American group, which also included an intern from Evergreen State College and a boy from Bremerton High School, spent five days in Mexico City. Then they linked up with Mexican students from Calpulalpan in the state of Tlaxcala for home stays, Earth Day and an ecological camp.

April 17, 1998

Here I am, on an aircraft on my way to Mexico City! It's hard to comprehend that another one of Phil's crazy ideas has turned into reality, and the fact that I'm part of this reality is so awesome. Our flight left Seattle at 6:30 am. It's now 11:30 and I'm still on the plane.

Twenty-four years I have spent teaching and traveling with students -- first exchanges with Mexico, then opening a path to Russia as the Iron Curtain fell, and now back to my first love -- Mexico. Each group is unique. These five young women from Spectrum seek to cut their own path deep into another culture. They say they want the opposite of a purposeless ìsenior tripî to Mazatlan where kids live like tourists in hotels, and ask their hosts to shine shoes and pick up their mess. American families pay a lot of cash to fund new experiences, but their children only substitute getting drunk in Mexico for getting drunk in the U.S. My alternative school students say they want ìsomething different.î

Last night, the whole group stayed the night at Phil's house. It was really fun. Janaka Old Coyote's father is a very spiritual man. So is his wife. Last night he said a Native American prayer for us. We all held the stick of life and said a few words. It was so beautiful!!! I can't wait to help out there. I can't wait to see such a different culture, and most of all, I can't wait for the drastic effect this is going to have on

my sheltered little life.

I too remember Steve Old Coyote's words, as we all reached out to grip a little more intensely the handle of life. He talked about how sparrows fly back and forth across the desert south of Arizona. They don't recognize any border. One land blends into another. Frontiers and barbed wire fences mean nothing to winged creatures on this shared planet.

Well, here I am in Mexico City. Right now we're all in our dorms lying in bed too excited to sleep. It was about 80 degrees when we arrived. We met Phil's son Tyler at the airport. After exchanging our dollars for pesos, we all loaded in a shuttle and arrived at Casa de Los Amigos (the house of friends). The drive here was insane, to say the least. For one, everybody has a VW bug. Even the taxis are bugs, green and white. No one drives in a certain lane. It's whatever's clever.

We listened to the Quaker director of the Casa talk about our seminar and service project. Then we all had dinner at a real Mexican restaurant. It was delicious and only cost about \$2! To walk off our dinner, we took a stroll in downtown Mexico City. I can't describe it! There are no road rules, and people are everywhere. We walked through a park and it was like a movie, couples on park benches kissing all over. Hookers were all over the place, but it's the most beautiful place I've ever been. Tomorrow we are going to Frida Kahlo's House. Can't wait for that either.

An evening walk across La Alameda, the place of the *Alamosi* or cottonwoods, that downtown park Jordan mentioned -- it brings back so many memories of other trips, other times.

Fountains spray streams of water around statues of Greek goddesses. Homeless kids sleep under tall trees. Elotes of corn roast on small grills and then are smeared with mayonnaise and chile. Street vendors torch and polish their acrylic paintings. Little wisps of pink cotton candy catch a ride on the night wind, stealing away from food booths to stick in the hair and eyebrows of the Spectrum girls. They laugh, and struggle to walk on the cobblestones among the crowd. Diego Rivera's enormous mural lights the wall of a building; Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and dozens of other characters from Mexican history take their own stroll in Rivera's painted park. Traffic roars along Juarez Avenue, and a string quartet sends forth elegant strains of classical music. We view a piece of cut stone found by subway workers, whose mystical imagination saw a miraculous image of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Candles and flowers now venerate the granite slab, here by the Alameda in the downtown of the world's most populous city. Overhead soars a tall skyscraper called La Torre Latinamericana, its modern steel symmetry contrasting with the enormous marble, copper and stained glass of the Palacio de Belles Artes, Mexico City's performing arts center built a century ago. The scratch of

our steps on the cobblestones brings back memories of other trips and other times.

A different language and an exotic place release new spirits within us. Twenty-five years ago I tried out talking en el espanol about love and commitment with an American woman who I thought did not speak Spanish. However, she did habla mucho espanol and we were soon married. In a hotel not far from this park we spent our first intoxicating night of foreign adventure. Later we lived in Mexico City for two years so our children could learn Spanish, and to whet their appetites for travel. With our two sons and a daughter grown up and graduated from high school, I now walk Mexico City streets with a new group of students. And my son Tyler, a Spectrum graduate volunteering in Mexico, greets us. He and his girlfriend have been volunteering with an ecology center in the state of Tlaxcala.

April 18, 1998

Today was so awesome! We got up and were out of Casa de Los Amigos at 8:30. We all ate breakfast at a really good restaurant. I had fruit (papaya, melon, pineapple, watermelon) with honey and granola. I also got a freshly squeezed papaya fruit drink. Anyway, after breakfast we got on the metro (subway) and went to Coyoacan to visit Frida Khalo and Diego Rivera's house. I don't think a dead person has ever moved me like that. Her house was beautiful with a garden in the entryway, and a kitchen with both their names made out of miniature pots hanging on the wall. But the most moving, the one that touched my soul, was Frida's bedroom. On her bed was her body cast and over it was a picture of her dead babies. The thing I will most remember was the inscription on the pillow lying on her bed. It read (in Spanish) ìnever forget me my love.î Frida's life was filled with such pain. I am positive her death was welcome.

Robert, our Casa de Los Amigos seminar leader, took us to a place in Mexico that was still doing things the same way they have done it for centuries. Where there used to be a lake, now were miles of floating plantations and a canal running through all of them. A Mexican took us on a canoe-like boat, and we floated down the canal. It was beautiful. He let us get out and plant a few things. After an hour or so in the market, we came home to the Casa. Dinner was so good!

Tomorrow is the ballet folklorico at the Palacio de Belles Artes and Phil's birthday (47th). I can't wait!

I have learned a little bit over the years about letting students explore on their own, letting them discover Mexico on their own terms rather than force a lesson. I used to lecture more about the floating city of the Aztecs and the dramatic eras of Mexican history. I still do that some, but alternative school students have taught me to let the city tell its own story.

In Coyoacan, a suburb in the south of Mexico City, our group

happened across a Mexican graveyard. Flowers, elaborate monuments and perhaps memories of Frida Kahlo's graphic paintings attracted the students into the campo santo, the holy and special ground that is a Mexican graveyard. They seem lively and colorful in comparison to American cemeteries. My own fascination with the Mexican view of death -- a culture which has a day to celebrate and dance with death, whose ancient rock statues look at us superficial, modern men with silent, skeleton eyes ñ used to lead me to tell the students too much. But these girls came to Mexico with the right attitude. They swarmed over the graveyard with their cameras and their own quiet thoughts.

Approaching 50 years of age, one considers his own mortality, and savors a bit more any special memories. For me, my traveling groups of students are colored photographs that blossom out of a black and white routine, the bright flowers found on a Mexican gravestone.

April 20, 1998

Yesterday was really cool! First, we ate. I got a melon licuado or milkshake. Then we went to the anthropology museum and that was bad-ass! Luckily it was a special day, and they were worshiping all their rain gods there. The people were all dressed up chanting and burning sage. Then we visited Maximilian's castle. It was beautiful, but kind of boring. There was an awesome painting on the ceiling of some Mexican boys jumping to their deaths so they wouldn't get captured by the American army. Afterwards, we came back to La Casa and got ready for the ballet at the Palacio de Belles Artes. Everyone looked great, and the show was fantastic.

Today I didn't much enjoy. We went to a small town after eating breakfast at the Casa. The town was poverty stricken. We saw a medical health care place the women built and run. We brought them medical supplies and learned about what they do.

Then we met a guy who told us about their ecology program. He showed us a compost system with disgusting worms....It sucked, but the guy was awesome and so were the things they did. I got really sunburned. We ate and then we all fought. The other girls can just get screwed. That's all I have to say on that.

That night we listened to a speaker, and all went out for pizza. Some chick wants the light off in this dorm room, so I better go. Tomorrow we leave the Casa, thank GOD! It's starting to feel like a concentration camp.

P.S. I talked to my boyfriend over the phone. I love that guy!

You get tired on a trip, tired of the heat and the foreign food, of your friends and the dormitory rules and a little homesick for familiar voices. But the quest is to survive the adversity, the challenge of dipping more deeply into another world. If you stay on the beach at Mazatlan, never stretching your life experience into a different shape, you

don't complain. But you won't really have traveled far.

