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THE IDEC AT SUMMERHILL

The 7th Annual International Democratic Education Conference was held at Summerhill School in Leiston, England from July 23-26.

I arrived a week early, before the term was over, so I could visit the school while the students were still there. On the last leg of the journey Mrs. Gull, the taxi driver, drove us from the Saxmundham train station to the school. She said that she and her husband would be glad to testify any time about the wonderful changes they had seen in the students as they drove them periodically to the train and airport. She was quite aware that the school was under attack by the education authorities. I was accompanied by Alex Morganov, a student who missed last year's conference because the Immigration and Naturalization Service sent his papers too late for him to go to Ukraine. He was born in Russia and is not yet an American citizen.

I was greeted by several of the students I had met on previous visits. I had taught many of them how to play table tennis. Oli, whom I had met when he first came three years ago was now ready to leave the school and go on to college. Jonas, from Germany, whom I had met when he first came and spoke little English, was now quite fluent and very self-assured. Meng-An, from Taiwan, had become the best table tennis player in the school, and was planning to go to the United States to live with relatives and continue his education. We had some nice matches while I was there.

Uri is now a student at Summerhill, but I had met him previously at several IDEC conferences when he was a student at the Democratic School of Hadera, in Israel. His parents have moved to England. He was very involved in the upkeep of the computer room. Chris and Natasha are children of current staff members Ian and Lenka. She is a Summerhill Alumna herself. They had just come from the United States when I last visited, but are all quite central to the school by now.

Many of the students and staff had just participated in a march on 10 Downing Street to protest the treatment of the school by OFSTED, the office of inspection. Among other things, the school had been told that its non-compulsory lessons conflicted with the imposition of the national curriculum. A pile of letters was given to Prime Minister Tony Blair's

office. The Summerhillians were accompanied by many supporters, including English homeschoolers who realized that if Summerhill were discredited that they would be next.

At the end of each of the three yearly terms, Summerhill has a big End of Term Party. It goes on through the night with popular dancing, country dancing, and snacks, as students leave for a one-month break. At this party the highlight was rapping in French, German in Japanese, with Henry and William, grandchildren of A.S Neill, now staff members, doing the record-scratching. Actually I missed most of this because I was doing a radio show on the Talk America Network from the school office, interviewing Carmen and Nathan, 14 year old Summerhill students who had participated in the march on 10 Downing Street, as well as a demonstration of the Summerhill meeting which took place at the House of Commons! I also interviewed Susan, Nathan's mother, and a strong supporter.

At midnight there was a gathering of all Summerhillians in a big circle, with those who were leaving in an inner circle as all sang Auld Lang Syne, followed by a lot of hugs and tears.

I met several Summerhill Alumni at the EOT. One of them was a soft-spoken Japanese boy who helped us repaint the lines on the tennis court. His name is Yoshiki, and he told me he has just been accepted into the Royal Scottish Academy of Music. At my request he then played a very difficult and beautiful selection from Ravel on the piano. He said he learned music at Summerhill, which arranged private lessons for him. I met another former student who is now running his own photographic studio in Amsterdam, and a third, an American, who has a Japanese restaurant called Saga in a very fancy part of London. At his invitation we ate there on the last day and it was great.

William Smith, an American film maker was at Summerhill making a documentary about the school. We helped him find funding so he could continue his project and release a film giving an accurate picture of Summerhill to help counteract the slanderous accusations made by OFSTED.

After the End of Term party he brought us to the train and we traveled to Albert and Popsy Lamb's house, in the Cotswolds, near Stroud, one of my favorite places in the world. Albert edited the new Summerhill book, a more recent editing of Neill's writing, and both he and Popsy were students in the school. While we were there we went to a new site of one of those mysterious crop circles, afterward visiting Avebury, a standing stone circle similar to Stonehenge and also thousands of years old. We also visited Bath and the Roman ruins. While there we met two people who were aware of the Summerhill situation and very supportive of the school. One was from a comprehensive school and had students doing street theater. She

said Summerhill was her ideal, but she couldn't go that far in her school. The other was a former teacher in a Quaker school, now running a health-food restaurant.

I was originally going to give a talk at Flexi-college in the north of England, but that was canceled with the college faced a sudden financial crisis and was threatened with closure. Nevertheless, a Mary Ann Rose, a homeschooler who lived near Stroud decided to track me down at Albert's house and came over with her oldest son to interview me. She has created a program and publications to help beginning home educators. She works with a support group of 60 families.

Returning to Summerhill for the IDEC on the evening of the 22nd, I met some of the first attendees. Many of them were AERO-related, and some were surprises. One of those was David French, who had first e mailed AERO from Poland and wants to start a democratic school there. Another was Christos Voulis, who originally contacted us from Greece and wants to start a school there. He expressed his great thanks for the support we had given him and even showed us an AERO article which had been translated into Greek and put into his journal. Also, Helen Hughes an AERO member from Windsor House School, a public alternative in Vancouver, Canada, joined us

Tokyo Shure arrived from Japan with a group of 15, including 12 students. Jim Connor arrived. He is a board member of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools and will teach this year at Upattinas School in PA. He had just been bicycle-riding in Spain. And had visited a school there, Los Muchachos, a school which takes students, some of whom are orphans, and trains them to be circus performers. He said they have new branches in South America.

The next day the conference opened, and was to be governed in the style of the Summerhill democratic meeting, with a Summerhill student chairing. We talked about how decisions were going to be made during the conference. Decisions were made about quiet times, smoking, etc.

At one point a special meeting was called because some people had been kept awake by noise the night before and have broken the rule which had been previously made. After long discussion it was decided to appoint "beddies officers" and two volunteered and were approved. But some were impatient with the meeting process and wanted to "get on with the conference." A proposal was made to end the meeting before the powers of the beddies officers were defined, and it passed, a decision which had at least one unfortunate results, which we will speak about later.

There were a total of 167 people at the conference, made up as follows: 123 delegates, 19 Summerhill students, 16 other students/children and 9

Summerhill staff. They came from 19 different countries. (Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, England, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Palestine, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, United States, Wales)

I took the participants through a networking exercise at the start of the conference. We made a big circle and brought various categories into the center and asked a few of each to explain their connection and background in a few seconds. The categories included those from out of the country, from democratic schools, from state schools, writers, administrators, students, etc. It was a quick way for people to get to know each other.

Beyond Tokyo Shure and Summerhill there were not many students from democratic schools at the conference. About fifteen Summerhill students participated in the conference and their involvement was strong. We hope some of them will come to next year's IDEC. One student came representing Sands School, and one student came from Hadera School in Israel. One great workshop involving students was led by David Gribble. Democratic education was discussed from the student point of view, with many questions for the students coming from the audience.

There were several workshops specific to the crisis which Summerhill is facing. One was about how alternative schools should be inspected and involved discussion of creating standards which would make sense to democratic schools. For example, one standard could require that a large majority of the students should vote that they like going to their school. Another could require empowerment of students.

Derry Hannam was one of two school inspectors to attend the conference he gave a very well documented talk about why schools which empower students and are learner-centered are more effective.

For my radio show that week I interviewed Derry. I also interviewed Helen Hughes from Windsor House School in Vancouver. We did the show from the office. Uri had worked very hard the evening before to download realaudio player so people would be able to hear the radio show live from the Internet and had finally succeeded. After the show I went over to the computer room to see what the reaction had been. I discovered to my surprise that they had been listening to the first 15 minutes of the show, which started at 11 PM, when the beddies officer came in and ordered them to shut it off! Despite protests, Uri complied with the order, although it seemed that the sound was disturbing nobody, and people later said that the officer was out of line. Thus, incomplete democratic process interfered with at least 10 people's desire to hear the radio show!

One of the first keynote speakers was Gerison Lansdown who presented the

case for children's rights and discussed her work with the United Nations. Also, Roland Meighan from Education Now talked about "the Next Learning System." He said that it is an extension of the learner-centered approach which recognizes individual learning styles which we all pioneered, starting in the 60's, but that the best way to present it is that it is the system of the future. Among other things, he showed us a cartoon of a line of animals including a monkey, squirrel, elephant, and fish, with the following instruction: To be fair, each of you must pass the same test—climb the tree!

I did a workshop, introducing participants to IDEC and showing the video from last year's IDEC at the Stork School in Ukraine. Later in the conference we had a meeting over lunch of IDEC people to discuss where the conference might be next year. To our surprise, there were several strong bids to host the conference, from Tokyo Shure in Japan, the Hope Flower School in Bethlehem, along with an offer last year from Alexander Tubelsky of the School of Self-Determination in Moscow, which I reminded the group about.

After the first meeting we seemed hopelessly deadlocked. The Hope Flower School and Hadera agreed they might be able to co-host. Tokyo Shure with their large representation had clearly been working hard on their bid, and even passed out to the group a flyer they had prepared, featuring a proposed budget, funding sources, and accommodations.

As we went into a second meeting during supper, I think we all assumed that we wouldn't be able to make a decision about the site, and the question might drag on through the year. But unexpectedly, Hussein Issa said, "As much as we need the conference at our school next year, I think that Tokyo Shure deserves to have it there, as they have clearly done more work on preparation. I suggest we have it in Japan next year, and that Hadera and Hope Flower co-host the next year." We had complete consensus on the suggestion, and a lot of energy behind it. We felt that this would give us a good lead time to get support for the conference in Tokyo, and even more time to get support for the Hadera/Hope Flower conference. We even suggested that funds should be found to bring Hope Flower students to the Japan conference to better prepare them for the next year.

Lost in the shuffle was last year's offer by Tubelsky, but since we had no confirmation of the offer from last year, the case was moot. We did have communication from Oleg Belin of Stork, wishing us well, regretting that they couldn't come to Summerhill, and describing their first steps toward becoming a regional center for democratic education.

The group did also recommend that we should create a more formal organization and decision-making process during this year.

Everybody left with good feelings and surprise that we had come to consensus.

That evening there was a band providing music and calling for country dancing. Meanwhile I prepared to lead a benefit auction which took place after the dance. People bid on donated home visits, a week as a student at Summerhill, a rare original Neill book, That Dreadful School, Japanese origami, kiwi soap and other items from New Zealand, a Summerhill T shirt, etc. The auction raised almost 300 pounds.

Throughout the weekend people swam in the Summerhill swimming pool, played table tennis, and I even got some tennis in. The weather was great.

Michael Newman, the Summerhill staff member who helped coordinate and moderate the conference, somehow managed to always keep his good sense of humor throughout. He and other Summerhill students and staff members worked hard through the whole conference to make it a great success. The students were an important presence.

On the last day each school represented at the conference made a presentation. There was also a discussion about the need for an international organization. Jesse Mumm and Jim Connor of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools said they wanted to set up an organization designed specifically to rescue schools which were under attack in some way. In the discussion we talked about how AERO had been able to find financial help and other support for schools which had been in crisis, including Hadera School, Hope Flowers School, Rogers Person Centered School in Budapest, The school of Self Determination, The Moscow International Film School, and The Eureka Free University in Russia, the Free School in Albany, New York, and the Stork Family School in Ukraine.

Of course, we have left out many details, which others should feel free to add, since I could not attend all workshops. After a final meeting, various groups began to leave after a very productive conference. We will stay in touch through the IDEC listserve.

The Story of a Democratic School in Guatemala

A year ago Margaret Allen of Miami e mailed me about alternative schools she knew of in Guatemala. She also mentioned us to her friends Rita and Roberto Vizcaino who subsequently sent us the following information about their school in Guatemala. They had wanted to attend the IDEC at Summerhill but were not able to get funding in time. They hope to go to next year's IDEC. --JM

We are coming out of over 35 years of war against ourselves and the processes of dialog, democracy, and participation still have to be developed so that all of the groups that make up our multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual Guatemala have a true and conscious grasp of them. In spite of it all we would like to share our experience so that it can reach other educators and so, allow us to indirectly participate in the IDEC and find a place among those with a history of Education for Democracy.

The school started functioning in 1978, in a small rented house with the characteristic of every room being surrounded by a garden. This cultivated our first 13 students, who for a period of one year experimented an ideal relationship among themselves and with the faculty.

The next year we grew unexpectedly and this brought the classic problems of people interacting within a group. There was a struggle for power among the faculty, the students, and even the parents of the students. By the end of the second year we found new facilities which we were able to lease at a very low price. These new facilities consisted of an old abandoned house built in the middle an acre of land. It had a pool that had until then been converted into a warehouse and the garden had been used as a dumping site for broken bottles from a brewery.

This house had enough room for us to operate for a few years, but then the growth of the school forced us to build new classrooms; these were made out of plywood. These classrooms functioned for about 5 years, time at which they had to be replaced. The new classrooms were then built with bamboo with cloth for wallpaper; they turned out to be beautiful, spacious, well vented, and with great illumination. All this went along perfectly with the spring time weather of our country. We spent several very pleasant and original years in these classrooms. They were not modified until two or three years before our eviction, time at which they were replaced by prefab classrooms still surrounded by gardens. After calling this place home for 18 years the land was sold to a developing company that decided to build a huge apartment complex in it. After being evicted we were lucky enough to find a new place to lease almost immediately. This new place was in the outskirts of the city and very close to where now we are building our own installations.

Our initial purpose when the school was created, was to concentrate on highly intelligent children. The marketing of such concept proved to be unexpectedly difficult in our country, so during the first years the school had very few students and they didn't fit the original profile but were a typical sample of school-age children. Suddenly, after three years of functioning with under 50 students we grew to 175 children and the problems common to large groups started. Instead of handling them in a traditional

manner, we opted for the development of some alternative model. Under advice from a psychiatrist, we went for the Anglo-Saxon justice system. Each child in a conflict could choose an attorney among the students, who in light of their natural tendency to be fair, had been chosen for such positions. The other party could choose a DA. It did not take long before we achieved "success," and two weeks later no one wanted to be in class.

The students wanted to be taking part in the "trials" and discussing their own problems. Parents started to worry by what seemed a waste of time and an abandonment of traditional education. The situation reached conflict when a group of students from 8th grade (14-15 year olds) wanted to try a teacher for making a six-hour long test, and not being present while it was being administered; they had none to answer their questions about the test. The demand was presented in a legal paper. The teacher overreacted to it and presented herself with her lawyer, threatening to sue for the "lack of respect towards authority of the students".