Mexico is an ancient world, where the past drips heavily into the present. So when dozens of modern Mexicans dressed in Aztec costumes danced into the museum of anthropology, the invasion seemed natural. The huge Aztec statues, like Coatlicue with her skirts made of serpents and her belt of skulls, seemed unsurprised to receive actual worshipers. The old gods do not go peacefully into museum cases, but still reach out to modern crowds.

Health clinics like the one we visited are part of the new politics in Mexico. The workers there support Mexico's mayor, Cuahatemoc Cardenas. With his election the ruling political party lost a major, nationally important political post for the first time in seventy years. Cuahatemoc Cardenas has a name doubly important in Mexico's mythic past. Cuahatemoc was the Aztec who resisted Cortes and his Spanish friends until their death. Lazaro Cardenas, the mayor's father, also stirred Mexican pride by nationalizing American oil companies in the 1930's. Both his names invoke a history of resisting foreigners. So the old political gods return, and Mexico goes forward and changes only by returning to its past.

It was strange to see a painting immortalizing six ninos heroes, or boy heroes who are supposed to have wrapped themselves in the Mexican flag rather than surrender to U.S. invaders in 1848. Is our Spectrum group another kind of invader from the north? Even if the story of the ninos heroes was largely invented by nationalistic historians, it presented a challenge. Briefly we discussed whether five American girls throwing themselves off the castle towers would compensate for six mythical Mexican boys dying years ago. The students rejected the idea, even jokingly offered as *extra credit* for history class. We live in a different, NAFTA world, without tight borders and hermetic nationalism. Youth ignore the old nationalistic myths, just live and make friends across new frontiers.

My student group gave me a little card on my birthday, and I felt rather sentimental. Each of the Spectrum girls wrote a little something personal -- Lesa, Lacey, Jordan, Ashley and Janaka. My nephew Sam from Bremerton High and our savvy Evergreen State College intern, Jessica, also added notes. A greeting from last year's adult volunteer, Jon Ewell represented all those who worked for the trip but did not go. Mexican culture has taught me the value of human connection, that there is more to life than the Protestant Work Ethic. I don't just measure my life by credits at my job. I count my friends, colored photos in my memory album, and bouquets of students signing little cards.

April 22, 1998

So many awesome things have happened in the last two days. Yesterday, after a long, nerve-racking bus ride, we arrived in the state of Tlaxcala in the town of Calpulalpan. As we were walking towards the house where we were to meet our host families and the other students, I noticed a

big party going on. I silently wished I had been invited. As we walked through the gate of the house, all the lights came on and a huge roar of whistles, shouts and screams muffled the sound of the mariachi band that also began to play. I realized all the emotion was for us! I have never felt such a warm, sincere welcome. We were greeted with music, food and love.

After dancing and company, I retired to my host Aurora's home. It is beautiful! Her father is a lawyer in Mexico City and her mother is a housewife. Aurora has a balcony off her room and a Jacuzzi in the bano (bathroom). This was a total surprise after seeing the poverty stricken people of Mexico City. The family was friendly and Aurora is very shy and quiet, but a beautifully sweet girl. I slept well.

Today was bad-ass! I woke up and ate a HUGE breakfast of eggs and fruit. Then we all met up at the office. Lesa went with Paco, a director of the ecological institute Centro de Educacion Ambietal y Accion Ecologica - Cedum. Lacy and I went with Phil's son Tyler to paint a mural for earth day. Janaka and Ashley and Sam stayed at the Cedum center to paint a banner about Spectrum to be used in the Earth Day parade.

The murals on the side of the building were awesome. Every year on Earth Day people get together and paint a mural. I was privileged to help. Tyler was telling us about Earth Day in Mexico City. He said that because their pollution level is so high, the government said Earth Day was only going to be held once every 10 years so as to not publicize the negative aspects of what the city is doing to our earth - crazy!

Afterwards, all of us (40 people) marched through the streets of Calpulalpan with banners and songs. Some people juggled and some played drums. We all passed out carnations of white, pink and red colors. Over the loudspeaker Paco from Cedum was spreading the word. It was awesome!

Then we all went into town and hung out. I played pool with the Mexicans and that was so great. To interact and communicate without words is such an indescribably beautiful thing. We walked, talked and all laughed. Today was the best.

Oh, how could I forget? I could go on about this detail, and I want to talk about it more later, but Lacy and I met a street puppy. He was about three weeks old, starving and lonely. The water and food we gave him I think he appreciated, and he might live a few more days because of it. When I held him and talked to him I knew he could die living a fulfilled life. I felt like my heart broke when he kissed my face. All beings need love, even the dirty ones. It may sound strange, but I will continue to pray for him and the rest of the animals of Mexico's streets who just came to this earth to find love and never will. People always have a door to escape, but animals don't. That's our job, I believe, and will continue to offer that door.

Tomorrow we camp, Mexicans and all!

Sometimes the door to a new consciousness opens not by travel,

books or museums....but by a younger generation sharing a different vision.

I am not a lover of animals. I used to like the old Mad Magazine comic strip that satirized the contradiction between sweet sentiments (What people say), and their dark psychological truth (What they really mean). It showed a cartoon of an expensively dressed lady holding a tiny, Chihuahua puppy. The caption read:

What they say: "I love animals!"

Behind the woman lurked her shadow, and a caption that sardonically reinforced my view of animal lovers:

What they really mean: "I hate people!"

I have believed in a pretty strict separation of species. At my house we have cats, but I keep them outside. My children don't recognize the same boundaries between animals and humans. When they visit, our old cat finds his way inside out of the cold.

Our trip is about discovering Mexico, but its social service focus is ecology. That's why we came to Calpulalpan, Tlaxcala, the home of Cedum. Tyler and his girlfriend Arianne have been here four months planting trees, making compost, and working with camposinos to promote sustainable agriculture. We came here to discover our connection with other species, as well our connection with another culture.

I guess ecology isn't just Earth Day parades, recycling and politics. Sharing the planet with plants and animals requires a different vision. Tyler is a vegan, eating neither meat nor dairy products. Jessica, our Evergreen State College intern, is a vegetarian. Jordan and the other girls take care of stray puppies. Spectrum's best musicians have written Animal Rights songs. Maybe it's time for adults to listen more closely to these younger people.

April 24-6, 1998

The Spectrum delegation, along with their Mexican hosts, spent their last three days at CEDUAM's alternative energy campamento, or camp. At the campamento the two groups of students worked together on ecological projects, including digging erosion control ditches, laying the foundation for a casa de pacas de paja or straw bale house, and maintaining a walkway. Three days away from cities and distractions allowed guests and hosts to focus their energy on communicating and working together. This part of the story is narrated by Phil's son Tyler, and three Mexican students. Tyler graduated from Spectrum in 1995, and is a veteran of the school's 1994 trip to Russia. The Mexican students are leaders of the environmental action club MikeMex. Their impressions were originally written in Spanish, and appear here in translation.

The Spectrum trip to Mexico is my first experience on the

parental end of a student exchange. I have never before planned what to do or worried about people drinking or even making out. I am beginning to believe what my father says though; the benefits outweigh the additional responsibility. Having a hand in organizing the projects at the campamento and exposure to Mexican culture is making me see the entire exchange differently. Especially working from the Mexican side of the affair. By working with CEDUAM instructors Pablo, Paco, and Professora Veronica I have been forced to think about not only what I feel the American kid desperately need to see, but what the Mexican students will see of them.

Communication was an issue even before this exchange began. The Mexican students had very limited formal training in English, and the American students had been exposed to Spanish for only a half a year. Using a dazzling array of hand gestures and pantomimes, the two groups worked together with surprising success.

I acutely felt that all the American advertisement surrounding the Mexican students influenced their reaction to Americans. The unspoken (ha ha) understanding was that the Mexican students would put more effort into speaking English than the American students would put into speaking Spanish. I feel this is derived from living in a constant barrage of American culture in the form of movies, advertisements, and products. Spectrum students did try to use Spanish and respect Mexican culture. However, they were swimming upstream against effects of economic power and cultural imperialism.

Tyler

It was a very beautiful experience, so entertaining and exciting to have the possibility of living together with people from another place, to know their customs, what they think, what they like to do, etc. On the other had, we were not able to communicate everything we wanted because of the language difference. Yes, it was possible to dialog enough to know each other, and it was an agreeable experience discovering other means of communication [besides language] to enable a conversation.

I thought it was a little funny how one guy named Sam always carried his dictionary. I think that at the beginning what most preoccupied us was communication, an aspect that diminished with time. He was very shy, but a good guy. In general all of them were nice guys.

Laura Melo

The visit we made to the Tlaxco Camp with the foreign students was very cool. Those experiences will never be forgotten because it was the first time we spent time with people from another country. At first we thought it might be difficult to communicate since we don't speak the same language. But actually it was not so tough because we managed to establish communication.