Lawyer and teacher could not restrain the enthusiasm we all felt. It was not perfect, but it was a fair way to solve interpersonal problems. We clearly let everyone know the rules of the game: that she had agreed when we talked about the "trials," and that we were committed to the experience, everyone, from principals and teachers to students. This teacher had the option of attending the trial or resigning. Faced with this situation, the lawyer calmed his client and told the children that they could not try anyone, much less call him/her delinquent if there was not a previously established law. The teacher then went to trial with the privilege of it being behind closed doors. From that day forward, the students stayed after classes, working in a new constitution. The process of citizenship was then based and strengthened in the students, teachers, and parent's conscience. It is now called Naleb' City.

We have undergone fascinating experiences as well as deep apathetic times. We have in fact observed the creation and growth of a nation within a nation. The school community has reflected most of the events affecting our country by reproducing them in a smaller scale. We have had coups d'etat, the Naleb' Constitution has been annulled three times; we've had sieges to the school's snack shop, strikes, groups of guerrilla students, etc. Overall the children have acted like in their real world, with all the national problems of the past years being played by them in the much more controlled environment of the school. Our students have learned to solve problems inherent to large groups of persons through dialogue, and compromise. We have evidence of this as some of them have successfully employed the techniques learned in school to solve problems at the companies where they work. We must remark that due to totalitarianism military governments of the past, we were, at times, afraid to carry on with our labor, but fortune was on our side in this respect and we never

suffered for it.

In 1998, the OAS Pro-Peace Commission heard about our experience and the General Coordinator sent a group to observe the school for four months. The outcome was a note indicating that "they were greatly impressed when they measured the real impact of the methodology developed by Colegio Naleb' throughout these past 18 years".

Four months later we received a commendation from the Ministry of Education in Guatemala, and in it the importance of disclosing our program to other educational institutions was acknowledged. We were prompted to aid in the process of bringing our methodology to others.

We must mention that we function under full recognition by the government since we fulfill every academic requirement. Also, according to letters received from the admissions office of several universities in the country, our highschool graduates perform consistently well in the admission examinations. Although in other countries, there are schools that have also implemented the idea of a student government, we feel that the process of dialogue through which we promote moral values and the importance of the common wealth, while strengthening the individual makes us unique.

We are currently in the process of building our own installations and for this we have mortgaged all we own. Still we are US \$650,000 short to create a Regional Center for the Education for Dialogue (CRED for its initials in Spanish) and the establishment of a pilot program which would last for a year and involve ten schools and ten companies. We feel that we have a commitment to our country, Guatemala, to spread the fruit of our experience, elementary in its conception, evident in those countries where democracy has deep roots, but still needed in most of Latin American countries where for years a culture of silence has been a mean of survival. We are convinced that education is the only way to teach democracy to large groups of people that have so far lived in segregation and oppression.

Once again, thank you for inviting us to your IDEC. We deeply regret not being able to attend, but we hope that in the future we'll have another chance to do it. Meanwhile we can only ask you to get in contact with us and help us to tell our story to the attendants to the IDEC. All comments and criticisms are more than welcome, and we would greatly appreciate if you could help us contact institutions and individuals that could aid us in reaching our goals. As we thank you again, we wish your IDEC to be a huge success.

Rita and Roberto Vizcaino (ritanaleb@hotmail.com)

Feedback from Gatto Show on WBAI:

BabsC45@aol.com: Dear Jerry: As a teacher whose been in the system for the last 20+ years, I've amassed a lot of very strong feelings about what is wrong with our educational system, and have felt quite helpless to contribute in a meaningful way, which I would really like to do. I am a violin in a small, upper middle class Westchester suburb. I love my job, but always feel that there's something more that I should be doing for society, through my job. In addition, not many of my colleagues speak my language, the language of a passionate educator, who loves to teach, and longs for a more creative, unusual, stimulating and courageous teaching environment. I look to recreate my wonderful high school experience, and long to give back to the community in a meaningful way. I don't know if you can direct or advise me. Perhaps you know of a community of educators who feel as I do. The charter schools interest me, and you talked about that today. If you have any response at all, please let me know. Thanks for a great show today. Barbara.

Jerry, I just finished listening to your show. Great job! You have a gentle manner and a way of keeping the show focused on the issue. I will call in to let WBAI know how much I enjoyed it. I hope it becomes a regular show. You and Gatto speak of the necessity of choice, organic and interest-driven education, etc. Further, Gatto went on to mention some practices he maintained as a public school teacher: sending kids out of the building, providing a menu of options, negotiating learning goals. In addition, I use most of my knowledge as a teacher in power to creatively work the system to the benefit of the students - i.e., getting them credit for nontraditional experiences that are not based on course work. I believe all these things are necessary. But my experience has been disappointing. I feel stuck sometimes as a public school teacher. We are happily homeschooling our own children, but I strive to create a better alternative within public schooling. How can a traditional public NYC school with some progressive leanings move towards a vision of education as organic, interest-led and humane? Who are the people working on this issue? What are concrete actions that have been taken to forward this action? Michael.

wkazir@epix.net: Dear Mr. Mintz, I can't begin to tell you how excited I was hearing your program on the Utrice Leid show yesterday! My wife and I are home schooling our three children and are always looking for resources to help us in improving their experience. Listening to the discussion with Dr. Gatto, I couldn't help but be amazed. My wife handles the chief responsibilities of our children's education and I can't wait to fill her in. Please keep up the work of informing parents and others about the choices available to enable us to truly help our children the best we can so that they can help themselves now and into the future. Sincerely, Wazir.

I heard the discussion on WBAI with Utrice, Jerry and John G. It was

invigorating. I have 3 kids. My 12 year old son is in the public school system. I don't look forward to another year of mediocrity. I will visit the school more and raise hell if that's what it takes. Thanks for the resource (Almanac). I will order it and share it with other families. Thanks. Camille.

Jerry--Congratulations!!!!!!! I sent the info to school board members I argue with. A radio show and a big personality like John Taylor Gatto might intrigue people who usually don't understand why we need to transform education! Yay, Jerry!!! Kimberly.

Jerry, Best of luck to you. People even in populated areas need your show & Magazine, and many more like them. The Alternative Education community has been slowly (VERY) letting outsiders hear their stories. I believe the fear was (is) that individual schools would become too large. We are now at a point where if we continue there will be so many options that possibly even public schools will be of a less overwhelming size. Best wishes. Susan.

Feedback from Education Revolution Radio Show on Talk America Network

I heard you on KTSA this morning. My grandson, age 7, is attending the summer program at the Circle school in S.A. I do not see how he will be able to attend year around due to the cost. This saddens me. Here in Texas , they voted down the school voucher program...of course. He was in Montessori when he was 4 years old for a while, and his mother went to Montessori when she was 4,5, and 6. It made such a difference.

My grandson was forced to attend public school for the first grade last year and I saw a lot of changes in him that were not positive. I hate it. One day he came home and started crying as soon as he got off the bus. He told his mother, he had an earache all day long, but had to wait all day long to cry, until he was out of school. I know they didn't tell him this, it is just the "attitude" in public schools demanding you to perform according to their expectations. Your feelings do not matter. He was only six years old, and a wonderful student...they adore him. He KNOWS what they expect of him, and he can't be himself until he gets home.

It makes me sick. Thanks for your comments and this site. I am sending it on to everyone I know with children...especially in my family. Jahad2, herwig2000@webtv.net

THE TREE

(From Burl Waits e mail group)

Peter Senge took two years to discover that the best way to describe learning was to utilize the tree:

"About halfway through my 40 year study of human learning systems I spent a year with a book called TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION-Published in 1963-One quote at page 91 explains what is happening in education reform."

"If a petal of a flower starts to wither, a skilled Gardner does not water the pedal, he waters the roots"

And many of us have heard the old native American saying:

"No tree has branches so foolish as to fight among themselves"

Mail and Communications

THE LANGBERG FOUNDATION IS A SMALL FAMILY FOUNDATION WHOSE PURPOSES ARE:

To encourage and support the development of innovative educational programs and schools;

To encourage and support the professional development of teachers and principals for these schools;

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I'm an ex-Summerhillian from 1957. I'm delighted that so many people are taking an interest and I hope we can persuade this nutty Govt. to change it's mind. Incredibly, S'hill turned me right around from a 'Problem Child' to a happy, well-balanced kid, who actually wound up with some belief in his ability to achieve something in this world. I'm proud to say that I've done extremely well in the music -- business to the point that I can guarantee that many people will have records that I've produced in their vinyl and CD collections. I even qualified for an entry in the Guinness Book of Records! I don't list these successes as a boast, simply as a way of registering that, despite my father writing me off as a Black Sheep, due to my hopeless career at my previous school, I finally came up trumps and, frankly, I've always attributed that largely to my education at S'Hill. Neill was a brilliant chap, and we all respected him above God. He helped to unleash my inner creative abilities, allowing me to do exactly what I wanted to, as long as it didn't interfere with my contemporaries, and gave me some sense of real value. I know damn well, that had my father been in the position to continue to force me to stay at my Public School, I almost certainly would have achieved bugger-all in the world and been a depressed nonentity. Thank you Neill, thank you Summerhill, and thank you everybody that was there with me. I love the bloody lot of you! All the

Best, Gus Dudgeon.

"When private schools accept significant levels of public funding, they usually must comply with a rather high degree of government regulation. Countries that heavily subsidize private schools also regulate and inspect them in areas that many American private schools might find objectionable, such as course content, testing policies, student admissions, tuition levels, teacher hiring and salaries, and composition of governing boards." This is the finding of the Center on Education Policy after reviewing information from research studies and government documents about private school funding and regulation in 22 countries. The results are available in a booklet called Lessons from Other Countries about Private School Aid from CEP at 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 619, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-822-8065. Fax: 202-822-6008. Web: www.ctredpol.org.

The Journal of Family Life; Empowering Young People is considering changing its name and would appreciate suggestions from readers. The Journal is the quarterly publication of the Albany's Free School in New York. The latest issue features interviews with Grace Llewellyn and Joseph Chilton Pearce; an article by Linda Coco and Ralph Nader called "Corporate America's Exploitation of Our Children"; one about "Democracy in the Night Schools of Rajasthan" by Mary John; and much more. Their address is 22 Elm St., Albany, NY 12202. Web: <http://www.empireone.net/~freeschool>.

Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities, a new journal on alternative education, is seeking essays, poetry, and other writing from young persons ranging in age from those who are quite young to those who are in college. The writing submitted need not be on education and learning per se, though such pieces are especially welcome. Young writers wishing to submit work for us to consider should send their pieces to Samara Miles, the journal's Associate Editor in charge of young persons' submissions, at moonsong@ix.netcom.com. Word files attached to e-mail messages are particularly welcome. If, instead, the writer wants to send a hard copy of her or his work, (s)he should mail it to the journal's editor, Richard J. Prystowsky, School of Humanities and Languages, Irvine Valley College, 5500 Irvine Center Drive, Irvine, CA 92620.

From Education Now, Summer 1999: "Current research on the brain shows that early neuron synapse connections are established at a phenomenal rate during the first three years or so. They begin to tail off by about age ten." The article entitled "After Five, Your Brain is Cooked" continues: We can actually see (via PET/CAT scans) how stress affects a young child's brain; we can monitor the changes that occur in serotonin levels. We can note that early, frequent and intense stress in childhood tunes the brain to set stress regulation mechanisms at a high level. This can sometimes result in a child learning and operating in a state of persistent fear; and

this eventually seems to cause changes to the overall structure of the brain which are most irremediable." While children are naturally and very rapidly learning in the very early years, the best approach to children under five is not formal curriculum or early reading programs, it is "social interaction, laughter, and play." 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ.

From: Christina Hall (christinahall@crosswinds.net)

I was very glad to see the focus on Columbine closer to the actual source of the problem. It gets ridiculous watching blame being pointed at gun owners, Hollywood, TV and everything else under the sun. I really admire Jerry Mintz and all he has done. As a parent I feel a lot safer with him doing the work he is doing, that is a very big deal.

A small group of parents in Ukiah are planning to start a democratic school/learning center in the next year. We're strongly influenced by the writings of Ron Miller and the holistic education concepts and therefore are seeking to design a Holistic/ Sudbury model. The Mariposa Institute has been formed to promote alternative education in our area of Northern CA. The Institute will be developing a web site for the (now closed) Mariposa School archives (www.pacific.net/~mariposa). I think it's important to find ways to build alliances with other alternative/ holistic/ progressive (etc.) schools and organizations, and the NCACS just might be one way to do this (along with AERO, etc.). Mariposa School was a member of NCACS, but we weren't very active in promoting the idea. I've been impressed by their more recent revitalization efforts. I'd appreciate any thoughts on this. Thanks very much. Larry Sheehy. Email: mariposa@pacific.net.

From Syd Fredrickson, M.Ed., Seattle, WA:

I'm already getting the Education Revolution. And so glad that I am. I'll be visiting two democratic schools in Virginia, seeing Gesundheit's land, where (because of my responding to Patch Adams' ad in your magazine) I will have a first chance to get familiar with the area/talk to them about my ideas for starting a community school there; AND, attend the Twin Oaks Women's Gathering--where I used to live--seeing lots of friends there at the end of next month. I would feel so stranded and out of the loop if not for the networking made possible by the Almanac of School Choices, Education Revolution Magazine, and these electronic links. Jerry, again, Thanks!

I just put up a website called: www.youthpower.net and an organization called Power to the Youth. It is an attempt to involve and empower youth in taking charge of their own education, both in and out of "the system." A fledgling, two-week old organization that it is, I am asking for help of all types and would be most grateful for any effort you could make in sending us your suggestions; spreading the word to others who might be able

to help, especially young people; advising me of any cheap advertising opportunities in any journals, magazines that you know of; and, if you feel so obliged, becoming a member or making a much-needed contribution. I'm 19 and my bank account is a whopping 32.50. The money goes directly to funding the site, and most of all creating publications and pamphlets to give to young people across the country. So with that, I thank you and hope to hear from you soon! Bill W.

Alan Benard, a director with the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools would like to invite you to explore their new Web site, <http://ncacs.org>. "The site includes an online brochure which explains who we are and what we do, as well as news from our member schools and programs. Visitors to the site from outside the US are especially alerted to our International Outreach page. Thanks to Jerry Mintz, and AERO for the opportunity to spread the news." NCACS, 1266 Rosewood Unit 1, Ann Arbor MI 48184 USA, ncacs1@earthlink.net

Arnold Greenberg writes: Liberty School, a democratic learning community in Bluehill, Maine had its second graduation recently; ten students graduated and received beautiful handmade diplomas written and artfully drawn by younger students. Liberty is an independent school that receives tuition from the various towns in Maine, so 95% of students come free. To graduate, students petition the graduation committee and document that they have met the minimum requirements of the state, but more important, they propose a Graduation Project around an essential question which they work on and then present to the school community. This "rite of passage" project has great meaning for both the students and the school because the students feel a sense of accomplishment, that they have studied or worked on something in depth and they have been recognized, celebrated and honored. Our hope is that younger students begin thinking about their Graduation Project and begin building their curriculum and activities around it. That's happening. When young people feel respected, and equally important, trusted, they feel allowed to be themselves and it is wonderful to see the real person emerge and gain a sense of his or her own power. It's been an exciting year!