Xochit

We all awaited their arrival without knowing who they were or what they were like. We knew nothing, only that they came from Washington State for a cultural [and ecological] exchange. Their group was from a school named Spectrum, different from us in all aspects ñ from another country, another language, other customs, even sharing the anxiety of wondering what would happen, communication thus a latent problem from the beginning.

Concha

I had worked at the campamento on a few occasions prior to this joint visit. We started work on the foundation of a straw bale house two weeks before. I was looking forward to getting a lot of work on the house done during the weekend. I hadn't really spent enough time thinking about what the students were going to find at the campamento. I approached the situation with a ìLets do a lot of workî attitude. To my surprise we did get a lot accomplished, though it was measured two ways.

The first measurement was more apparent; the straw bale house foundation was set in stone and lodo, a special type of mud. More firmly established, though more difficult to perceive, was the foundation for lasting friendships. Working together proved to the two groups of students that they could communicate and accomplish tasks together. With these beliefs came a transcendence from struggling to communicate to struggling to exchange ideas. American students discovered that Laura and Concha were not only people who could, if asked properly, provide food, a bathroom, and a place to stay, but individuals who differed on many philosophies, and could argue to back up their beliefs. Mexicans discovered that Spectrum students were not just ìAmericans,î but people. Students experienced an epiphanyóthey got to know each other

Tyler

At the camp we were able to live very well together, Mexicans and foreigners, in the kitchen as well as at work. I very much liked working with the guys in my team while building the [straw bale] cabin. There I realized that although we were different and from distinct countries, we could work in an organized way, and cooperate as equals.

Laura Melo

It was my first camp, but I think it was the best. We worked, and the work was hard. But the company and the place made everything easier, so we did it with pleasure.

Xochit

Seeing the students part ways reminded me of my first student exchange to Russia. Raw on young faces is discovery of a shockingly deep connection -- only to know that these special friends will soon be 2,500

miles away.

Tyler

The only disagreeable thing was saying good-bye. Over all the taste left in one's mouth was very good, very magical, different from anything that I have ever lived before. I only wish that all of this might happen again.

Here in Calpulalpan, Tlaxcala, we always are waiting for our guests with open arms.

Laura Melo

I think it was something unforgettable. Thanks to this we now have had a great experience, something that I hope is repeated.

Xochit

After all the plans got going, together, between us and them, was born a great affection. We had the pleasure of knowing that some of us could host them in our homes. It was fascinating; the sad thing is that it all ended.

After establishing a friendship with some people, people with whom you have worked and enjoyed yourselves, knowing that there only remained a few days, you asked-- will they return? I don't know. Perhaps never, perhaps soon. That is what we all asked ourselves at the end of this fading dream, where perhaps nothing remains.

The experience was good, living with different people. Besides, these memories we will have for our whole lives. The woeful part was departure. We all cried, they and us united with the same feeling. The sad good-bye, as always, but with the hope of seeing them another time. And if it is not so, then we will always remember them because these kinds of things are not forgotten.

Concha

The last entry in Jordan Parson's travel diary:

April 27, 1998

Here I am on the plane going back to my oblivious life as an American female. I am feeling so many things, and asking myself so many questions. I am also scared. My life is changing. I'm going to graduate in five weeks. I'm going back to a place I know I won't be in for very much longer. I feel like I am on my way to another vacation ñ this one will be a little longer. What if my boyfriend doesn't want to come with me? The answer makes me sad.

I made a connection not just with the students I met, but with Mexico. I feel like there is a place for me there. If I don't go back, I'll feel like I copped out.

There are so many poor families and children who don't know what it's like to feel real love, let alone the warmth of a familiar home. That bothers me, but not as much as I think it should. What bothers me is the uneducated people having the babies or the people who buy a dog but don't love, feed or neuter it. So the puppies of the dog either starve on the street or get kicked around or worse. That bothers me. And I don't see how I can go home to my beautiful house and my beautiful car and my full fridge and my loving parents without seeing in my mind the three week old puppy starving on a corner while passers-by kick him, or the dirty man and woman holding a newborn and living in a box. How dare I even think of turning away. I refuse to shut my eyes to that.

It seems so unfair that the people with the most beautiful culture and the biggest, most sincere hearts are being controlled by such a corrupt government. What would Mexico be like if only they were truly free? I guess it wouldn't be Mexico. Maybe the people wouldn't be so full of spirit.

Mexico City and the countryside are so completely different. Mexico City is loud, big, scary, sad, and so beautiful at the same time. I love the city. It is so full of life of all different sorts. Everything you can imagine you'll find in Mexico City.

But oh, the country! It 's more like a desert. Things are dusty and small, but the people are proof that God does exist. They are so good, so sweet and every last bit of it sincere. They have so little, but are so proud of it. Their houses are so small, but they love to show them off. I don't think it's their material houses they want to share. I think it's the love that's in them. If they had nothing to offer, they would give it anyway. If it meant starving, they would give a guest their last piece of bread. And on top of that, each one is so different and unique. They all have something to share or to teach. Such a beautiful country I just left.

As of fall, 1998, Spectrum Community School and the MikeMex Club work to continue their connection and their projects. Spectrum students study more Spanish in hope of returning to Mexico. The MikeMex Club continues its ecological activism. Spectrum seeks sponsors to help bring the Mexican students to America, and take another American group to Calpulalpan, Tlaxcala.

For more information on these topics, Phil and Tyler Davis' E-mail address is phjdavis@ix.netcom.com For those writing in Spanish, Cedum education coordinator Pablo Gallardo Garrido and the MikeMex Club can be reached at [:Cedum@laneta.apc.com](mailto:Cedum@laneta.apc.com). The English-speaking, education director at the Casa de Los Amigos, volunteer center in Mexico City is Richard Keith. His E-mail address is amigos@laneta.apc.org.

ninos hero

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#5: Steve Boncheck of Harmony School in Indiana.

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#11: Joanna Camp, about remineralizing the earth, and Ron Miller, editor of Great Ideas in Education.

#12: Joe Weber of Contra Costa Alternative School.

#13 Les Garber of Horizons School, Atlanta.

#14: Elaine Young, about the NYS Charter bill.

#15: David Colfax, CA homeschooler.

#16: Mike Denisenko, Graduate of School Within a School, Brookline, MA.

Call AERO about more recent taped interviews, including Morty Lefcoe, Pat Montgomery, Robert Theobald, Robert Ferris, Arthur Morgan School, Renaissance School, Goddard College, 10 Signs, Pat Seery, DariaBrezinsky, Schuelerschule, Albany's Free School, John Gatto, Lon Woodbury, Intentional Communities, etc. \$5 each

VIDEOS

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*FRENCH-AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE CAMP at Theleme School in the French Pyrenees, including Cathar Castles, Spain, Dali Museum, 22 minutes. \$15

*Two-hour video of the DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS CONFERENCE at HADERA SCHOOL in Israel, April 1996. Includes tour of Hadera School. \$25

*Seven-Country trip to Europe and Russia, Including European Forum for Freedom in Education Conference, Democratic Schools Conference in Vienna, Eureka Avant Garde, in Ijevsk, Russia, School of Self-Determination, Moscow International Film School, Brockwood Park Krishnamurti School, Herman Jordan Montessori School, Theleme School. \$20

CONTACT AERO FOR VIDEOS OF OUR OTHER RUSSIAN TRIPS

*SUMMERHILL VIDEO. Two videos in one: the 1990 International Alternative School Conference at Summerhill, with interviews of Summerhill students and alumni as well as vivid footage of the Summerhill end-of-term celebration. Also, Summerhill's 70th anniversary celebration in August, 1991, featuring more alumni interviews, and a Summerhill democratic meeting. 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 of Jewish, anarchist parents in 1893, she started anarchist schools in England back in 1908, went to the US in 1917 to teach at the Modern School (based on the work of Francisco Ferrer) in New Jersey, and taught at and ran Modern Schools until 1958. Her son Jim, who was a student at the Modern Schools and is now a 70-year-old pediatrician, is also interviewed. There are also excerpts from the Modern School reunion in 1989 which featured the Spanish Modern Schools. \$25

*Transcript of Nellie Dick and the Modern School! \$5

CONTACT AERO FOR FOUR OTHER MODERN SCHOOL VIDEOS

*DEMOCRATIC MEETINGS. A two-hour tape of demonstrations of various democratic meetings, including one at Summerhill, a meeting of Russian students at the New Schools Festival in the Crimea (translated into English), a demonstration meeting with Long Island homeschoolers, age four to 13, a meeting setting up a democratic system for an "at-risk" public high school alternative, and a democratic meeting at a public "choice" high school. \$25