Home Education News

(Ed note: AERO did a consultation to encourage North Star's development): Kara WillowBrook writes: I have been a homeschooling mom of three kids for 13 years. In September another homeschooling mom and I opened a democratically run homeschool resource center, North Star. We currently have 18 children, K-6, enrolled. Kids attend anywhere from 1 to 5 days a week. North Star Center is part of a growing movement designed to provide a more holistic, child centered alternative to traditional education. Our hands-on, multi-sensory approach is geared to meet the needs of many learning styles. Our philosophy is that children are natural learners and

do best in a non-coercive atmosphere that actively supports their own curiosity and interests. In North Star's less structured environment children are free to move and talk at will pursuing their own unique interests and developing their own unique talents. Children are given the experience of thinking and discovering for themselves, rather than always being told what to think and do. This maintains their natural love of learning as well as promoting the important life skills of perseverance, self-motivation, and initiative. It's really been an adventure! We have been amazed (and thrilled) by how quickly the kids have caught on to this system, and how completely they have claimed ownership of their school. We've had some ups and downs in our first month, but this is definitely one thing that just shines. I don't know if our center would be up and running this year if it weren't for the help and ideas and inspiration that I've gotten from everyone. Thanks for considering us and helping us launch! Kara and Shari. North Star School & Homeschool Resource Center is located in Port Orchard, WA. Email: WillowWake@integrityol.com or shari-weber@usa.net. Web: www.northstar.homepage.com.

Re: Jailing of Karen Maple: (Compilation from Several Sources)

In Vermont, a school will carry a student on their rolls even though that same student is not in attendance, for whatever reason, of that school. After as many as 6 months, the school will contact the state to inform them a child was not in attendance and then reimburse the state the funds which they provided for that student. But, what if a student has been carried on the school roll for 3 years and has not been in attendance all that time due to his mother's decision to homeschool him? Once it is found out that a school has done so, that would be quite a 'chunk of change' that school must reimburse the state. It is easy to see why any school would want to prevent a student from leaving their domain, especially a special education student who is bringing in thousands of extra dollars.

The story begins so typically. Seventh-grader Trevor Maple was bored at school, displayed a short attention span, and read at a second grade level. Academic problems escalated into social problems. He even went to live with his grandparents to give another school system a try, but to no avail. His school's vice-principal advised Trevor's mom that homeschooling could be a perfect alternative. His mother, Karen Maple, then made the choice to homeschool her son after years of intolerable treatment of her son by that elementary school and the school's repeated failure to teach him anything. Trevor's scores improved markedly, as did his self-confidence when he was in a learning environment that didn't call him "learning disabled." However, school officials deemed the test results suspect. Then, eighteen months after homeschooling began, the school called to ask if Trevor was absent because of illness. Karen thought this strange, but was assured it was a clerical mistake. This was before the school sent a letter to the state's attorney claiming that Trevor was a child in need of supervision.

Enter several court appearances over two years, always with a public defender, always denied the ability to submit SAT scores into evidence. To date, Karen has had three public defenders, as has Trevor. Karen was arrested, found in contempt of court for failure to bring Trevor to a juvenile court hearing on August 13. Diane Wheeler, Franklin County deputy state's attorney acting as prosecutor, states, "Essentially, Ms. Maple holds the key to the cell door," meaning they don't intend to release her until she offers up custody of Trevor as her bail. If Karen fails in her plight, we all fail. Call 802-933-4514 for information on how to help. CM

HomeSource offers classes to homeschooling families. The program is available to students, K-12. They offer computer technology--have 20 computers on site, 'Hands on Math Manipulatives' classes, etc. They have a 1 teacher/5 students ratio in their classes and contract with off-campus resources for other activities, such as tennis lessons, swimming, horseback riding, going to the symphony, etc. They expect to serve 600-700 students next year, their third year of operation. They have an excellent relationship with their district and its superintendent, have had no complaints from the Teachers' Association. The law the center operates under does not require certificated teachers. HomeSource, P.O. Box 40884, Eugene, OR 97404. Tel: 541-689-9959. Fax: 541- 689-1051. Web: www.betheltech.com. Email: paulaw@betheltech.com.

Homeschoolers and their supporters should be wary of the recent study released by the Home School Legal Defense Association, according to an article by Larry and Susan Kaserman, "HSLDA Study: Embarrassing and Dangerous" (Home Education Magazine, Summer, 1999). The reasons stated are that the study draws conclusions about homeschoolers based on an unrepresentative sample; ie, only homeschoolers "who took Iowa tests through Bob Jones University Testing service, whose parents completed the questionnaire, and whose questionnaires were not eliminated because of administrative problems." The sample homeschoolers included in the study were further limited in several other ways. In addition, the authors assert, the study fails to meet criteria of social scientists in four key ways: coverage error, sampling error, measurement error, and nonresponse error. HEM, PO Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855. Tel: 509-486-1351. Web: <http://www.home-ed-magazine.com>.

Since Six Flags Great Adventure first created Home School Day, other businesses in New Jersey have followed suit. The Camden Aquarium now has six home school days planned for the next year. The Philadelphia Zoo holds Zooschool for elementary homeschoolers every week during the school year. Liberty Science Center also has a Home School Day each year. Nancy Plant explains in "New Jersey: A School Without Walls??" that much more is happening in Jew Jersey for homeschoolers as more and more organizations

reach out to this growing population. "These organizations provide, among other things, the 'Socialization' everybody (except us) worries about so much." Unschoolers Network, Two Smith Street, Farmingdale, NJ 07727.

A new experiential, democratic school and homeschool resource center has opened this fall in Washington. The North Star School and Homeschool Resource Center was founded by Shari Weber and Kara Willowbrook with the goal of empowering parents who have ultimate control over their children's education. Students, from kindergarten to grade six, are registered as homeschoolers with their school districts. Therefore, North Star does not have to comply with state attendance regulations and students can be enrolled one to five days a week. Teachers ("facilitators") don't have to be accredited and are aided by high school age homeschoolers ("apprentices"). The school now has 14 students enrolled, will eventually have 30 a day, and may add a junior high school. For more information call 360-876-7706. 1880 Lawrence St., Port Orchard, WA 98366.

A revised second edition of The Homeschooling Handbook by Mary Griffith has recently been released. This book covers all the basics of what parents need to know before deciding to homeschool and answers questions that arise along the way. Practical advice is given on topics such as how homeschooling works, research on its effectiveness, costs involved, and how and where to find materials and resources. It is available from Prima Publishing, 3875 Atherton Rd., Rocklin, CA 95765.

This note is to announce that I have finally finished a long overdue updating of my Homeschool Resource Guide, formerly posted on Prodigy. It is now on @Home at <http://members.home.net/ct-homeschool/guide.htm>. The Guide has grown to over 400 entries, 320+ of which have web links built into the listing. I have also added short linked pages providing a brief history of the Guide and describing some tips for navigating it. Check it out if you can or at least save a bookmark for future reference. I plan to restructure the Guide next month to speed up access and usefulness of the contents. After all the work I have done on this, I'd like to be sure people see it. And there is no advertising to wade through, just pure content. Enjoy. Richard Shalvoy. Email: ct-homeschool@home.com.

From Leslie Moyer, moyerles@wiltel.net: "misc.education.home-school.misc/ is a great, extensive compilation of many different homeschool resources--I highly recommend it. For those that have previously linked to Richard Shalvoy's Prodigy page, this is the head's up to change the link."

The National Home Education Network is a community of peers working together to create a national organization that recognizes and respects the enormous diversity in the homeschool movement. NHEN strives to foster an understanding of homeschooling at the national level as well as to

facilitate networking among grassroots organizations. Currently we are building a "media kit" for those outside the homeschool community. If you have information that you think might be helpful in this area, please contact Linda at ldobson@aldus.northnet.org. The NHEN website <http://nhen.org> is now being built. If you have web expertise and would like to help develop the NHEN website, contact Helen at HEM-Editor@home-ed-magazine.com. If homeschooling politics is your interest, contact Sheila at hsmick@aol.com. The Support Group Committee is busy compiling a comprehensive list of active support groups nationwide. Contact Leslie at moyerles@wiltel.net. To find out more about how you can participate in this exciting new organization, you may subscribe to the general NHEN email list at <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe/NHEN>. Box 244, 22 Westerville Square, Westerville, OH 43081.

When I tried to find out who was on our school attendance review board, I was told that it wasn't public information. I began to hear stories from people who had gone before this board who had many stories of being harassed and degraded. The real problem here is that they are targeting children with health problems. The parents are having trouble getting the child's work from the schools, and then being penalized for keeping their sick children home. This review board has told people that they are lucky their children have turned out as well as they have, with parents like them. One woman, whose son had a twisted bowel from birth, was told that she had never done anything for her son in the entire 16 years of his life. They have told parents that if they tried to home school their children, they would be put in jail, and their children taken away. This past school year we had a change in California, in the way the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) money is allocated. There is no longer an excused absence; if the child is not at school, the school doesn't get the ADA money. So now the schools want the kids there, sick or not. It is obviously all about the money. It has caused a lot of trouble for a lot of people. I got involved because I felt that they were not running the review board with the right intentions. The goal of this board is supposed to be to help keep your child in school, by doing anything necessary to make it easier for that child to be there. So, if you have heard of anything like this happening in other places, or have any ideas, I would appreciate the info. Holly

Public Alternatives

From Anne Evans: 37 years ago a small group of parents founded a parent-run cooperative preschool in Santa Rosa. Now this same group of parents have grandchildren who have entered the same preschool, but this time these children of the cooperative preschool were not satisfied to let the system swallow up their children -- so together with the grandparent group, they applied for a charter for a parent controlled cooperative charter school. The school is now k - 6 (shortly to become k - 8 if the membership so

decides) and it is democratic in that all stake holders have a vote. Children have been responsible for their part in the school day, making boundary rules and conduct rules, etc. The school has grown into a cooperative of three schools under one blanket: preschool, children's center (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and charter school. Our web page is under construction at <http://www.~srec.sonic.net> . Please visit us! Anne

Rhonda Goebel; (rRANDS@chicago.avenew.com) writes: I have found that the school establishment does an effective job at reproducing itself by disallowing virtually any movement, however slight, away from their established norm, sometimes to the point of self-contradiction or hypocrisy. For example, we had a staff discussion on how to implement concepts from a book on brain-based research. I pointed out that according to one of the research items listed in the book people naturally begin to read anywhere between the ages of 4-10, and asked how we can include this vital piece of info in our school. The principal immediately stepped in to say that because of outside pressures, we could not adapt that info to our school. So we continue to have pull-out reading services for kids as young as 6, spending thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars on forcing young people to read before they are ready. These kids are shamed, many plagued long term with feelings of inadequacy. Wildly enough, it seems all the staff agreed with the principal. Another example: We will be 'trained' in how to facilitate inquiry into subjects, following the lead of the children's interest. Yet all the packaged curriculum will not only remain and be expected to be followed (tenured teachers have actually lost their jobs for not following the script), but will be added to. Millions of taxpayer dollars are spent on the purchase and update of packaged curriculum, just in our district alone. And then the taxpayers get to also pay for our futile training so we can perceive and label ourselves as a 'progressive' school system. All at the expense of children's natural growth. Teaching in the establishment has been the most illogical reality I've ever experienced.

Lisa Brick (unity@gti.net) tells us that "the second year at Unity School is starting so much smoother than the first. There is some built-in, ongoing support this year and all indications look positive. A second application for a Unity charter school was submitted to the New Jersey DOE for next September! The learning environment is modeled after ours, including the democratic governance and sustainability pieces. I am pleased that the vision is spreading and feel acutely aware of how our integrity and success is imperative for its continued growth. While there are individuals getting involved with charter schools with differing objectives, there remains the opportunity for those with a deep commitment to the evolution of our children, society, and planet to play a proactive role in changing a system that has worked to the disadvantage of so many, if not all, in deep systemic ways. I honor those who choose out of the

system with home schooling and un-schooling, and I honor those who remain working within the system to transform its goals and methods. Neither path can assure personal success, however this term is defined, for the young people involved, yet both can provide opportunities to make an enormous, hopefully beneficial difference in the lives of many. I continue to appreciate all that you have seeded and support!"

"Only about one quarter of American students can write at a proficient level, according to a report released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Just one percent of the nation's students scored in the "advanced" range. 16 percent of fourth and eighth grade students and 22 percent of twelfth grade students scored below "basic," unable to show even "partial mastery of the knowledge and skills" expected at their grade levels. Authorized by Congress and administered by the Federal Government's National Center for Education Statistics, the assessment center has been testing students in a range of subjects since 1969. The 50-minute tests are designed to test narrative, informative and persuasive writing skills. The report showed a significant gender gap, with girls outscoring boys by 16-20 points at all grade levels, and about twice the percentage of girls as boys scoring in the "proficient" level." From "Most Pupils Can't Write Well, Report Says" by Jodi Wilgoren, The New York Times, September 29, 1999.

"Nine widely used middle school textbooks were examined over a four year period by Project 2061, a long-term effort of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, to improve science, math and technology education in schools. Not one was rated satisfactory, including the new selection of texts that has just entered the market. The study says the texts cover too many topics, fail to develop any of the topics well and offer classroom activities that are nearly useless in helping teachers and students understand important concepts. Two of the most popular textbooks, "Glencoe Science" (Glencoe/ McGraw-Hill, 1997) and "Prentice Hall Science" (Prentice Hall, 1997), received some of the lowest ratings." From "Failing Grade for Science Books" by Tamara Henry, USA Today, September 29, 1999. (<http://www.usatoday.com> or <http://www.edbriefs.com>).

Alternative certification has been a dramatic success to date, and according to The Center for Education Reform's Newsletter No.54, more states are opening up the teaching profession. Massachusetts began a bonus program to attract outstanding teacher and applicants say it is the "alternative path the state created that drew them to the program" as well as the monetary bonus. "In fact, the characteristics of the new teachers reflects a greater diversity, depth and equality than one normally finds among the ranks of traditionally-credentialed teachers." The Newsletter also reports that California's Teacher's Association attempt to unionize all charter schools has failed, but a compromise bill is still a possibility. 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 204, Washington, DC 20036.