*CODE CRASH--For quickly learning the Morse Code. Hundreds sold! This is a tape in which two 12-year-old homeschoolers learn the Morse code in less than 20 minutes each by our unique copyrighted association method. People interested in getting their amateur radio license will be amazed. It works. We guarantee it. You'll learn it. Show to a whole class. Recently glowingly reviewed in Growing Without Schooling; "We were all amazed and impressed with ourselves that we suddenly knew the whole Morse code in an hour." \$20

*HOMESCHOOL RESOURCE CENTERS. A video of a homeschool resource center featuring the Snakefoot Education Center, at Common Ground Community. This is a group of families that created a center in which 15 homeschooled children meet three times a week. They also hired a resource person. \$20

*Two WPIX TV shows about Homeschooling and Alternative Education. In the first, Jerry Mintz introduces alternatives in the tri-state area, with on-site visitation of the Long Island Homeschoolers, and Manhattan Country School. In the second, a WPIX interviewer in the studio grills Jerry and two homeschoolers. One parent started homeschooling because her son had cancer, and the schools refused to teach him. She homeschooled, and when he was cured, returned to find he had passed his class. If you want, we'll add the interview with Jerry Mintz and Jenifer Goldman on CBS Up to the Minute, in which they discuss their books. \$25

*GABRIELLE SHOW, November, 1995. A one-hour video aired nationally on the FOX Network, featuring homeschooling and a homeschool resource center, with public and homeschooled children and Jerry Mintz debating with a public school union representative. \$25

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfiMany of the participants agreed that this year's International Alternative Education Conference was one of the best in years. The programs were impressive, even dramatic, and included students from a variety of alternative schools.

For example, one of them was the "Freedom Writers" from a public school in Long Beach, California. A classroom teacher in that school, Erin Gruwell, had been given a hard time by the students in the class since she came on as a new teacher. She was being harassed by one particular student. One day she saw a grotesquely unflattering picture, rather racist, of this student being passed around the room. When she saw the picture she was horrified and told her students that this was the kind of caricature that was put forth during the holocaust. Many of the students stared blankly at her. They did not know what the holocaust was.

Thereupon they began a journey that has taken them to amazing places. After reading the Diary of Anne Frank, the students invited as a speaker the woman who had hidden Anne Frank's family in Holland. One of the students said to her, "I've never had any role models before, but now you're my role model." The woman answered, "I only did what was right." They then contacted Zlata Filipovic,, the girl from Bosnia who had written a diary about her experiences in that war-torn country and invited her to come visit the class. Now the students are committed to the process of combating racism and genocide. They are trying to raise funds to visit Auschwitz next year.

In another presentation, the Single-Gender Academies, which are public schools for boys only and for girls only, did a presentation on learning by way of television links from the conference to their classroom; from there to the television communications center and then to a science museum in Florida. This was all done live and the audience was able to ask questions of the students and of the people in the museum. Susan Condrey, who also was the key organizer of this conference, directs the program.

Throughout the conference meetings were organized of representatives of the various alternative education organizations. The group decided to establish a web presence on the AERO web site with the addition of a bulletin board. The AERO web site is at www.edrev.org. Since AERO has taken over the publication of Changing Schools, traditionally the communications network of the International Alternative Education Conference, the group agreed to encourage its members to subscribe to AERogramme as individuals and as entire organizations, as the State of New Jersey has, for example. AERO communications director, Michelle Senzon, has been following up. Next year's conference will be hosted by the Connecticut Alternative Education Association. For more information,

contact the AERO office. -Body Text IndentBody Text 2Body Text 3)Ä

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ÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfiParenting 2000 with Mary Addams Schaeffer

Mary has often come on the Education Revolution show and has even hosted some shows. Recently she asked me to come on her local radio show which is broadcast from Nassua Community College. This is an excerpt from the show of a dialogue between us and a public school teacher.

Mary: This is the eve of the first day of school for many people and we wonder what are parents thinking out there, what are you worrying about, eager about. What's on your minds? And teachers, you're about to start a new school year, what are you thinking, what's going on? If there are any teachers out there, I'd like you to call in and tell us parents what we should keep in mind as we send our kids back to school. If you're a listener, you know that my children are homeschooled, so I am not sending children back to school. But I'm aware that there are only some of us who are homeschooling and many of you are sending your kids back to school.

We have as our guest tonight Jerry Mintz of the Alternative Education Resource Organization. Jerry has been with us before as a guest. Jerry, tell me what kinds of things are on parents minds at a time like this when they're sending kids back to school. I know you deal with parents who have kids in alternative schools, public schools, and homeschools. But of the people in public schools or private schools, what kinds of questions do they ask you?

Jerry: Well I think that people are nervous - I think that's what happens - and in a lot of cases where things aren't working so well, which is a larger percentage than you might think, you have a lot of people who have kids who are have had problems in school and have been having problems all along. They didn't realize that they had any choices, that there is something different that they could do, and in some cases - many cases - they blame the kids for the problems, or the school blames the kids for the problems. Then, in addition, they will sometimes give them drugs to keep them docile in school (they call it Ritalin). I think that this is what a lot of parents face as they look at the school year. I think that maybe, who knows, 25, 30 percent of them might be very nervous about sending their kids back.

Mary: So you say they're worried about sending their kids back to school

because of the pressures?

Jerry: Because they know on some level - because parents really do know what's best for their kids - that it's not working!

Mary: We want to hear what's going on, what's on your mind? Are you worried? Are you worried that you won't be able to get them up in the morning? Are you worried that they'll get that teacher that your other son had last year that was so mean?

Jerry: People should know that they do have alternatives, and that's the key for everybody here. They must know, for example, that home education is possible. Some people have two parents working and think that that's not possible. Of course, we're working on organizing a system here where maybe parents could homeschool if they were both working. I once saw in France something called The Collectif Enfance-Parents in which parents were the teachers and each parent only had to come in half a day a week and they took turns doing it. They covered the whole week that way; even working parents could do it - they only had to take half a day off.

Mary: The Collectif Enfance-Parents, and how often did they send the kids in?

Jerry: Every day of the week, and each parent only had to put in half a day a week. It was a collective and provided continuity with the kids. This kind of thing is possible, I think, in an area where there are a lot of homeschoolers, and of course, there are a million homeschoolers in the country now.

Mary: That sounds very interesting. We have a caller on the line now, Debbie, are you on?

Debbie: Yes I am.

Mary: Do you have a child going to school?

Debbie: No, I don't.

Mary: You are a teacher?

Debbie: Yes, I am.

Mary: What do you want to tell us? What do you want to tell parents as they're sending their kids back to school?

Debbie: I would like to beg parents to be responsible for their children,

take the time out and give them love and attention and everything they need. It would make our jobs a lot easier. Actually, it would cause us to actually do our job!

Mary: What would it look like for a parent to be responsible?

Debbie: Well, as far as school is concerned, take responsibility and try to help the kids with the homework, know what's going on in school, watch their friends, who they're hanging out with, and if they're doing something they don't like, have better discipline. Not to let the kids do what they want?

Jerry: Would you encourage parents to go and sit in for a day and see what school is like for their kids?

Debbie: That's a good idea. Then I know, well, the kids would probably be better behaved.

Mary: You know, I've done that, I've actually sat in, and they're not. Hopefully, they're not better behaved, because the way they behaved the day I was there was pretty horrendous!

Debbie: I can tell, basically, what goes on in the home of a child. Some kids I have are wonderful, great, and I would have a million kids if they were like them. But not all the kids are like that. And the kids who are not like that, the parents are in denial about their behavior and there are so many problems, it just makes us crazy. I believe that parents have no idea what goes on in school with their kids.

Jerry: I think that's true and I think it's very important for them to get involved.

Debbie: Oh, absolutely!

Jerry: I think the system will actually become better if the parents become involved.

Debbie: A hundred percent better! We would actually have education taking place, and learning. We take care of the kids during the day, they care of them at night, and if they don't do their job, because a lot of parents think that it's the teacher's responsibility, and no! I mean we try to do what we can, but if we have 32 kids in the classroom, it's really hard.

Jerry: Well let's face it - all of the parents out there are homeschoolers, whether they send their kids to school or not. And if they're sending their kids to school, then they're still homeschooling the rest of the

time, and they should coordinate as a staff with the teachers of their kids.

Debbie: We would probably have no problems if that were the case.

Jerry: What I'm saying is that all parents are homeschooling and I think that, just picking up on what you said before, that they should coordinate with the teacher what they're doing, and vice-versa, of course.

Mary: Well that would be great!

Jerry: What level do you teach, Debbie?