In Massachusetts, the demand for the original 15 Charter Schools which opened in 1995 has tripled. The demand for all of Massachusetts' 34 Charter Schools has doubled as well. The number of charters allowed in that state is capped at 37, all of which have been issued. Currently, a bill is being considered to increase this number to almost 80. Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center, Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, 85 Devonshire St., 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109.

Mike Halloran, the founder of Venture School in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District and one of the early founders and leaders of LeARN (CA alternative education association), died of cancer at age 63. The memorial service for him was held on Friday, August 20, 1999 at St. John Vianney Church, Walnut Creek. The family asks that memorial donations go to Venture School's Halloran Opportunity Program in Education, 3280 East Crow Canyon Road, San Ramon 94583.

Beth Pratt (bethprat@massed.net) writes: We are are a grades 8-12 program. Our hours are from 2:30-9:30 pm, Monday through Thursday. The program began by servicing the kids that no one else wanted. I was a part-time director/teacher 1996-1997 and have been full-time since 1997. We are very popular with the school committee, the superintendent and the high school administration. They all have their own agendas, but for the most part, we are left on our own to work with some pretty disenfranchised kids. The sense of community that we have started to develop is noticeable not only to the staff, but to the students. For the most part, as I'm sure you know, these kids feel so withdrawn and distanced from school for about 50 different reasons. While the reasons have an affect on the students learning, drawing them back in, is where we believe that we are making a difference. This year, our goals are to provide ongoing staff development in the areas of differentiating instruction within a classroom; portfolio assessment; and educating linguistically and culturally diverse students within the classroom. I would love to be in contact with other alternative programs. We are located in central MA. Boston has a big alternative program, but it might be better to talk to people who are coming from a smaller city, like Fitchburg. Thank you in advance for any support and help you can offer. I am certified as a principal/assistant principal 5-9 and 9-12 and I am transferring my doctoral work from UMass/Lowell to Nova Southeastern University in September. I look forward to hearing from you. H: (978) 249-2849 and W: (978) 345-3244.

A Canadian public alternative school sees issues such as inadequate/unstable housing, low level of education, expulsion from regular school, physical and emotional abuse, drug and alcohol problems, lack of family support, and many more, as being barriers which get in the way of youth completing their education, obtaining jobs, and overall, finding their way

to independence. The School focuses on helping students overcome these barriers, educate themselves, and become successfully independent individuals. Tracey. Email: pathways@intergate.bc.ca.

MAAP: the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs has a large website for alternative educators and students at <http://www.informns.k12.mn.us/~0287maap>. We have 80,000 students in 800 schools in the state and could probably help some of you with your questions. We have contact numbers for most of our leaders and links to many related alternative sites. We are also hoping to host the next International Alternative Education Conference in Minneapolis in June of 2000 and are therefore sending a group to promote it at this weeks conference in Connecticut. Bill Jepson, MAAP webmaster.

International News and Communications

What is IDEC? by David Gribble

IDEC stands for International Democratic Education Conference. It is not the name of an organization or a group. What happens is that at each year's conference a school volunteers to run the conference for the next year. (In practice there has sometimes been a delay in finding a volunteer, and this year there had to be a choice made between several schools.) At intervals, calls have been made for an official structure of some kind -- another one came at Summerhill this year -- but in practice the autonomy of individual schools in arranging their own conferences has made for exciting variety. Once representatives of a school have agreed to run a conference, everything is in their hands -- dates, participants, cost, accommodation and style of conference. The length of the conferences has varied between two days for the first one to a two weeks in 1997. Students from both the host school and visiting schools have nearly always played a large part. The longer conferences have included days of sight-seeing and varied social and cultural events. Sometimes there has been a full program of prepared talks and workshops, and sometimes the program has been entirely decided by the participants after they arrived; sometimes there has been a bit of both. Some conferences have been funded entirely by the host schools or by outside agencies, but some schools have had to charge a fee. All decisions about such matters are taken by the host school.

The first conference was in 1993, in Israel, at the Democratic School of Hadera. A few teachers and students from democratic schools found themselves at a large conference in Jerusalem, called "Education for Democracy in a Multi-cultural Society." The participants were mostly philosophers, professors and politicians, so the teachers and students hardly had any opportunity to contribute. A small group was invited to Hadera for two days after the big conference, and the discussions were so stimulating that it was agreed to meet annually.

For the first four years it was known as the Hadera Conference, and

David Gribble sent out a newsletter two or three times a year. There were few contributors, and eventually it was abandoned. The hope was expressed that the Internet could provide a substitute, and Jerry Mintz now offers an IDEC listserver.

There are differing views as to the purpose of the IDECs. Some see them as an opportunity to discuss shared problems in a supportive atmosphere, where you know that other people share your values. Others hope to spread the idea of democratic education by inviting possible converts and attracting favorable publicity. Others see the conference as a means of bonding schools so that they can offer support in times of crisis, on the "united we stand, divided we fall" principle. Some see them as a way of improving the public perception of the host schools in their own countries. The purpose of any given conference is decided by the school that is organizing it.

The host school also decides who is to be invited. Usually you can get an invitation by simply expressing a desire to attend, but for the second conference at Sands a limit was set to the number of people from any one school, and it was suggested that at least half the delegates from each school should be students.

The 2000 IDEC is to be held in Tokyo, and will probably have new delegates from India, the Philippines, Thailand and Korea. It will be held in a conference center on the outskirts of Tokyo, and the total cost will be about \$180 for one week, including transport to and from the airport, accommodation and food and all organized activities. Write to Tokyo Shure IDEC Committee, 1-9-19 Kisimachi, Kita, Tokyo 114, or email them at info@shure.or.jp. David Gribble.

AUSTRALIA

Pine Community School is a small independent school offering alternate primary education. It is located in a semi-rural setting on the northwestern outskirts of Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Its motto is "Happy Children Learn" and it practices child-centered education. The school's new web-site is <http://www.uq.net.au/~zzpcs/home>. You may wish to add this to your list of links to schools offering alternative education. Regards, Bruce McClenahan, Director.

Adrienne Huber (a.huber@cowan.edu.au) writes: The literacy assessment project I am undertaking involves me finding out what is already being done in literacy assessment in the middle school years (about Years 6-10). I have an open book on what I include. In addition to this part of the project, I am also working with teachers at local independent and government schools to help them to articulate their and their students' needs. The final report and recommendations will be a collaborative effort on the part of participating schools and teachers and myself. The process is grounded in teachers' and students' experiences. The Association of Independent Schools in Western Australia is funding the project through

federal government funding. The Association is developing a National Literacy Plan for Independent Schools and needs to be flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of school philosophies. I believe it is critical that alternative forms of assessment be included in this report so schools can be informed when they make decisions about how they will assess students' learning. I would be very interested to hear about the alternative assessments raised at Summerhill.

BRAZIL

Helena Singer writes:

I have developed a list of how many free schools are in each country and when they were created. I reached these results based on your directory (Almanac), the list of the German and the Austrian Associations, the Summerhill Review and some correspondence that I exchanged with people all over the world. These results are in my book, so when I arrive home, I'll translate this extract of the book and send it to you. The research was finished in 1994, so it is not very updated. Finally, I'd like to tell you that I'm beginning to work to open a free school in Brazil, with Ricardo Semler, the entrepreneur to whom you gave my e-mail address almost one year ago. So, to some extent, you will be the godfather of the first Brazilian free school, and I'll keep you informed about that. Once again, thank you for everything (hsinger_99@yahoo.com).

CANADA

Brent Cameron (brentcameron@intouch.bc.ca) writes: I have personally worked with hundreds of students to challenge any course they want at any age without prerequisites. My daughter who founded the Wondertree Foundation for Natural Learning at age 6 is now enrolled in a university level music program without any credits from school, without ever attending school whatsoever. Personal representation and negotiation are at the basis of success in achieving your goals. I am convinced that schooling is about a) maintaining the jobs of teacher's as a vested interest group, and b) about keeping children busy so that their parents can keep working on the economic assembly line of society. All deference to "education" is but a smokescreen for the obedience to the politics of authority and social order. Real education begins at the moment of choice and personal design. Wondertree Foundation for Natural Learning, Box 38083 Vancouver, BC V5Z 4L9.

HUNGARY

The Rogers Person Centered School in Budapest has been forced -- because of financial reasons -- to move into another building which needs to be refurbished. The children, teachers and parents will welcome volunteers who can come over in November to give a hand. Please contact me if you are interested in helping. This project is coordinated by Teachers Without

Borders - Flanders. Paul Aerts, Jachthoornlaan 76, B-2970 Schilde. Tel & Fax: +32 (0)3 658 44 57. Email: aerts@glo.be.

A note from Anna Gador, Director of the Rogers School: Dear Jerry, Thank you for your letter and for subscribing me to the IDEC listserv! The Edwards grant was a great help of course, thank you for it again! You are always warmly welcomed in the school! With many, many greetings, Anna.

JAPAN

Last spring, the Global School of Japan was closed and its founders are planning to create a Global Village, which will be open to everyone. They have opened a networking center in Takasago at the location of the Global School. For more information, contact Kazu by email: modernlove@mtd.biglobe.ie.jp.

November 26 - 28, Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Kyoto, Japan. Empowering Youth in the Global Society. An inter-generational dialogue between youth and elders concerning issues of critical relevance for the future, speakers have been invited from Japan and other countries to share those ideas they think will most empower youth in the coming century. To allow participation by students in other countries, the program is establishing links with institutions and NGOs through an Internet Webpage. Statements from the speakers and prominent proponents of democracy (such as the Dalai Lama, Helmut Schmidt, Jody Williams, Simon Peres, Nelson Mandela, etc.) will be posted before the conference to stimulate discussion of youth issues by students throughout the world. On-line participation is currently being explored. Robert Kowalczyk, Professor Kinki University, 1-Minamigoshi-cho, Okazaki Sakyo Ku, Kyoto, Japan 606-8334. Journey East, Director, Group 21. Tel: 81-75-771-1949. Fax. 81-75-771-1949.

We are members of Tokyo Shure IDEC 2000 Japan committee. We are happy we will hosting IDEC 2000 in Japan. From now on we want to share information about the next IDEC. We will send you information from time to time. First, we want to report the date and place. We booked National Olympic Memorial Center located in central Tokyo from July 9 to 15, 2000. This center is well facilitated. There are plenty of rooms for workshops. We booked a music room, a gym and a big meeting room. It also has an accommodations department. These rooms are cheap and very clean. This center is next to a big park and close to some historical buildings. Transportation is also convenient. We are planing to have a symposium on the first day of IDEC. We booked a hall, Marion, which is very close to Ginza, the center of Tokyo. We have applied to several foundations. We've got some positive answers already. Please apply for such funds in your country. Don't hesitate to ask for more information. Tokyo Shure IDEC2000 Japan Committee.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

From the Guardian Newspaper, July 23, 1999 - London, UK:

SCHOOL OF PEACE STRIVES TO TAKE ROOT IN ROCKY GROUND by David Sharrock in El Khader, Bethlehem.

On a rocky, parched hilltop a Palestinian school called Hope Flowers, which has peace and coexistence at the core of its curriculum, is under threat, its roll rapidly falling as the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority discourage parents from sending their children.

Ibrahim Issan, its self-effacing, graying, weary but still dynamic head, could not have expected to make so many enemies by establishing a school which wants to teach its Palestinian pupils how to live in peace with their Jewish neighbors.

"We're adding a drop of water to the sea of peace," he says.

While practically everyone also has been talking for years about peace in this conflict ridden area of the Middle East, Mr. Issan has been doing something about it. But neither the Israelis who are threatening to demolish the school, nor their "peace partners," the Palestinian Authority, seem keen on his efforts to raise a new generation of Palestinians with a different attitude.

Hope Flowers began as a kindergarten in a shed attached to Mr. Issan's home in South Bethlehem. growing year by year until, two years ago, it had 350 pupils. But when Hamas suicide bombers struck in Ben Yehuda shopping street in Jerusalem in August 1997, the subsequent Israeli closure of the West Bank nearly smothered Hope Flowers.

"It was right when we were doing registration, and the checkpoints prevented the children and their parents from getting here," says Gene Sandretto, a volunteer teacher from California.

An Israeli army checkpoint near the school meant that the only way Mr. Issan could reach it was by scrambling over a hill. When he got there he found the soldiers were even refusing to allow through a water container - water is not piped to this part of the West Bank.

"On top of that, the supervisor of schools for the Palestinian Authority was pressing families not to register with us," says Mr. Sandretto. "The families were vulnerable to pressure and we lost 150 students."

The PA has tried intermittently to close Hope Flowers, on the grounds that its efforts to promote coexistence between Jews and Arabs threaten "national interests."

The school has faced other threats. Last year Sheikh Ahmen Yassin, the spiritual leader and founder of the militant movement Hamas, returned from Saudi Arabia with £31m to spend on Islamic schools. These schools went on a recruitment drive, offering terms which sharply undercut the £190 annual fee charged by Hope Flowers. As a result the school lost another 75 pupils.

Just when it looked as if things could not get any worse, the Israeli military authority which runs the occupied territories decided that a new

kitchen block being built in the school's grounds was "illegal."

It was a moot point when it comes to building in the occupied territories, Palestinians know that if they apply for permission it will almost always be denied.

Jewish settlers, on the other hand, seize ever more hilltops with impunity. Under the law of the occupied territories, the whole school is an illegal construction.

"With Oslo, everyone was confident that this area would be incorporated into Area A or B (Palestinian full or civilian control) soon," says Mr. Sandrotto. "But when the peace process broke down, we'd already built the school and now we are still 100 yards from Area A."

The case is now grinding through the courts.

Just to rub salt in the wounds, on the adjoining hilltop the large Jewish settlement of Efrat is carving out another access road and has taken the opportunity to create further facts on the ground by erecting a caravan settlement less than two miles from their perimeter.

"We're waiting to see if the new government has the balls to throw them out," says Mr. Sandrotto.

What makes Hope Flowers unique in the West Bank is its lessons in peace and democracy education. Every week each class has a lesson on the subject suitable to its level of understanding, from practicing kindness to animals to basic ideas about negative effects of stereotyping, and engaging in dialogue with Israelis.

Israeli volunteers teach Hebrew, science, English, computers and art; in return they learn Palestinian culture and Arabic. The school makes frequent field trips to Jewish areas and has developed joint projects with about a dozen Jewish schools. In 1995 it "twinned" with the Democratic School of Hadera.

Yet in spite of these positive contributions to the spirit of the Oslo accords, Hope Flowers does not receive a penny from the Israeli or the Palestinian authorities. It survives on donations, chiefly from Jewish, Christian and Muslim organizations in the United States and Europe.

Mr. Issan, a Palestinian refugee from 1948 who grew up in the Deheisha camp in Bethlehem, says he began to build his school after realizing that he knew absolutely nothing about the Israelis or the Jews.

"I had been fed nothing but negative images and stereotypes throughout my childhood. I knew that I was not special in this and that no good would ever come of it if we want peace here.

But some people are suspicious of us, they accuse us of being collaborators with the enemy. But in spite of everything I believe we have made progress. The problem is that the peace process stalled and there is a lot of anger, which I face every day and sympathize with."

He has high expectations of Israel's new prime minister, Ehud Barak, and hopes he will don the mantle of the former Labour prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin.

"The PA is not yet ready for peace, they haven't the courage. It's a

psychological problem for them."

Five years from now, Mr. Issan hopes, his school will have truly flowered.

"I hope to have helped build an open-minded, democratic society. We have a lot of fanatics, but my dream is for Muslims, Jews and Christians to live together. It will not happen without hard work."

ISRAEL:

Hello Jerry! I appreciate very much the work you do in helping Kluch School and Hope Flower School! My congratulations to you and your organization. Hello to all the dear IDECers dispersed in all continents! Thank you again Jerry for letting me participate in your program yesterday. It was a new experience for me about the living power of this big net. Mara, The Democratic School of Hadera. (Mara participated in The Education Revolution radio show, listening on her computer and sending in comments during the show by e mail. We discussed the following artical which se had sent us).

Here are excerpts of an article composed with the help of Yaakov Hecht, the Director of the Institute for Democratic Education:

Reasons for the Main Crises that the Educational System is Facing

There are, in my opinion, three main reasons that led to this situation:

1. The lack of communication between the employment market and the educational system -- assuming that the educational system is supposed to prepare its pupils for the future world that takes place outside the school, and simultaneously to be a microcosms of the reality.
2. The revolution in the subject of human and child's rights and it's manifestations at the school -- the traditional school was set up in a world that is substantially different in its perception of the concept of human rights.
3. The information and communication revolution and the encounter with the school -- a school that considers its primary goal to provide missing information to the pupil, is now becoming rapidly useless. That is because new technological means perform this task in more efficient ways, that improve rapidly.

The educational system tries to deal with the crises it faces using three basic ways:

- A. Denying the existence of the problem - an action is required, yet none is taken.
- B. Attempts are being made to change difficulties that cannot be changed or that do not exist -- actions that are not needed are taken. Some of these changes contradict each other. As a result we witness the phenomenon of schools "flooded" with projects.
- C. When the solution is actually the problem, and we try to solve the

problem by more of the same solution. More values education, more discipline, more competitiveness; the solution is the more the merrier. The outcome is a system that is less effective and relevant which leads to hard feelings of frustration for many who deal with education -- educators and others.

The new conditions force us to create a educational system that is based on a new, democratic conceptual world. The redefined school will be designed to help the students develop their own powers to choose and to create the reality they want to live in, and to help them see the reality as a diversified, multi-directional one. After this redefinition, the student will be shifted from the passive position s/he occupied in the old school that defined for the student his or hers goals, objectives, desired outcomes and the exact ways to achieve these. The name we use to describe this new system is "A Democratic School." The democratic school does not offer a magical solution to the situation at hand. It offers possible futuristic directions. The goals of the democratic school are education for independence and education for human dignity.

In my opinion the education system is at an obvious strategic turning point. The fundamental conditions for the operation of the system have changed: The goals have changed, the tools have changed, the target audience has changed. I believe that the educational system is ready to make the transition from statements to action. The situation today is different from the past since the past experiences were done top to bottom, that is from the academy or the intellectual elite to the field. Today, on the other hand, the pressures come from different directions -- from field educational personnel, from the parents, from the students, from the makers of educational policy, from the academy and from the work places. We are in a completely new situation, one that demands a thorough and urgent change, one of whose not arbitrary direction, for the public who wants to live in a democratic world, is the democratic school.

ENGLAND-ISRAEL

Summerhill School's difficulties with education inspectors from the British Ministry of Education was documented in an article in an Israeli newspaper, Ha'aretz. The article by Dafna Lewy-Yanowitz briefly recounts A.S. Neill's life and his establishment of the school in 1917 where his daughter, Zoe Readhead, grew up. A short interview with Zoe was included in the article. She believes that the violence seen in today's schools is largely due to the traditional school system's lack of respect for children or for their emotional growth and well being. In a democratic school, such as Summerhill, she says, "children cannot grow up to be violent adults."

POLAND

I'm an Englishman living and working in Poland. At present I am exploring the avenues leading to the possibility of setting up a school close to the Sudbury Valley School model in Poland. The important elements seem to be establishing an environment in which the children are fully responsible for the management of their own learning and participate in the running of the school on an equal footing and with equal rights to the staff. I want to establish links locally, with sympathetic people and professionals from various disciplines and I want to establish wider links with people in Poland who already have some experience of moving in these directions within the Polish educational context and legal framework. David French.
Email: david@campus.filus.edu.pl.

UKRAINE

From Oleg Belin of the Stork Family School in Vinnitsa, Ukraine: "I am glad to tell you that the Alternative Education Center at Stork School works. We fully realize that it keeps going to a great extent owing to your kind help and encouragement. We are also grateful to Fred Bay for sharing ideas with us and we thank him along with O.P. Edwards Foundation for their generous contribution.

In April, May and June, the Center organized two seminars and a conference. The subject of the April seminar was bringing up free children in elementary school. Actually it was a two-week training course for teachers and educators of children of the 3 to 11 age group. It was attended by more than 40 teachers from the city of Vinnitsa and the region, and by a number of students of the teacher-training college and the Pedagogical University. The seminar was based on the experience of Stork School Montessori groups and was lead by a prominent trainer of Montessori teachers from the Netherlands, Elizabeth van Santen. She had been closely observing pre-school and elementary groups for 8 years and had visited us several times during that period. This time she stayed with us for two weeks and did a great job at the seminar together with our Montessori teachers.

The second seminar was dedicated to an alternative method of essential musical education worked out by Lev Vinogradov (Moscow). It is a method of developing education rather than the usual training of performance skill. It helps to develop the ability to improvise and to deal with practically any musical instrument. The students come to understand and to feel music. Besides, it helps the children to feel free and relaxed. That seminar lasted 4 days and was attended by 30 teachers and students from all over the region. We've arranged with L. Vinogradov that he will come again on August 17. He promised to continue the seminars on a regular basis. We also intend to broaden the geography of participants.

In June, we had a 3-day conference which was an attempt of a critical view and comprehension of the Stork School experience and its perspectives for

the nearest future. Next year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of Stork School. We are planning to arrange a special conference devoted to the date. It goes without saying that we look forward to having you and other friends of ours from different countries at our jubilee. In the meantime, I hope you are enjoying the Summerhill Conference. Take care. Oleg"

Stork Family School's Trip to Moscow: The parting was sad. You should see the teenagers bidding farewell after the IDEC-98 conference, which was held at Stork Family School in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. You should see the tears in their eyes, the hugs and sad smiles; you should hear their promises to meet again.

As soon as the Stork students came back to school after vacation, they started planning a journey to the Moscow School which took part in the conference with The Self-Determination School, the Kluch, and the Moscow International Film School. At last on the 24th of November our plans and dreams came true. Money was raised and a bus hired for a week. a group of students, staff members and parents started for Moscow.

The next day we arrived at the Self-Determination School. The day we arrived was the beginning of the annual LyceumWeek; it was a week of immersion into Pushkin's cultural and social environment. The School headmaster, Alexander Tubelsky, acted as the Lyceum's headmaster, the students played the role of the Lyceum students and the teachers -- of Lyceum teachers. All of them were dressed like the people of early 19th century. They addressed each other and talked to each other in the manner of high society people of Pushkin's time. The school was all decorated accordingly. You could hear and see a lot of poetry, plays, romances and music created by Pushkin and his surrounding or connected with Pushkin. The atmosphere was warm and friendly. We were overwhelmed, it was terrific. But unfortunately we could spend at Tubelsky's School just a few days. And then we had to part again. C'est la vie! The group stayed at the Self-Determination School five days, but part of the time was given to visiting the other two schools. We had a short visit to the Kluch, where we were received like close relatives. They taught us to sing some of the songs and psalms they usually sing. Since they learned some of ours during the Conference, now they sing our songs and we sing theirs.

Then they took us to their neighboring school called "Kovcheg," which means "Ark." It is a wonderful school for handicapped children. At the International Film School we got a gift of video films taken during the IDEC-98 conference. They also greeted our representatives (we couldn't all go there) warmly and heartily.

The few day's time we stayed in Moscow was hardly enough to satisfy our longing of friendly communication with our Russian friends. And of course we couldn't visit almost any of the numerous cultural and spiritual centers and places of interest in Moscow. We just found a little time to observe a couple of museums, churches and monasteries. Our visit to Moscow was really

unforgettable. We are sure that our close contacts with Moscovites will go on and we will visit each other again and again. Oleg. Email: aistork@vinnitsa.sovam.com.

Dear Jerry, I've visited your site and I can say that the activities you organized are really great and useful, especially for our present-day situation. Thank you for doing this work! The educational systems throughout the World are in extreme need of it. Until now, I had not heard about Stork Family School in Vinnitsa or other activities of your organization in Ukraine. We have an alternative system of education, "Autodidactics," which includes: learning at least 3 foreign languages; reading literature masterpieces of other nations in original, without translation; and the most important thing is that "Autodidactics" makes any learning fantastically interesting and passionate. Here in Ukraine, we have a lot of activities: every month we organize philosophical education lectures, some linguistic training's, seminars -- "Theory and Practice of Friendliness," Valery Kourynsky performances of "Theater of Thought," and many others! There is a large following of "Autodidactics" all over Ukraine in such big cities as Lviv, Dnepropetrovsk, Charkov, Zaporizhia. Also we (the group in Kiev) cooperate with the same groups in Moscow and Krasnodar (Russia). Currently we are working on the creation of a book for children, which will help them learn 5 languages (English, French, German, Russian, Ukrainian), with unique methods of parallel learning of these languages. We are only in the process and we need the support of people who have dealt with the difficulties of publishing in Ukraine. We don't have experience, but we have a great desire to change something, to raise up the level of Culture and Beauty in Ukraine and not only. With all my respect, Yuliya Sapoznikova. Website: <http://victorian.fortunecity.com/brutalist/278/>. Email: xlyulya@inec.kiev.ua.

Teachers Jobs, and Internships

BLUE ROCK SCHOOL in West Nyack, NY, about 1/2 hour from NYC, is seeking a new director beginning in summer 2000. Blue Rock is a small private alternative school for grades pre-K through 6. It was founded in 1987. The school focuses on hands-on learning and education in the moment, with the aim of fostering children's natural curiosity and confidence by allowing them to learn from their own inquiries and at their own pace. The school also strives for a balanced education of mind, body, and feelings. We have an excellent, dedicated staff, an active and supportive board, and an involved, enthusiastic parent body. We are looking for a director with a passionate interest in childhood development and a strong commitment to alternative education. Duties will include administration, parent and student relations, and community outreach. Please send cover letter and resume to: Search Committee, Blue Rock School, 110 Demarest Mill Road, PO Box 722, West Nyack, NY, 10994. E-mail: delro@attglobal.net.

Erin Nugent is seeking a teaching position in an alternative schools in the St. Louis area. She would like to begin this fall, if possible. Contact her 7340 Forsyth #308, University City, MO 63105. Tel: 314-726-4595.

Our small beachside community would like to see someone move here to start an alternative school. We have a charter middle school at SeaSide but no high school as yet. The area is growing and possibilities are here. I could be a contact person if anyone is interested. Mary Byrd, (850)231-5573, hpbyrd@scti.net, fax: (850)231-2806

Two teachers are needed to develop a new 7 - 12 alternative program for MSAD #40. This will be a chance to create a program from the ground up in mid-coast Maine, which has the highest concentration of non-traditional programs in the state, as well as a very supportive regional alternative education association. Hiring now for the year beginning in Sept. Teachers need secondary certification which would allow them to be certifiable in Maine. Please contact: Frank McCabe, PO Box L, 145 Calers Corner Road, Waldoboro, Maine, 04752, 207-832-2101

The Community School has two positions and one internship open for the term beginning in October 1999. A teacher/counselor is needed to work closely with a group of educators and students, aged 16 to 20, who are working in an intensive, residential learning community. The residence runs in two 5 1/2 terms each year. A residence coordinator is also needed who will coordinate house/car/grounds maintenance, food shopping, and so on. One or two internships per term are being offered for teachers/counselors who are interested in learning more about Relational Education and the work the Community School is doing with students who have left high school. If you are interested in any of these positions, please specify which one(s) and send a resume to Dora Lievow, or email your questions to her at dora@cschool.acadia.net. If you are interested in the internship please email Emanuel Pariser at emanuel@cschool.acadia.net. The Community School, Box 555, Camden, Maine 04843, Tel: 207-236-3000/3498, Fax: 207-236-2505.

The Venice Community School, a small K-12 alternative school in Visalia, CA, is looking for a teacher for the Discovery Program, ages 5-7. The classroom has room for eight children in a creativity based classroom in a rural setting at the base of the Sierra Mountains. No credential required. Must love children and be open to training; experience is preferred. Email: AmyCooke@aol.com. Tel: 559-592-4999.

Juliette Zaiser, experienced educator wishes to be part of a holistic, progressive, alternative school community dedicated to a holistic educational philosophy. Current certification and licenses in the state of Oregon and the Territory of Guam. Working on certification with National

Association of Drama Therapists. Undergraduate degree from UCLA in theater arts. Graduate degree (M.Ed.) from Univ. of Guam in Special Education. Experience with learners of all ages; in home-, charter, college, public, private and prison schooling venues; with multicultural, foreign and American groups. Willing to discuss and explore future avenues and possibilities with anyone in any location. May be contacted by e-mail at zaiser@writeme.com.