Debbie: I teach high school and college.

Jerry: Oh, really! College, too! What kind of differences do you see between high school and college and what do you think about the kinds of kids that are coming into college today?

Debbie: The college I teach is wonderful, I love it. It's a dream come true. My day job is a nightmare. My night job is a dream come true because they do their homework, they pay attention, they ask questions, they behave properly, they're pleasant to talk to, they're human beings, they're wonderful, I have no complaints. During the day, there are some kids that are mature, but a lot of them.... I go home, I feel like I'm going to have a heart attack or die from stress in about five years because of the nonsense that goes on at my high school job, and I have pretty good class control.

Jerry: Do you think that perhaps the high schools or public schools should run more like colleges?

Debbie: What do you mean?

Jerry: In other words, giving kids more responsibility for the work that they do and not be in a situation where the kids are treated in a way that kind of infantilizes them.

Debbie: I think they do that themselves. I think they should have less freedom. The more freedom they have, the worse it would be.

Jerry: And you don't think that the reason they're acting that way is because they have no experience with freedom or responsibility as they grow up in school?

Debbie: A lot of them don't know what responsibility is.

Jerry: But you see, what I'm saying Debbie, you see, I ran an alternative school in Vermont for many years that was K to 12. It ran as a democracy so the kids knew every aspect of the school, and they were very responsible for making decisions; anything that they made, that was it for the school. What happened is that as those kids got to be about 14, 15 years old, when people would come and visit and talk to those 14 and 15 year olds, they would think they were talking to a very young looking staff member.

Debbie: No, I wish that could happen.

Jerry: What I'm saying is that this happens because at this kind of school the kids were given decision-making power and responsibility every step of the way which doesn't happen in public schools.

Mary: So what you're saying is that if they're cultivated that way, if they're brought up from the beginning with the power and responsibility to make decisions...

Jerry: Then you won't have the kind of problems that Debbie's complaining about when they get to high school.

Debbie: They play the system. They know if they come in late, that it can't be counted. They play the system; it's unbelievable.

Mary: Right. So they're not there to learn, they're there just to get through the day.

Debbie: They're very intelligent; they're not as stupid as people put them out to be. They know the rules and they use the rules against...

Jerry: But I think they see themselves as sort of prisoners in an authoritarian system; I think you and I might do the same. On the other hand, if they felt it was their responsibility to make the decisions, to make the place run right, believe me, they would do it differently.

Mary: And also I think that by the time they get to the high school, to the high school teacher, it looks like it's too late for this crop. We really need to start younger. We can't just throw the responsibility on them...

Debbie: Even my neighbor who is a kindergarten teacher has the same complaints I do. She wanted a lot of parents to show up and she was going to teach them what to do for the summer with the kids and all that; a lot of parents didn't even show up. Then when I have open school night, the parents of the kids who should be there, aren't there. One time I just sat down and cried because I was so upset that parents did not take any active

role whatsoever. And I'd made phone calls all day.

Jerry: If you actually would see what a good alternative school looks like, I think it might change what you think is possible with kids. The kids that I took into our school were, a lot of them, serious problem kids that had blown right out of public school. By giving them real responsibility, it turned them right around. It's amazing the kind of discipline there was in the school because the kids knew every aspect of it. There was even a rule that you can't stay after school unless you're good. This is a serious rule.

Debbie: The problem, I think, in our school, one of the problems, is that the discipline is not followed through. Like when you cut a school you have detention, and they're allowed to pick the period they want, and they never come anyway. There's no immediate action, there's nothing.

Jerry: When you have peers involved in the discipline, everything is different, believe me.

Debbie: You mean if they make up their own rules and stuff?

Jerry: At our school, if somebody broke one of the rules that everybody made, they had to face a meeting of everybody.

Debbie: That's a good idea, yea.

Jerry: You see what I mean; it's a totally different situation. Believe me, people didn't want to do that!

Mary: Because then it's not the kids against the adults.

Jerry: Exactly. It changes the relationship between the adults and the kids completely.

Mary: Interesting, huh?]

Debbie: Yea, that would work if we ever did it.

Mary: One thought I want to leave you with, though. You're starting off a new school year tomorrow...

Debbie: I'm very depressed. I hate to say it. No one is happy!

Jerry: It really gets me, Debbie, these advertisements like Staples and so on that show the parents jumping up and down and the kids depressed. At my school the kids liked school so much that they actually made a rule at the

end of one school year that they would have school at least one day a week through the summer.

Debbie: Ah, my God.

Jerry: What happened was about halfway through the summer, the teachers said forget it, we don't want to come in anymore! But the kids wanted to have school continue on. I'm really serious about this.

Mary: Wow. That'd be great. That's a dream come true!

Jerry: That's how school can and should be! I can give you my website and if you're interested in knowing more about alternative education, send email to me through that website.

Debbie: That would be great! I mean there are some kids that just make my day and I love them to death.

Jerry: I have a feeling that with a good teacher like you if you came to understand what is really possible, it would change the way you interact with these kids.

Debbie: Okay, thank you!

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!Äfffi just got a great note from Renaissance School, the one where AERO did the consultation job on democratic process. Director Mari-Jean Melissa said that she needs a good source of teachers with alternative education backgrounds, and thought that a lot of other schools might need this also. She also said, "The 5,6,7 year olds asked to interview their new teacher, then voted on her. I'm sure it started with the democratic process you all taught them. The Explorer group (through 5th grade) is running their side almost exclusively by council meeting. Thanks!"

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Judy Garvey, bluehill@ctel.net, is a homeschooler in Maine. She writes: "Hi Jerry, RE: Explanation of Jonesville & Springfield Massacres, p. 21 & 22, AERO-gramme, Spring-Summer 98: Yours is the ONLY thing I've seen that's put out the right slant about what is happening with the school shootings. I think you said it wonderfully well. Nowhere in the media has anyone even suggested that the fault could be with the school systems themselves. It's amazing to me, because it's so obvious. So, thanks for putting that out.

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!Äffis workshops, etc. KILN Campout, 615Indian Gap Road, Frankfort, KY
40401; or email at JanNorgat@aol.com

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I am in the 7th grade. I am in Will Rogers Bayside Academy. I am located in Long Beach California. I live on a boat in Long Beach Marina next to the Long Beach Convention Center. I am very interested in alternative schools because none of my teachers give me encouragement or assignments that interest me. All they give me is busywork. Some of the assignments interest me but very few. I would appreciate it if you would write back to me with more information about alternative schools in the Bayshore area of Long Beach. Matt
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Letter From Nat Needle in Japan

Dear Jerry,

Greetings from Kyoto, Japan. Thank you for that wonderful AERO-GRAMME #24, which I devoured cover-to-cover (after reading it, of course). The other day I picked up an English-language newspaper, and I noticed that President Clinton had given a speech to group of Hispanic students (in New Orleans, if I'm not mistaken). Encouraging them to work hard in school, he said, "The 21st century will be ruthless." He meant that in a global economy, in which everyone in the world competes against everyone else for material security and sheer survival, only those who succeed in school will win: all others will lose. Comments like "The 21st century will be ruthless" are always made, it seems, with the tone of inevitabilty usually reserved for natural phenomena: "The eclipse will occur at 2:25 pm", or "California had better be ready for the next big earthquake."

I believe Mr. Clinton means well; he wants those Hispanic kids to be winners instead of losers. Nonetheless, let's not forget that if the 21st

century becomes the story of human beings around the world pitted against one another in a struggle for well-being, even survival, this will only be because we failed to imagine something better and insist on it for ourselves and our children.

In thinking about the 21st century, I'd like to hope that the most important debate will be between two different ideas about human development. On the one hand, we have the view which seems to underlie mainstream thinking today: that people develop primarily through the victory of the strong over the weak, in which the weak are eliminated, and in which the victors deserve our adulation for setting the pace for the rest of us. On the other hand, there is the view, which is at the root of all the great wisdom traditions, that the strongest are those who devote themselves to strengthening the weak, to keeping the whole community afloat, to plowing their gifts back into the common field through service to others.

Certainly competition among relative equals can be a useful and even exhilarating way to hone abilities and set higher standards for ourselves. Without a larger context of mutual aid which leaves no one out, however, neither the strong nor the weak can bring out their ultimate best. Clinton, with his threat of ruthlessness, wants to convince students that the 21st century will not be kind to the lazy. Yet it is possible that most people grow lazy, not because they can rely on help from others, but because they hate being stacked up against others.

I don't care to motivate my children by telling them that they will have to be strong to survive the ruthless competition. I'd rather tell them that the world needs their wisdom, their talents, and their kindness, so much so that the possibilities for a life of service are without limits of any kind. I'd like to share with them the open secret that this is the path to receiving what one needs in this lifetime, and to becoming truly strong.