My name is Syd Fredrickson, and I'm living in Seattle. I have lived in intentional community, studied consensus and facilitation and worked both in and outside of community (Twin Oaks, in Louisa, VA where I began formally practicing) as a mediator & facilitator for groups. I then did event organizing and admin. support for a couple of non-profits while getting my M.Ed. I'm currently looking for a teaching position, preferably in a democratically-run, ecologically-oriented school. I would also be a good special programs coordinator (i.e. service projects, internships, individual research projects...) if not a full-time teacher. I've been communicating with and visiting some schools like this for the past year, and also talking with groups who would like to start new schools. I am most interested to work with teens, so I have not put a lot of time yet into visiting schools that only have kids under 12. I'm finding it difficult to find a place to teach, though I have so much passion and a good variety of experience in teaching, facilitating, being responsible for kids of all ages! I find this group and the publication of THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION to be a life line, for which I'm very grateful. Syd Fredrickson, Seattle WA sydf@u.washington.edu, and syd@scn.org.

NEW ZEALAND

A New Zealand trained secondary school teacher with strengths in science, mathematics and personal development work is looking for an institution in the US that would take him on and train him in student-centered teaching practices for at least 6 months next year. He is part of a team of people who are developing an alternative school. They want to provide a learning environment where youth will make a difference in their communities and love to learn. Please contact s_blackstock@hotmail.com

Conferences

Oct. 28-31, Association for Experiential Education International 27th Annual Conference, Rochester, NY. Keynote speakers include Rochester's mayor, William A. Johnson; founder and President of the National Youth Leadership Council, Jim Kielsmeier; and Nel Noddings of Stanford and Columbia. For more information or to register, please check out AEE's web page at www.aee.org.

November 19-21, Frost Valley, NY. The Art of the Community Weekend.

Intentional communities conference features workshops and information sharing. Rt 1, Box 155, Rutledge, MO 63563. Tel: 660-883-5545.

December 21-December 28, Benson, AZ. World University International Conference. Desert Sanctuary Campus, PO Box 2470, Benson, AZ 85602. Web: <http://www.worlduniversity.org>. Email: desertsanctuary@theriver.com.

Special Section:

CHANGING SCHOOLS

_____Since 1973: The Journal of Alternative
Education_____

The 29th Annual International Alternative Education Conference

The 29th Annual International Alternative Education Conference, which was held at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut from June 25th to 27th, was marked by a special visit by keynote speaker Bob Barr, one of the founders of the organization. He was able to put into perspective three decades of the evolution of public alternatives. He talked about his early search for schools that were serving kids effectively and how he discovered public alternative schools and discovered the beginnings of a movement. That discovery transformed his life and his involvement has transformed this movement. He helped organize one of the first and most important training programs for teachers going into alternative education but acknowledges that there is still a crying need today for much more of that teacher education. He said that research in the last fifteen years dwarfs any of the research done previously and confirms that educational alternatives are truly serving the needs of its students. He cited one study on school violence in which they found violence in almost all forms of public schools but there was a blip in the data in which there was almost no violence in or virtually none at all in the public alternative schools.

Attendees came from alternative schools and organizations in Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, Kansas, Georgia, Kentucky, California, New Jersey, New York Idaho, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, Florida, Indiana, and Michigan. Most of those in attendance were from public alternative schools, both choice and at risk, but at least one independent was represented in the person of Scott Gray from Sudbury Valley School. At a meeting of the state alternative school organizations, Minnesota confirmed that they will host next year's conference, and Oregon said they will host the 2001 conference with the help of the Washington Alternative Learning Association. There was also some discussion at the meeting of the Changing Schools Magazine, which is now a section of AERO's The Education Revolution Magazine.

Representatives said they would go back to their organizations and look into the possibility of bulk subscriptions from their states to support the magazine.

There was a discussion again about creating a national structure for this group, which actually has no office or a national representative but instead is and consists entirely of its component parts which are state alternative education organizations and individuals. AERO announced that as it agreed to do at a previous meeting, it now hosts a public alternative school's bulletin board on its website and will add as many links as it can to the individual state alternative education associations. The representatives from Minnesota talked about plans for next year's conference and said that in the coming year they would pursue the question of whether a more formal national organization is needed or warranted by this group. A formal vote was taken, which confirmed the fact that the members in attendance wanted the organization to remain pretty much as it is, with the amendment by David Bly of Minnesota that they would initiate a discussion of this throughout the year and open it up again at next year's meeting.

Other keynote speakers included the Commissioner of Education, ? Geordi?, and ? Bell. It was announced that the Commissioner's office had contributed \$15,000 toward the creation of this year's conference. There were numerous workshops on __ One unusual workshop consisted of excursions on a ten man Indian war canoe. The group putting on this workshop brings up to 40 students on excursions using these canoes in which they study everything from ecology to teamwork. Jerry Mintz presented two; one entitled Columbine, What Have We Learned, and the second about the international dimensions of alternative education.

On Jerry's Saturday afternoon Talk America show, Bob Barr was the guest and answered questions from many callers as he talked about practical applications of alternative education. One truck driver who called in at first said that he didn't have anything to do with education but then admitted that he had a four year old and he was very concerned because his young boy hadn't really started speaking yet. Bob told him that he should read to the boy everyday for at least twenty minutes. The truck driver said he had thought about doing that but hadn't done it yet. Bob said he needed to talk to him all the time and when he points at things to tell him what the names were of the things he was pointing at. Bob was originally going to be on the show for only a half hour but stayed for the full hour because he enjoyed the conversation. Several of the callers were Texans who perhaps called in because they recognized and felt comfortable with Bob's Texas accent. Texas is his home state.

After the radio show, the conference concluded with a big clam bake and

lobster dinner and dancing at Connecticut College's outdoor "pit."

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION INTERNSHIPS

by Melanie Whitham (melaniewhitham@hotmail.com)

My adventure began in July 1998 when after only one year of teaching fulltime in a traditional elementary school; I decided to seek out something more meaningful. I was not going to live out the rest of my days as a teacher this way. I didn't want to go back to university for two reasons: because that was the traditional way of seeking a career change and because I had had enough of institutionalized higher education for a while.

At first, I was hopeful of getting a paying job within alternative education, so I responded to a few ads in The Education Revolution, AERO's newsletter. One ad in particular for a high school in Maine really caught my attention, but when I phoned, the lady on the other end of the line said that ad was a mistake. Case closed, or so I thought. Once I realized a paying job was not likely to materialize in the near future, I looked through The Almanac of Education Choices in search of alternative schools that suited my interests and my needs at the time. I sent out what I thought was a very tempting offer to over fifteen alternative schools around the world: "Certified teacher will work for almost nothing" and I called it an internship. One school answered positively. As fate would have it, it was the tiny alternative high school in Camden, Maine I had called only a few months earlier to inquire about a job.

Against many odds, including U.S immigration (I am Canadian) and difficulty finding a place to live, I arrived in the quaint, welcoming town of Camden to do my internship. I didn't know it then, but I'm certain of it now: there was no going back. As I embarked on this learning adventure, I had no idea to what extent my view of education would be forever changed.

The previous year I had three different classes, 75 students in all. I saw each class for a total of 43 minutes per day, five days a week. Try as I might, it was nearly impossible to form any meaningful relationships with my students. I chose the Community School because with a ratio of one student to one teacher, and a setting like an old farmhouse, I would be hard-pressed to find a much more intimate educational environment. I wanted to learn about and experience connectedness and intimacy by building meaningful relationships with those I was to share my love of discovery and growth, both staff and students. Relationships are the foundation of the student's the staff's experience at the Cschool, as the school is often called. Students develop relationships with their employers, as they hold jobs while at the school, and with volunteer tutors from the community. They also develop relationships with the small community within the school,

their peers as well as staff, whom they get to know as teachers, counselors and housemates.

As a teacher who was at the school every evening for academic classes, I had the chance to follow individual students for several classes, helping them determine their goals, plan their nightly classes and witness the final product come to life. From the outset, I knew these students would teach me more about how they learned than I had ever been taught in my educational psychology courses. The emphasis at the Cschool was on the students and their individual learning styles and goals.

I had heard about student-centered learning, but at the Cschool I saw it in action and came to know what it really meant first-hand. I can think of one student in particular whom I was trying to help with his writing assignment. He had to write an essay and had chosen Belize as his topic. He hated writing. Coaching him through this assignment became my goal. If he didn't get through it, I would be to blame. I went into it with my own agenda. My starting point with him was my own past experience; what was expected of me at his age, what I had produced at his age. The student wanted to stay where he felt safe, not taking risks, starting from where he was at and staying there. So it became a tug of war between two strong-willed people: He recoiling at the thought of developing a thesis statement and myself, wanting him to come up with a sophisticated, persuasive essay.

Thanks to the insight of another staff member, I realized thesis statements could be very simple and still quite legitimate. I also realized that as a teacher, my expectations should be grounded in the student and his or her needs at the time. This particular student wasn't planning on going to college, didn't have a reason nor the motivation to learn to write a sophisticated persuasive essay. So who was I to tell him he had to go through what would have been a very frustrating process, only to emerge afterwards with a product he never wanted in the first place? In the end, we settled on a simple thesis statement. I gave him the outline and standards for a persuasive essay and he pounded it out on the computer on his own - and he felt good about what he had accomplished. That was worth more to me than any essay-writing lesson I could have given him. This quote by one of the Cschool staff summarizes well what this student taught me: "When you regularly put in more than 50% of the effort to help a student, you are becoming an obstacle to their independence and eventual success." Emanuel

Speak to just about any staff at the Cschool and they will tell you that a trusting relationship between a student and a teacher is essential for academic success with many of the students they receive. Chances are that in a traditional high school where teachers have 100 or more students, the situation I just described would have unfolded rather differently. This

particular student would probably have never done the assignment, since he hated writing so much, and since he probably would not have had much support from anyone.

The development of relationships aids academic growth but relationships are difficult to nurture during the short evening academic classes, so I was grateful for the informal time provided when I could just hang out with students. We would talk about everything from our beliefs about God and the afterlife, to how they felt about the school and what they had done on their weekend off. My favorite times with students were while cooking supper, or driving them to work, or watching the moon float over the ocean on a camping trip.

Much of the most precious teaching/learning moments I've ever had were during these times. One of the most effective religion classes I'll ever lead or attend happened spontaneously in the school van on the way back from a camping trip. A student and I shared our beliefs surrounding God and discussed possibilities of an after life without judgement or censorship. Another spontaneous learning opportunity occurred on a hike one afternoon. Two students and myself discovered a pile of rocks on the top of Mt. Battie in Camden and we decided to make an inuksuk, something that was new to the two students. (The Inuit, Native peoples of Northern Canada, used stone sculptures called inuksuk to indicate the way to the nearest village, where food was stored or to warn of dangerous places.)

Postman and Weingartner wrote, "The best time to learn anything is when whatever is to be learned is immediately useful." I believe it. We need to create the opportunity in schools for more spontaneous, teachable moments. The most fun I ever had teaching French was on a hike in Acadia National Park with a student who was really interested in knowing how to name all these things we were seeing in French. It was probably one of my most successful attempts at teaching French and I hadn't even planned it!

While I taught this student French, she later taught me one of the most important lessons I will ever learn as an educator, something I knew but wasn't fully putting into practice. One of the reasons I was so happy about our French lesson during the hike was that it made the hike more bearable for someone who really could not stand even the thought of hiking. Being a nature-lover and a hiker myself and being very involved with the camping program at the school, I found her lack of enthusiasm difficult to accept. I thought that anyone, given the opportunity and a bit of encouragement could learn to at least tolerate hiking. And so, I continued to try to sell this student on the glories of hiking, until one day, another staff told me that this student saw my efforts as a lack of respect for her right to hate hiking. And she was right. Emerson said, "The secret to education lies in respecting the pupil." Now I know what he meant.

Because of these wonderful moments of insight along with many others like them, I began feeling like I had come home, professionally speaking. I realized that relational education went beyond the teacher/student relationship. Here is an excerpt from the introduction of the Internship Handbook I created for The Community School: "At the Community School, we believe that personal and communal learning involves an intimate encounter: between thinking and experience, feeling and knowledge, creating and interaction, self and other."

While at The Community School, I grew and learned along with the students. I felt like a vital part of this special learning community. CSchool students feel a similar connection. One student said "You get out of it what you put into it. Pay off is when people are able to face their quirks in a group. It brings the group closer together when we give time and effort to help each other out. That makes us want to be a more important part of our community."

At the beginning of this article I referred to my internship as an adventure. True, it was an adventure in and of itself, but it was also the springboard for a much larger life-long adventure in search of the most exciting, engaging, the most real forms of education possible. I found this type of education at the Cschool. Since then, I have visited many other education options, including Shackleton Schools in Ashby, MA, Pathfinder Resource Center in Amherst, MA, as well as Liberty School in Blue Hill, ME, Opportunities in Rockland, ME and Riley School in Rockport, ME. I have met some very open and helpful people including, Ron Miller, author and founder of a school in Vermont, Fred Bay of the Elizabeth and Michael C Paul Foundation, Arnie and Dagnia Langberg, who run a school in Colorado, Deborah Meier who heads a school in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and has written a book about her experience as head of Central Park East, *The Power of Their Ideas*, and a whole bunch of other inspiring individuals whom helped celebrate the Cschool's 25th anniversary at their conference on Relational Education in May of this year. I have organized a small conference in my hometown with Jerry Mintz, helping to contribute to the efforts of a group of parents who are looking for educational alternatives for their children. So as you can see, the adventure continues. The next step is a project I have been thinking about for a few months now. When I began looking for an internship, I felt like I was rummaging around in the dark. I sent resumes out to many schools but I had no idea what I would be asked to do, what I could learn in each school, if I would possibly get a stipend or room and board or how long my internship could last. I simply put my envelopes in the mail hoping for the best, trusting I would get the response I needed. The Community School was the only school out of almost 20 that responded positively to my request. Some schools didn't even understand what I was asking for. I was left with the

impression that there needed to be more emphasis placed on internships, for teachers-in-training, n-service teachers as well as people who are simply interested in what we are doing in the alternative school movement. If your school is very involved in internships, I would love to hear about it. Being only three years out of university, having earned my Bachelor of Education the traditional way, I am even more convinced that if the face of education is going to change, we need to start in the teacher training institutions and with those teachers who are seeking change. Those looking for internships need to have access to a tool they can work with in order to get what they want out of their experience.