If they have this kind of motivation, then, if succeeding in conventional school is what they want to do, more power to them, so to speak. Perhaps it's too easy for winners of the educational contest, like myself, to talk about abandoning it. (Perhaps if you're a poor Hispanic kid in New Orleans, it's the only game in town.) All the more reason, though, to blaze alternative pathways to adulthood in which not only my own kids, but kids like those Bill Clinton spoke to, could deal head-on with the problem of making a dignified living in this world without forgetting that each of us is only as strong as the weakest of us.

When I return to the US in the spring of 2000, I'd like to start such an "alternative to school", drawing on both my Buddhist background and my experience in democratic education. Meanwhile, I'm trying to do a little writing about Buddhism and alternative education. If anyone has any ideas on this subject, or any interest in my practical project, please get in touch!

Mail: Nat Needle, 8 Shokaku-cho, Fukakusa, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto
612-0801 JAPAN
Phone/Fax: 011-81-75-531-0477
Email: needle@mbx.kyoto-inet.or.jp

Ernest Udom writes: "A school in Nigeria Needs a Teacher" .Betem Christian Community Academy, one year old junior Secondary School for orphans and needy children is looking for a mature Christian teacher to work here for two years. The school is located

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!Äffin a rural area with no electricity and pipe borne water. From the school to the state capital is 76 kilometers. There is no salary but board and lodging are provided. If interested write to: Ernest Udom, Betem Christian Community Academy, Box 1710, Calabar, C.R.S.; Nigeria, West Africa. -Body Text IndentBody Text 2Body Text 3)Ä

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Andy Smallman writes: Puget Sound Community School (PSCS) has an opening for a part-time Administrative Assistant. The position is 15 hours a week during the school year and pays \$7.50 an hour for helping maintain our office -- answering phones, preparing and sending information packets, updating our database, etc. Located in downtown Bellevue, a large suburb of Seattle. Call 425.455.7617 or e mail andy@pscs.org.

Jessica Koehler, j_koehler@cc.colorado.edu

I'm a college sophomore who just discovered a passion for the idea of a more alternative and interactive educational program for kids. If there's any information you could e-mail me about volunteer opportunities to get involved with alternative education, information that I should read, and credentials I should have to go into this field I would love it!

Michael Strong, micheal@lycosmail.com

I am the headmaster of The Winston Academy, an intensively academic alternative school in Ft. Lauderdale (e.g. students, if they want, may take AP courses in 7th or 8th grade, much of the program is self-paced.) I am also the author of a book on intellectual dialogue in the classroom, *The Habit of Thought*, and a consultant for public and private schools interested in classroom intellectual dialogue. I have a background in Paideia and Montessori education. My own children have attended Montessori, Waldorf, and home school. I'd be happy to communicate via email with parties interested in any of the foregoing. I believe that alternative educational approaches represent the most realistic hope of solving social problems world-wide.

Jason Habisch, blacklake@juno.com

I am 24, fresh out of a small Christian college in the midwest, and I am running a small alternative school in Columbia City, Indiana. I am excited that there are others that believe that there is a story behind every student and they all deserve our best efforts!

Brenton Stinespring, honeymoonin@hotmail.com

There are so many fascinating and wonderful things for individuals to pursue, within and beyond the traditional curriculum, that it seems such an unnecessary disaster for that love for learning to ever lessen. Yet when education is targeted at attaining a predetermined score on an unindividualized test this is exactly what we see happening. I am yet to experience schooling in an alternative setting, but am eager to receive the opportunity. I'm currently certified to teach k-8. If you can assist me in my pursuit in any way, please contact me.

Johannes Wollbold, JWollbold@aol.com (Germany)

Website: Bundesverband der Freien Alternativschulen

I heard about these pages from Jerry Mintz at the International Democratic Schools Conference (IDEC) in Vinnitsa/Ukraine, 8th to 15th of July. This conference for me was the starting point of learning more about the international democratic education movement - a great and enriching experience! When I came back from Ukraine, I began to write some websites about the conference: a general article and reports on 3 workshops:- a law from "School of Self-Determination," Moscow- logical games by Mark Bedenko/Vinnitsa (in German only)- "Freedom and Structure" concerning the

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfiOctober 18-21, Detroit, MI. National Dropout Prevention Network Conference, "wheels in Motion: Creating Champions of Learning." Online: www.dropoutprevention.org

October 25-6, Vichy, France. Annual Meeting of Les Enfants d'abord. Brigitte Guimbol, 474 Chemin de Font Cuberte, 06560 Valborne, France. E-mail: bguimbol@aol.com. Tel: 04 93 12 93.49 -Body Text IndentBody Text 2Body Text 3)Ä

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfiEmanuel Pariser writes: "The Community School held its 25th year anniversary reunion celebration in Camden in August. We honored local people who have volunteered and helped out over the years, we had slide shows from terms 1 -50, musical performances by graduates and their bands, rode the chair lift to the top of the Snow Bowl, where the festivities were held, and had a lobster bake, a logbook, a bonfire and a final closing circle. Over a hundred former students, staff, relatives, parents and friends came, making the event a joyous and meaningful celebration."

November 7, 344-354 Gray's Inn Road, London, The Open University
Conference, Anna Craft or Bob Jeffrey, School of Education, The Open
University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. AR.Craft @ open.ac.uk or
R.A. Jeffrey @open.ac.uk
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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfffiDENMARK

Chris Flynn, flynn@email.dk:

I'm an American living in Denmark now for more than 9 years and I now have
3 boys, ages 8, 5 & 3. I'm interested in finding others in Denmark or in
other parts of Scandinavia or Europe where the laws may be similar, in
order to draw on their experience in this area. I'm feeling a little alone
here and outnumbered. But, until now, my boys and their educations are
doing just fine. My oldest reads well above his age level in both English
and Danish and the others are fluent in both languages and are progressing
fine. They are socially well-adjusted and not suffering at all as was
predicted by local traditional educators. Please come with some suggestions
and or comments at your convenience.

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfffiAUSTRALIA

James Hutchings, jameshutchings@hotmail.com:

Activate is an anarchist magazine for teenagers. We have been giving
copies out in the suburbs of Sydney to try and spread our ideas. We have
received legal advice -- nothing in the magazine goes against any law.
Besides this, we believe we have the right to state our ideas. According
to the law, we should have the right to spread our ideas. But the powers
that be don't recognize their own laws if it's inconvenient for them. It's
worth noting that the Australian government is hypocritical. Anarchists,
along with lots of other people, protested against a racist politician.
The Australian government criticized the protestors - they accused us of
being against freedom of speech! More important than the law, we believe
we have the right to free speech. We have continued to distribute
Activate, and we will do so whatever the government says. We are asking
for your support. We are currently setting up a web page. Contact us and
we'll send you the URL when it's ready.

Crenshaw, crenshaw@swva.net:

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GREECE

Christos Voulis, cvoulis@mailexcite.com:

Dear friend Jerry: First of all I want to thank you for the communication. I would like to let you know that the magazine I'm doing together with another teacher, called "The island of the AB" already has 4 issues. We give information to Greek teachers about radical, libertarian, alternative and all schools which are not under the control of the State. We try to publish this magazine 1 or 2 times a year, but it's very difficult. I would like to have contact with schools and to present them in the magazine. Of course, till now AERO helped me a lot. What I need most is articles from schools which I can put directly in the magazine. For us it is very difficult to make our own school, so at least I want to give as much information as possible. My wish is to meet you in Hellas and to organize a presentation of liberal - education together.-Body Text IndentBody Text 2 Body Text 3)Ä

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Jason Habisch, blacklake@juno.com:

A member of my education committee who gave me a copy of AEROGRAMME and also your alternative school directory first introduced me to your organization. We are a small school serving a rural community in Columbia City, Indiana. I began in September and the school is only three years old. We serve both students expelled from the schools and our residents here on the campus. There are 12 boys and two sets of houseparents. We are part of an organization out of Fort Wayne and we are expanding. I am very interested in learning the Montessori method, especially ways of having the boys teach each other. We are literally a one-room schoolhouse! I am a '97 grad of Taylor University and I am attempting to learn all I can about this often overlooked aspect of education! Thank you for your help!-Body Text IndentBody Text 2Body Text 3)Ä

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John Ivens, john paul guano26@hotmail.com:
Was just reading through the most recent issue of AEROGRAMME and just HAD to write. Yer publication is always a damned good read. I am so happy I

disturbed youth in grades 1 through 12. Illinois Type 10 certification in BD/LD is required. Please contact Catherine Carey, Principal, at 2615 Washington Street, Waukegan, Illinois 60085. Tel: 847- 625-6130. Fax: 847- 625-6135.-Body Text IndentBody Text 2Body Text 3)Ä

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Paul Bentley, pb@wardrobe. dircon.co.uk:

I would like to ask you to consider joining my new discussion list on the 'Classroom of Tomorrow'. The media these days seem to be full of predictions that the 'Classroom of Tomorrow' will move from school to home-based state education in as little as 25 years. It has been suggested that children will learn at home via the Internet, there will be a classroom in every home, schools will be replaced by resource centers, and the balance of power will switch from teacher to pupil, with the teacher as temporary guide. If these changes are realized, it could either be the start of a new era of real choice and flexibility in learning, or it could be even more prescribed, unimaginative and restrictive than what we have now. The purpose of this list is to counter the 'more of the same with new toys' mind set and offer a forum for debating the many complex issues that the prediction that the 'Classroom of Tomorrow' will be based in the home raises. This list is at present open to all and unmoderated. Anyone can post to the list but only list members receive postings and have access to the archive. And lastly, the debate will be meaningless if it is not well informed about the thinking going on in the wider world, and I would like to enlist your help to build up an online archive of articles that relate to the 'Classroom of Tomorrow'. So if you come across anything at all that you think would be of interest I would be very grateful if you would email, fax or snail mail it to me at the following address: email: cot @ wardrobe. Dircon.co.uk. Fax: 0181 244 4590. Classroom of Tomorrow List Archive, 83 Manor Park, London SE13 5RA UK. To subscribe to the COT List, send a blank email to: cot-subscribe @makelist. com

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!Äffifith, 13, who has homeschooled. Also, contact AERO for videos of the IDEC, a list of presentations, and information on the IDEC list-serve which is planning the next conference. -Body Text IndentBody Text 2Body Text 3)Ä

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Stork and Other Schools in Great Need of Help

Not only is the Stork School in dire straights, but several other schools are also in urgent need of help. Donations to the Stork Family School of others below can also be made through AERO. Here are some other situations:

From Katherina Makarova and the Moscow International Film School:
Many things happened since our last meeting. We were taken unawares by the financial crisis in Russia. Two of our groups had problems with food and accomodation in UK and Sweden because their VISA Cards in were frozen by Russian banks. After coming home the situation became worse. The situation in Russia is still critical: the dollar rate and the prices rose up 4 times for two days. Salaries that weren't big before now become less than \$10-15 per month. Most of the Russian and foreign commercial companies make staff reduction. Some of the foreign representatives suspend all activities. All members of our Charity Committee both Russian and foreign supporters of the school stopped doing this forever or suspended their payments for the unsure time. The little amount that we scratch up is frozen on the account, because most of banks suspend all operations. In fact this crisis and the government police threatening to the existence of such school as ours. We can't take payment from the students even if the situation force us. It makes the education in our school exclusive and inaccessible for most of the parents and destroys the democratic principle of equal potentials which is in the basis of our School. School now is desperately in need of any possible financial help only for surviving (materials, food, salaries). Preparing for the chance of instability in Russia, three of school staff members opened an account in Austrian bank. It is the only way now to save the donations from the crisis. It is:

DIE ERSTE OSTERREICHISCHE

SPAR-CASSE-BANK

Adress: Mariahilfer Starsse 69, 1060 Wien, Austria

Account number: 2809-89571

Name: M.I.F.S. or Serguei Gratchev

BLZ (BIC)20111

to find out more please conract the bank officer at:

tel. +43 1 587-3700

fax.+ 43 1 408-9922

We still hope fore the best and fighting with the difficulties as are some other alternative schools in the world.

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!Äfffi (see AERO-gramme #24)The Modern School had its 26th Annual Reunion on September 19, 1998 at Rutgers University, in New Jersey. Dan Choderkoff, co-founder of the Institute for Social Ecology was the main speaker. Paul Avrich spoke about Abe Bluestein and Bob Helms spoke about Hippolyte Havel. Peter Ford talked about the resurgence of young anarchists who have founded the Atlantic Anarchist Circle. Chris Mercogliano of Albany's Free School talked about his new book, Making it up as we Go along. Jerry Mintz reminded the group that, although 104 year old Alffed Levitt wasn;t able to attend this reunion, he still would like Modern School alumni to strongly consider his suggestion to create a new Modern School in New York City. A videotape of the Reunion is available from AERO for \$25. AERO is selling Chris's book for \$15 plus postage (see order form).

Bob Farrace is the Editor of High School Magazine, for Principals, Assistant Principals and all High School Leaders, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. When they decided to do an issue on alternative education (October 1998)

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!Äfffi, he asked AERO for help. We provided him with the names of some of the leaders in the field, and he chose to feature articles by Mary Ann Raywid, Tom Williams, Joe Nathan and several others. He also printed two short pieces written by Jerry Mintz, about alternatives in other countries and homeschool resource centers. Articles were about the history of the movement, technology, homeschooling, schools within schools, charter schols, etc. 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA20191, 703 860-0200

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The Shaker Mountain School's 30-year reunion was a great get-together, well organized, and we couldn't have had better weather. We had a traditional SMS meeting and discussed the use we've been making of funds that have come from interest on the sale of the building which we originally got donated from Exxon. Most of these funds have gone to support the Alternative Education Resource Organization. Funds must go toward a project by former Shaker Mountain School staff or students which supports democratic education. With so many children of Shaker Mountain students enjoying the event, we also decided to have a Shaker Mountain picnic every summer.

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Ä!ÄfffiLeslie Moyer, Tulsa Regional Representative HERO of Oklahoma, writes: Reluctant homeschoolers are families who don't really want to homeschool, but the system offers them very few choices. As more families choose this option, the public schools are paying more attention. The Oklahoma State Dept. of Education has an "Alternative Schools" department that is actively working to get more "alternative education" programs added. For information, contact Mary Meritt at 405-522-0276. After May, they expect to have a total of 279 such programs available to Oklahoma students. (Up from 179 last year.) Alternative Schools are for "kids at risk of not receiving a diploma." This includes lots of different situations-- kids who are bored, not thriving, pregnant, drop-outs, troubled kids, etc. HERO, 302 N. Coolidge, Enid, OK 73703. HERO web page: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/3236>

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Ä!ÄfffiA recent graduate with a degree in child and family development, Leslie Schwartz, is interested in finding a job which involves working with a Sudbury-type school. She is flexible as to location. Contact her at 1005 Macon Hwy. Apt. 827, Athens, GA 30606. Tel: 706-208-9235. Email: lesl@arches.uga.edu.

Jessica Rath has a BA in English and would like to become involved with teaching in a less traditional environment. She is willing to start at any level and help out with any aspect in making your school a success. She currently lives in the Boston area, but would be willing to re-locate. She has some literacy tutoring experience as well as some experience working with disadvantaged teens. At this time, she is a Conference Coordinator and can be reached via telephone at 617-787-0091.

The Meeting School, a small, alternative Quaker boarding high school, is seeking faculty with a desire to live and work with teenagers in an experiential educational setting. Students join faculty in farming, cooking, community decision making, and other "real-life" living and learning opportunities. The school is strongly committed to democratic, non-coercive processes, and educational freedom. In addition to houseparenting skills, faculty might have some expertise in the areas of math, English, social studies, music, outdoor/environmental education, or development and operations. Singles or couples welcome to apply. Contact: Jackie Stillwell, Dawn Ashbacher, or David Stern at The Meeting School, 56 Thomas Road, Rindge, New Hampshire, 03461. Tel: 603-899-3366 or 603-899-2806.