This brings me back to the project I mentioned earlier. If an alternative schools internship directory existed, those who are interested could more easily have access to detailed information regarding each school listed as well as the particulars of the internships they offer. This document would also allow schools interested in hosting interns to draw from a larger pool of potential candidates since more people would be aware of the internships offered at their school. For schools which haven't thought about offering the opportunity for people to learn hands-on about what they do, a place to advertise may also encourage them to begin accepting interns. If your school would be interested in being included in an alternative schools internship directory, if you work at a teacher-training institution that might like to have such a directory available to its students, or if you are someone interested in an internship in an alternative school anywhere, please contact me at melaniewhitham@hotmail.com. I would also like to hear from anyone who would like to write a piece, or who has already written a piece, about an internship they've done in an alternative school. I would like to include stories and insights about internships in the directory.

The more we get the word out about what's going on in schools that are making a difference, the better the chance that we may inspire others to come join us in our educational adventure.

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS edited by Michael w. Apple and James A. Beane
A book review by Derry Hannam to appear in *Improving Schools* vol2
no3. published by the Institute of Education of University of London.

This little book is a gem. A book that gets back to the real basics. It focuses upon learning that helps young people to understand themselves and the world as they perceive it through pedagogies that also develop the self-esteem and skills required to change it. In the first chapter the editors clarify their concept of a democratic school. Of course it is one in which all stakeholders, parents, teachers and not least students have a voice in the administrative and social decision making of the school. But it is much more than this. Central to the democratic school is the democratic

curriculum. This unswervingly aims for the highest standards of intellectual rigour and evidence of the capacity to think critically. "For students to use their minds well" in the words of Ted Sizer. But - and here is the democratic test - that which is studied is negotiated between students and teachers to reflect the realities of the students' lives, interests, concerns and those of their parents and communities. It is thus experienced by students as both meaningful and creative. It accepts as part of the reality to be understood the need to manage the assessments and tests that constitute the gateways to higher education and employment but the negotiated curriculum at all times has "joined-up" meaning. This, of course, is what is conspicuously lacking for British students whether they be alienated drop-outs or "high-attainers" with ten Grade A's at GCSE.

Apple and Beane are very sensitive to the current lot of teachers in the US and the UK. They are unequivocal in their praise for those who have the energy and the courage to resist the de-skilling and de-professionalising effects of centralised prescription in order to be creative with their students. They have nothing but contempt for policies that create the poisonous mix of fear, anxiety and depression generated in teachers and students alike by such pressures as "naming and shaming", league tables and inspection regimes that are perceived to be unfair and punitive by design. Their notion of "standards" is very different to mere sets of "grades" or SATs scores which possess no intrinsic meaning. The curriculum must above all else be able to honestly answer the question "why are we learning this?"

Apple and Beane hand over the narrative to four educators who in different ways and circumstances operationalise their vision. All with socially disadvantaged students and communities. All with evident success though none without struggle. Creativity and meaning-making are the key-words. The need to satisfy standard requirements are not shirked but the route towards them is always for negotiation between students and teachers. Collaboration and individual achievement are equally prized. Parents are closely involved as are communities.

Deborah Meir writes of her time at Central Park East Secondary School in New York City before she joined the central team of Ted Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools. The coalition's principles are fully implemented at CPESS. Depth of study is preferred to superficial breadth. No teacher teaches more than 40 students. The highest standards are set - for all students - in non-tracked (unstreamed) settings. Teachers are "coaches" and students are workers who have to ask and answer their own questions. Assessment is rigorous in 14 portfolio areas for graduation but involves peers as well as staff in reviewing the negotiated content.

Larry Rosenstock and Adra Steinberg describe the re-invention of vocational education at Rindge School of Technical Arts in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Here a programme has been created that involves students in projects which address community needs. Teachers are re-empowered to make crucial professional decisions in collaboration with their students.

Teachers work in teams with adequate planning time. Academic and vocational knowledge is integrated to seek solutions to real community needs and problems. Management face head-on the need for teachers to thrive in a democratic culture if such an environment is to be created for students.

The third case study is La Escuela Fratney in Milwaukee. Another participative, democratic school where adults and young people work collaboratively to create a negotiated meaning-laden curriculum - this time in two languages. Parental and wider community involvement is again central to the overall democratic concept.

The last example in the book recognises the reality which confronts many teachers wanting change in institutions where most adults do not (a situation not unknown to this reviewer!). Rather than wait for a "whole school policy" Barbara Brodhagen and a colleague decided to create a democratic learning community of 55 7th-graders in an otherwise orthodox middle-school in Madison, Wisconsin. This learning community uses collaborative governance for class-management and co-operative learning. Most movingly in this inspirational story is the account of student-led parent conferences - students explaining their goals and self-evaluations to their parents in the presence of the teacher. Two quotes linger in the mind. "We cannot believe how much we have learned..." and "...we weren't a special group but the situation made us special."

The book has sold over a quarter of a million copies in the USA. Our need for its vision of democratic education that can truly nurture active citizens for a democratic society is no less than theirs. I will send a copy to my friend Bernard Crick for his birthday!

From School Security Raises Concerns by Richard Carelli, The Associated Press:

As schools reopen with greatly increased security, civil libertarians say concern for students' safety is overwhelming students' rights. "It's unbelievable, on an unprecedented scale," said Nadine Strossen, national president of the American Civil Liberties Union. "We're seeing the equivalent of Fortress America, and students' privacy rights and freedom of speech are under attack from within." Police officers, metal detectors, student ID cards and surveillance cameras are new to schools across the nation. So are routine backpack searches, increased use of drug tests, stricter dress codes and less tolerance for schoolyard taunts or threats.

The ACLU, aggressively challenging policies in many public school districts, may be fighting an uphill battle. "In the wake of increasing violence, courts seem to have become more deferential to school districts' genuine concern for student safety and security," said Cynthia Prettyman, general counsel for Palm Beach County, Fla., schools. "Students still have rights and I'm sure the ACLU will stay on top of this, but any legal challenge will face a high hurdle."

Julie Underwood, general counsel of the National School Boards Association, says school districts are well-served by programs emphasizing "culture and climate -- how people treat each other; whether a respectful learning environment exists." Here, in question and answer form, is a look at what rights students have:

Q: Students are just kids. Why do they have any rights?

A: Children, like adults, have legal rights. The Supreme Court, dating back to a landmark 1969 decision, has said students who attend public schools do not surrender all constitutional rights at the schoolhouse door.

Q: What about students' privacy rights?

A: The Constitution's Fourth Amendment, which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures, applies in public schools, but school officials get more leeway than police. And school searches of lockers and backpacks, even the use of metal detectors, are much easier to justify when the target is illegal drugs or weapons. Still, courts generally require "individualized suspicion" in certain circumstances, barring school officials from searching all students in a room just because one of them may have stolen some money or smuggled in a pack of cigarettes.

Q: What about drug tests?

A: The law is still evolving on this issue. The Supreme Court ruled in 1995 that student athletes could be subjected to random drug tests because athletic programs are voluntary and student athletes are role models. Since then, some lower courts have allowed drug testing of students engaged in other extracurricular activities. But some courts have struck down drug-testing policies.

Q: Is there somewhere students and teachers nationwide can find out the answers to specific questions?

A: No, the law on students' rights can vary from state to state, depending on state laws and court rulings.

From Schools Begin 'Student Profiling' By Brigette Greenburg, The Associated Press:

Much like the FBI developing psychological profiles to track terrorists and serial killers, school psychologists are putting together checklists of characteristics common among students prone to violence... Students who fit the profile can undergo counseling, be transferred to an alternative education program or even be expelled. Critics call "student profiling" an overreaction to the rash of school shootings... They fear that children who do not reflect an image of the perfect student could be unfairly labeled. "Different doesn't mean dangerous," said American Civil Liberties Union spokeswoman Emily Whitfield. "Not only are students being unfairly

targeted but, in some cases, there's not a whole lot of thought going into it.'

...One publication widely read by school administrators this summer was "Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools." The guide from the National Association of School Psychologists, the U.S. Department of Education and other agencies was commissioned by President Clinton last year and distributed to schools nationwide. The guide has 16 features that may distinguish violence-prone children, including social withdrawal, feelings of rejection, and poor academic performance. But association spokeswoman Elizabeth Kuffner warned that the guide should not be used to predict which students will go on a rampage. 'Definitely there are warning signs. Definitely there are things to look for. But to just say a kid fits this profile, we don't think is a good idea,' she said.

From Parents irate over search of students, By Mary Hurley, Globe Correspondent, Cambridge, MA: For Lorraine Woodson, it was a routine question posed to her son, a straight-A, eighth-grade student at the Agassiz School: 'What happened in school today?' Her son's answer on June 1, however, was not routine. 'Mum, I was searched.' 'I was hurt,' Woodson recalled last week. 'I was very angry.' Then she took action. She went to the School Committee meeting and told committee members of the searches. Then ... at an emotional, heated meeting of the School Committee, Woodson was one of a large group of minority parents expressing outrage over the interrogations and searches that school security officials conducted in eight elementary schools and the high school. Fueling their outrage was the fact that the parents of eight of the students, including Woodson, weren't notified by school officials about the action.

A majority of the 28 students searched and interviewed were minority students, 16 blacks and five Hispanics; another five were white and two were Asian. Twenty-five were eighth-graders, including five girls; two were fifth-grade boys and one was a seventh-grade boy. Superintendent of Schools Bobbie D'Alessandro, who said at the meeting she took 'full responsibility' for the searches, said they were undertaken in response to concerns about the escalation of gang activity and recruitment in Cambridge. Two of those searched were found with weapons, a knife and a meat mallet.

In a school system where nearly 80 percent of the students are minority, however, the searches have unleashed a firestorm of controversy and raised questions that have yet to be answered. Last week, the school board took action after listening to angry parents for 2 1/2 hours. On a 4-3 vote, the board approved a policy that requires the school department to notify

parents before any search of a student takes place.

The board also directed D'Alessandro to write a letter of apology to the 26 students who were searched and interviewed and their parents. The board defeated a motion to include apologies to the two who had weapons. That is not enough for the parents, who believe they have not been shown respect.

Woodson asked, "What about the students mental safety? All children need to have respect and their parent's protection. ... The road to hell is paved with good intentions and this is not acceptable."

One question yet to be answered is, in light of the superintendent's assertions that one goal was to elicit information, how many of the 28 students were actually searched, as opposed to just interviewed, and did security officials have "reasonable" suspicion? Parents also want to know why their children were singled out. Several charged the selection was based on anonymous tips, but D'Alessandro refuted that.

D'Alessandro, clearly uncomfortable with a policy of requiring parental notification, urged committee members to "think very seriously" about it, contending notification after a search is sufficient. That the searches were conducted in response to increased gang activity is also a source of controversy. A chronology of events from January through June detailing suspected gang-related activity compiled by Silva was distributed by the superintendent's office. Several school board members, however, wondered why they and the community had never been informed of such activities.

The parents' demands also include one that security personnel undergo "extensive training and guidelines be set in place to monitor their performance." They also want information on the criteria used to hire security personnel and the type of training they receive.

"What happened was absolutely wrong." said Denise Simmons after the meeting. "I'm not letting this one go."

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From: A Community Life-Long Learning System,
By Bill Ellis (tranet@igc.org)

In the last two or three years local homeschooling networks have started providing themselves with a new form of learning social institution. They don't yet even have a universal name. To start examining them we could call them "Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning Centers (CCL-LLCs)." These

community centers are cooperatively owned and controlled by the member families they serve. They provide counseling, mentoring, supplies, facilities, workshops and classes. Most importantly they use all aspects of the community for education. Libraries, YMCAs, churches, museums, local businesses, farms, government offices, the local newspaper, the streets, the parks, and even nature itself are all part of the learning system.

In 1998 Community Learning Centers became of national interest when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act dedicated \$40 million to expand after-school programs. But this program was limited to school districts, and administered by US Department of Education. Thus directed more at saving a decaying schooling system than experimenting with the new futuristic systems of learning.

Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning Centers (CCL-LLCs) may be one of the most seminal innovations of the past decade. They may be the seed for a deep fundamental change in the education/learning system of the future.

CCL-LLCs

are to a large extent an outgrowth of the rapidly growing homeschooling movement. As the body of this self-organized learning system grows, it is conceivable that Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning Centers could completely replace the state controlled schools.

The transition to a Community Life-Long Learning System is much more than a change in educational practices. It is a transformation of the whole mind set of the value of knowledge, and the value of the person in society.

"Teaching," "educating," and "schooling" imply that society, or government, is acting on, controlling, indoctrinating and forming some amorphous lesser beings. It is a domineering, hierarchical, and authoritarian system of control from the top down. It is inherent in the first phase of democracy which accepted many of the tenets of rule from above, the divine right of kings and its transition to the divine right of government. It is in harmony with the fading worldview that the cosmos, and the Earth, are parts of the chain-of-being in which man is a semi god controlling the Earth from above, and all lesser forms including women, children, and animals, plants and the Earth's natural resources are but resources for the use of man. It is a perfect example of the social institutions developed under the Domineering Paradigm.

Every single word in "Cooperative," "Community," "Life-Long," and "Learning," carries a different connotation from that of the Domineering Paradigm. "Learning" is not something a superior being does to a lesser one. Learning is an act of self-volition. It is a self-actuated process of creating skills, discovering knowledge, and satisfying one's own natural curiosity. It is built on, and it teaches, the inherent right and

responsibility of every individual to set her is his own standards. It honors the diversity of evolution.

This transition from "educating" to "learning" is being recognized by a wide variety of scholars. Management guru Peter Drucker in his "Post Capitalist Society" writes of a society based on knowledge. One in which all society is an open life-long learning system in which every person can enter any level at any time. From the other end of the spectrum, peace scholar Elise Boulding reports that a common feature of the many "Imagine a World Without Weapons" she has held with people of all walks of life and all ages, was the vision of a "localist society" in which communities were self-reliant and "Learning appears integrated into other community activities ... everyone is a learner, and education is life long." This theme of the "Learning Community" is fully integrated with the growth of civil society and all other aspects of the emerging Gaian Cultures. (This essay originated from a 1998 E.F. Schumacher Society Lecture)

WHAT DOES RAP MUSIC HAVE TO DO WITH ALL OF THIS?

I had an experience that I probably would not have had in my lifetime if it were not for my cousin's 14 year old son, Alex and his friend, Matt. They go to an expensive private prep school in Westchester County. My cousin Bill, Alex's father, died a year and a half ago, so I've been filling in from time to time as well as I can. He asked me to take him to a rap concert in Albany, about the last thing I could have imagined doing. But I thought it might be interesting, something different, and also I'd have a chance to visit the Free School. It was an amazingly enlightening experience for me because I saw something that I just didn't understand before.