Paula Bright proposes to tutor a small group of students with academic difficulties in her home by immersing them in language experiences spanning the curriculum. Her goal is to remediate them to a point where they could function the following year at or close to grade level in reading. She would like ideas, suggestions, and any other help to get this project started working with the local school system, homeschooling groups, etc. Contact her at Bright Beginnings Learning Center, 8530 White Ave., St. Louis, MO 63144. Tel: 314-961-2821. E-mail: Dowbright@aol.com.
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AERO Now Operates Two National Radio Shows; CEO America New Sponsor

For the last month AERO has had two weekly radio shows. The first, on the Talk America Network, is now on every week on Saturday at 6 PM EST. This is our best time slot yet. It goes to 45 stations around the country and on the Internet on realaudio.com, or at talkamerica.com. The new show is on the Cable Radio Network. It is on every Tuesday at 11 PM EST. It goes to 13 million cable TV sets, and channels which ordinarily have music in the background. This includes 90% of the cable companies in California, which airs the show at 8 PM PST. We are still looking for more advertisers to go along with our current ones: Clonlara home Based Education Program, Antioch College, Goddard College, and the Consortium of Innovative Boarding Schools, which includes Arthur Morgan School, Horizons School, The Meeting school, Maple Hill School, , Summerhill School, and Stone Soup School. You could also ask your local talk station to carry the Talk America show, or

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!Äffi is looking for a night staff member, to work five nights a week, plus a half day, to participate in the general meeting. Must believe in democratic education. Three week trial period. Room plus \$4000/yr. Rt 83 Box 56, Highland, WV 26346. 304 869-3250. highland@ruralnet.org-Body Text IndentBody Text 2Body Text 3)Ä

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Student International Alliance Camp

A week after returning from Ukraine, I went to to Marin County, north of San Francisco, to work with Russell and Peggy Tunder at the Student International Leadership Project Camp. I helped them with democratic process at the first camp three years ago, and they had asked me to do the same this year at camp with Russian, Chinese and American students. The students ranged from 11 to 19 years old. The Chinese group came without a translator or adult supervisor. The translation was done by a 16 year old from the American group who grew up in China. There were great cultural presentations by each group, visits from UN representatives, trips to San Francisco, just to name a few events. here are some comments made by e mail to an AERO reader by three of the students:

We have all come here for one reason, that we all know that we are the future of our society. And only by knowing each other will we be able to achieve our mutual dream of living on a planet where we are no longer seperated by our differences.---Alejandro M. Astrawinata

I am a sixteen year old American student here origianlly from China, translating for the Chinese students, and trying to bridge the different cultures together. I realize that we really don't have that many differences. Through common games and activities we have formed a bond and trust that we will remember much better than vague talks. The Chinese students are getting a first-hand look at the democratic process, since every morning we have these meetings to decide little things and important things democratically. I really appreciate this chance we have to meet these people that we usually only know through watching from a distant television or hearing about them. ---Claudia Sun

My name is Anna. I'm from Austria where I grew up in a homeschooling family. In Austria I worked with kids, teaching ceramics, teaching Turkish as a second language, and helping with group process. I'm twenty years old. I live in San Francisco now, and I'm helping out here at the International Student Alliance camp.

In a note to AERO after the camp Russell wrote, " Your work organizing and leading the democratic process was pivotal in setting the tone for personal responsibility, group participation and conflict-resolution in the executing of our program agenda. and your table tennis instruction and tournament was another excellent vehicle for cross-cultural interaction and remained a constant topic of discussion and playfulness among the whole student body...We are very grateful for your untiring support for us and the process and for your warm friendship during those intense two weeks."

I thank Russell and Peggy for those kind words. There will be another camp next summer, and a video made by the students will soon be completed. Contact AERO for details.

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ÄÄ♣ÄÄ Ä!ÄfiInstitute for Educational Studies have introduced a new approach to graduate learning. Students enroll for 18 months and, except for two ten day residential meetings, attend interactive and collaborative dialogue via the Internet. A fully accredited M.Ed program, concentrating in Integrative Learning, entrance dates are January and July. Philip Snow Gang is the director. www.tmn.com/ties/, 8115 McCormack Ave, Oakland, CA 94605, 510 638-2300.

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ÄÄ♣ÄÄ Ä!ÄfiNov 12-14, Colorado Springs, Sep-Con "98, the Conference of the Separation of School and State Alliance, 4578 N First, # 310, Fresno, CA 93796, 209 292 1776

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfffiCEO America has, www.ceoamerica.org-Body Text IndentBody Text 2
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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄfffiAdministrator/Director needed (part-time, about 20-25 hours per week). The Bellwether School is a holistic, child-centered alternative school for children ages 3-10, located near Burlington, Vermont. Now in its fourth year, the school is looking for a visionary educational leader to work collaboratively with our staff of seven. We are developing an ecological literacy program and want to develop more programs in music & foreign languages. Fundraising experience is also helpful. Ron Miller, 120 S. Brownell Rd., Williston, VT 05495. (802) 863-4839. milleron@together.net

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NYHEN: New York Home Educators Network Attended by New AERO Staff
By Michelle Senzon

My name is Michelle Senzon. I'm the new Director of Information and Research at AERO. I graduated from Prescott College in December 1997, with a degree in Alternative Education and Creative Expression. My studies focused on creating community around excellent education, home schooling and life long learning. It is a perfect fit for my work at AERO. .My work includes fielding incoming phone calls, doing consultations, and research, along with representing AERO at regional and national alternative education happenings.

While Jerry was at the Modern School Reunion on September 19, I attended the second meeting of the developing group called NYHEN, New York Home Educators Network, along with Mary Addams, a homeschool parent and AERO Internet consultant. We met in Utica New York at the Shawangunk Nature preserve. The beauty and wildness of the preserve were a perfect setting for the individuals from many homeschooling groups from around the region to come together to form NYHEN. Most of the state except for New York City and the far western part of the state were accounted for.

The group's purpose is to "support the freedom of families to educate their children at home; to improve connections and communications

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ÄÄÄ Ä!Äffing his 'round the world trips to visit a variety of alternative and democratic schools. Jerry Mintz of AERO had suggested some of the schools, which include Summerhill, Tamariki (in New Zealand), Sudbury Valley School, Tokyo Shure, the Democratic School of Hadera, and a mysteriously renamed school in the US for which you will have to guess its location. He also visited schools in India, and Ecuador. You won't see another book like this. You can special order it through AERO by calling us at 800 769-4171.

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ÄÄÄ Ä!Äffiffoctober 23, Pace University, NYC, Alfred Korzybsky Memorial Lecture, Ted Sizer, Launching a Charter Secondary School: Reflections from the Front Line, Institute of General Semantics, 163 Engle St #4, Englewood, NJ 07631, 201 568-0551, Institute@General-Semantics.org

10, 339 Lafayette St Room 202, NY, NY, Libertarian Book Club Anarchist Forums, "Memories of the 1960's and the Lessons Learned." 212 979-8353

April 21-25, 1999, National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools annual conference, July 29-August 1, 1999, Washington Hilton, DC, Frontiers of the 21st Century, World Future Society, 7910 Woodmont Ave Suite 450, Bethesda, MD 20814, 800 989 8274 wfinfo@wfs.orgColorado

June 24-26, Connecticut College, New London, CT, International Alternative Education Conference, "Alternative Education, Leading the way to the New Millennium." Bill Scalise, ALPS Program, 193 Mechanics St, Danielson, CT 06239, or call 860 779-6660.

Excerpt from Radio show, ,dialogue with public school teacherus and a public school teacher.--JM

PHOTO

The AERO group in Kiev, with bus driver

PHOTO

Vinnitsa on map of Ukraine on the side of the bus

PHOTO (vertical)
IDEC poster at opening ceremonies

PHOTO(two head shots, one above the other which will fit next to poster)
Kageki Asakura from Tokyo Shure, Japan and Moshe from Hadera School,
IsraelT

PHOTO
Dima with his aunt (l) and founding teacher of Stork School (r)

PHOTO
Stork Students demonstrate ballroom dancing at school carnival

PHOTO
Oleg Belin with Stork students

PHOTO
Fred Bay does a workshop at the IDEC

PHOTO
Alexander Tubelsky and Jerry mintz at IDEC

PHOTO(small)
in his office in Kiev

PHOTO
Two Stork students

2 PHOTOS
Chinese students at Student International Alliance Camp

PHOTO
Peggy TunderThe School of Living , of which AERO is a part, had a retreat to celebrate is 65 years of existance and to talk about its future. There were about 25 participants in the weekend event, held at Heathcote Community, in Freeland, MD. The School of Living holds Heathcote's land in trust, as it does for several other communities. SOL publishes a newsletter, The Green Revolution. Ordering information is in the back of this issue. AERO readers get a 33% discount for SOL membership. We did a radio show on SOL and intentional communities while we were there. It can be ordered from AERO for \$5 plus \$2 postage.

PHOTO
Two participants in the School of Living retreat at Heathcote

PHOTO
Swimming at Shaker Mountain reunion

PHOTO

Shaker Mountain alumni Larry Martell and Walter Zeichner greet each other
PHOTO

Shaker Mountain alumni children
PHOTO

Students of Spectrum Community School in Mexico City, l to r: Jordan
Parsons, Lesa Meek, Jessica Tupper, Lacy Hannum, Ashley Walen, Janaka Old
Coyote

PHOTO

Spectrum Director Phil Davis

PHOTO

Painting of a "boy hero," wrapped in the Mexican flag, leaping to his death
rather than surrender the flag to American soldiers

PHOTO

Mexican family building their own home in a Casa de Los Amigos project