The best way I can describe it: I would almost compare it to a religious event. It reminded me of responsive reading in Jewish and other religious ceremonies, when the rabbi or minister up front would say something and then the people in the audience would all respond. It went back and forth like that. It seemed like everybody knew the words! And there must have been 10,000 people in there. What they were saying was also amazing! They were saying all the outrageous things that kids are never allowed to say when they're in school or at home. The word fuck had to be used about 1,000 times tonight. Everyone was addressed, very politely, as "motherfuckers," as if it were a term of endearment, which I suppose it was.

It seemed to me that this was a kind of commonality of experience for a youth culture that is almost a complete, 100% disconnect from what the adult culture tries to impose on kids. I'm sure I had to be the oldest person in that place. Generally speaking, the oldest people were in their mid-twenties. I suspect that people in the adult culture have almost no

idea about what's going on there.

They say it's virtually impossible to get kids to memorize classical poetry in school these days. But this is contemporary poetry, expressing the feelings of people who are downtrodden, in the ghettos, suffering, and that is what was resonating with the audience. It was fascinating to me that at least half the audience was white. There is almost no cultural equivalent to this irreverent commonality for white kids. So I think these kids are attracted to the expression of anger and the willingness to express themselves. It is so clear that this is contemporary poetry that some of the rappers, particularly DMX, simply stopped at some points and essentially recited poems. They didn't even really try to have it with the music; there was a beat to it, but it wasn't with the usual loud music in the background. Some of it was actually just straight expression, as if he wanted to make sure that people actually heard the words.

As I looked around, I realized that people, even the two kids from Westchester County that were sitting next to me, had all the rappers' albums and knew the words to them.

Matt said that the way that he learned the words was simply by listening to it over and over. He says that most of the times the words are not printed out. I remember that for every CD that my niece used to get (she preferred heavy metal), she was determined to know every single word of every song. She would write her own lyrics sometimes. So, clearly kids are doing their own literature and poetry, but in their culture and not the culture that's being crammed down their throats in the regular schools.

One thing Matt said was that not only did they talk about coming from poor circumstances, but they talked about how far they've come, how far they've risen. So they also want to be inspirational. They said that one of DMX's songs was about how he was ignored as a kid: He was supposed to be the kid in the family who didn't need much to succeed. Alex says that in the video you can see his report card and he got straight A's on it, but his mom didn't seem to care.

Alex: So he went to his room and ripped it up and said "Who cares about me?" and just runs out of the house and starts doing drugs and alcohol.

Matt: When he meets his wife and has a kid he decides to stop doing drugs because he wants to do the right thing for his kid.

Jerry: It's almost like a morality tale, how he changed his life around. It is the same thing that happens in church, but kids won't listen to it from a preacher. Another song was about how they have so much money that they hardly know what to do with it; they practically throw it away. Like the

necklaces are about \$40,000 for one piece.

Matt and Alex said that far from being racist, the songs are actually positive in terms of racial relations. One of the lines is: "I use no discrimination; I have respect for Black, Asian, and Caucasian." This was not the case of Tupac Shakur who actually was the subject of a lot of police brutality and mostly by white cops. I noticed there was only one woman rapper. She seemed to be the one that was also controlling the music too. Basically, it seems like rap songs try to deal with real life and real life feelings and situations and things that people can relate to. So in a sense it's probably a lot more relevant than what young people will experience either in school or in church. I think that's one reason they are so drawn to it.

A lot of the rappers are not actually from urban areas; but they rap often about where they come from. One from Staten Island, one from Queens, one from Georgia. The attitude about drugs is that marijuana and alcohol are basically okay, but not the harder drugs. Again, this is much more in tune with what kids have seen from their own experience, whereas the adult generation is always lecturing to them about how any drugs and alcohol are bad, so they stopped listening to them. A lot of times the songs are very much story-telling. One Alex really liked in particular was called "The Art of Storytelling," about a guy in love with a girl. He went away and became a famous rapper and always hoped he would see her in the stands sometime. He eventually went back and found out she had died of a drug overdose.

They're generally religious. Sometimes it's a personal religion, sometimes even more specific. Almost never are they heard to put down religion. One, BMX, was talking about how thankful he was to be on earth and in the world.

One thing that they do talk about that is not mainstream morality is cheating on their girlfriends and how cool they are by being, as Alex says, "players." But apparently they can do almost whatever they want that's really outrageous. One of them comes out wearing a woman's wig and spandex and people love him. They said there has been a sort of evolution away from the abusive attitude that rap music used to have and still has to some extent toward women.

Even though I did have my ears blocked with earplugs, I tried and I could not understand perhaps 90% of the words. It was like they were speaking another language, and that I, being of the adult generation, couldn't speak it. Perhaps we should learn it.

Breaking Ground
by David Orr

The problem of education in our time has little to do with SAT scores. It is not in any important way related to how much money we spend on education. It has absolutely nothing to do with preparing the young for the global economy or how many computers we stuff into classrooms. The problem of education in our time is how to make ecologically intelligent people in an ecologically ignorant society.

The success of this effort rests not only on what happens in classrooms. Environmental education, however well-intentioned or well-executed, cannot compete with the instructional effects of highways, shopping malls, urban sprawl, factory farms, agribusiness, huge utilities, and multinational corporations. By the time a student reaches college, environmental education, if it happens at all, is mostly remedial. And what must it remedy? For starters, it must help students understand how some 300-500 chemicals get into their bodies and the deadly illogic by which some justify such risks to their health as necessary trade-offs.

Education must equip students to comprehend the effects of the economic practice of discounting, which devalues their future to the vanishing point, and to see through the distorted reasoning used to justify huge risks of climatic change for the benefit of the fossil fuel industry.

It must equip them to see through all of the hyperventilation about progress, economic growth, and salvation by technology: the stock-in-trade of the terrible simplifiers. It must prepare them to be more intellectually agile, broader, and deeper than the experts who would make them modern-day serfs in a virtual economy. It must equip them to see through all of the life-denying rationalizations used to sacrifice biological diversity and the beauty of the Earth for one spurious thing or another.

Real education, however, cannot stop there. In a decaying senseless culture dying for lack of vision, the larger task of education is to help expand our sense of ecological and human possibilities. We need a more life-centered concept of education that equips students with the wherewithal to recalibrate the larger society with ecological realities. And how is this to happen?

Models of eco-design

I propose a national effort to engage students in making schools, colleges, and universities models of ecological design that can be seen and experienced.

Every school, college, and university has a formal curriculum described in its catalog. But it also has a hidden curriculum consisting of its buildings, grounds, and operations. Like the infrastructure of the larger

society, it structures what students see, how they move, what they eat, their sense of time and space, how they relate to each other, how they experience particular places - and it affects their capacity to imagine better alternatives.

The extravagant use of energy in buildings, for example, teaches students that energy is cheap and can be wasted. The use of materials that are toxic to manufacture, install, or discard teaches carelessness about the use of energy and a kind of mindlessness about where things come from and at what cost. Windowless rooms, or those with windows that do not open, teach that nature is to be kept at arm's length.

Likewise, campus landscapes are seldom valued as a component of a larger energy system useful for blocking winter winds or providing summertime shading and cooling. Neither are they regarded as potentially useful for growing food or fuel, sequestering carbon, recycling wastewater, capturing water, conserving biological diversity, or providing animal habitat.

Such landscapes are, however, unfailingly educational. They teach that we are separate from nature and that intellectual acuity is an indoor thing having nothing to do with practical outdoor skills. Ironically, for all their worldly sophistication, our students are often starved for direct experience that connects them to soils, plants, water, forests, wildlife, and a related body of skills.

It is possible, however, to design buildings and landscapes that work differently. For the past three years, I have worked with a team of students and leading designers, including William McDonough, Amory Lovins, John Lyle, John Todd, and Andropogon Associates, to craft an environmental studies building that will use energy and materials with great artfulness and efficiency and will be powered by direct sunlight using advanced technologies like photovoltaics and fuel cells.

We set out to design not just a building in which education happens, but one that educates through its design and routine operations. The amount of electricity generated by a photovoltaic array and the building's energy use will be monitored and displayed in a central atrium. Whenever possible, we are using materials from local sources, giving priority to those that can be recycled. Some components will be "products of service" that will be returned to manufacturers for recycling, not discarded.

The building will feature natural lighting and windows that open. It will purify its wastewater in a "living machine" designed by John Todd. Wood for the building will come from forests that are managed for long-term ecological health. Building costs, including CO₂ emissions, will be

calculated on a life-cycle basis.

Similarly, the landscape around the Adam Joseph Lewis Center has been designed to teach ecological competence in horticulture, gardening, natural systems agriculture, ecological restoration, forestry, aquaculture, and techniques to preserve biological diversity. In other words, it is possible to construct buildings that promote ecological imagination and help to develop ecological competence. We broke ground on this building in September. It will be completed in the late fall of 1999.

Conscious connections

For the past 12 years, I have worked with teams of students here and elsewhere to research the invisible network of corporate farms, feedlots, forests, factories, oil wells, and mines that supply educational institutions. The evidence shows conclusively that colleges and universities can reduce environmental impacts, improve services, reduce costs of campus operations, and do so in a way that is an educational asset. For example, it is possible to use the institutional purchases of food, energy, materials, and water as part of a larger pedagogy to promote the evolution of sustainable local economies in which we can become responsible agents. These conclusions are borne out by similar efforts at Brown University, Dartmouth, Middlebury College, the State University of New York at Buffalo, and elsewhere. There are 3,700 institutions of higher education in the US, with 14 million students, annual budgets over \$150 billion, and endowments in excess of \$100 billion. We could make long strides toward sustainability if even a fraction of these were to adopt ecological guidelines for campus management.

The transformation of schools, colleges, and universities is, of course, a means to a larger end. Our role as educators is to show students that the world is rich in possibilities by engaging them in solving real problems and to foster the moral energy, practical competence, and analytical skill they will need to meet the challenges of the century ahead.

But these, too, are means, not ends. Education in our time should aim at nothing less than the renewal of wisdom, the rebirth of gratitude, and the recovery of a sense of beauty large enough to embrace both esthetics and justice.

-----Resources: David W. Orr's Operational Guidelines for Campuses and Universities can be found elsewhere on the YES! Web site. Other resources recommended by David Orr:

¥ Ball State University, Proceedings, Greening of the Campus II, Muncie: Ball State University, 1997.

¥ Michael Dwyer, et al., Oberlin and the Biosphere Campus Ecology Report, 1998.

¥ Sarah Hammond Creighton, Greening the Ivory Tower, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.

¥ Julian Keniry, Ecodemia, Washington: National Wildlife Federation, 1995.

¥ Second Nature: www.secondnature.edu.

David W. Orr is the author of *Earth in Mind, Ecological Literacy*, and co-author of *The Campus and Environmental Responsibility* and *The Global Predicament*. He is a professor of environmental studies and politics at Oberlin College.

Alternative Education and the Future

Someone at a conference of public alternative schools asked me to predict what I thought was going to be happening in the future in education and educational alternatives. He thought I would have a special perspective on this since I am one of the very few people who have input from all over the world and all forms of educational alternatives. In talking to him I realized that I do have a very strong feeling about what I think is going to be happening. Of course, given Chaos Theory, anything is possible. These were some of my thoughts:

First, in terms of public alternative schools, I foresee a continued growth in numbers, many of which would be the so-called at-risk type alternatives, those being "mandated" by many states these days but which are seen by many people as simply "dumping grounds" of unwanted students from the main schools. Since the onset of the creation of public alternative schools back in the 1970s this has been the trend -- away from the "choice" alternative schools, those representing a different approach to education which would be applicable and open to any students in the community-- toward the kind of schools that were only for students that have evidenced some kind of problem in the system and need "fixing up." The reason for this trend is that the existence of the choice type alternative schools is in itself a living criticism of the educational establishment. The at-risk type schools only imply that there are a certain number of students that are problems -- the implication is that the problems are with the students, not with the system itself; that the students have to be fixed up, not the system. The problem with this has been the fact that the decisions about the creation

of a lot of these schools are in the hands of people in the system itself.

I feel that this trend will probably continue for at least five or six years; however, Mary Anne Raywid's research has shown that this type alternative is not very effective, and in fact, perhaps even counterproductive for many students. The teachers in these schools start with two strikes against them and have to be extraordinary teachers to overcome the label that the students coming into these at-risk programs have to wear. Students tend to live up to the labels that they're given. As educators come to realize this problem, many of them will begin to open up these programs to other students. Even a minority of "good students" choosing to come into these programs help to change the entire dynamic of them; now the students know that it is no longer for every one of them to be labeled as having "problems." It seems that the state of Washington and perhaps also Minnesota have come to realize this so that even their programs that are mostly for at-risk students are open to any students. On the other side of the coin, you have states, like Kentucky, which have had an influx of money but it is only for the creation of mandated, at-risk alternative schools. This is where a national organization of public alternatives could have an influence and perhaps save the situation for many students in the future and speed up the process.

Second, we've seen tremendous development in the number of charter schools. The first charter school was created in 1991 in Minnesota; Joe Nathan had a hand in that. When we did the last Almanac of Education Choices in 1995, there were 300 charter schools, today in 1999, there are over 1,200. My guess is that in a couple of years, there will be over 3,000. I also predict that the total number of charter schools will level out at about 5,000, but I certainly could be wrong by several thousand. I think that the problem will come when people begin to realize that ultimately charter schools are still being controlled in one form or another by government authorities. Joe Nathan has expressed a concern that charter schools could go the way of public alternative schools and become increasingly for at-risk students. Since there are still governmental bodies that have to approve the creation of these schools, the tendency to favor those for at-risk students is still there.

One of the microcosms that I like to look at is perhaps a predictor about charter schools is the system of alternative schools in the city of Toronto. Started in 1970, the first school created there was Seed School. It resulted from a group of students who enjoyed a particular summer program so much that they petitioned the board of education of Toronto to give them a couple of teachers and a couple of rooms so they could continue the program into the school year. When this was approved, the bureaucracy had been breached and the school department had to make a handbook on how to create such schools. In the following several years, 25 of these schools

were created. What is interesting is that the number of these schools leveled out in the high twenties and over a period of time they became more and more like other public schools but still remained somewhat different. Very recently, a new political regime made an attempt last year to close all but a few of them down. My understanding is that they have not been successful at this, but it does indicate the potential vulnerability of charter schools.

Third, the real wild card in the prediction of the future of education has to do with homeschooling. Home education as a new movement goes back to the 70s. Twenty years ago, there were perhaps 15,000 homeschoolers around the country. Today, there are one hundred-fold as many, perhaps a million and a half, as Newsweek suggested in an article earlier this year (or last year). This explosion shows no signs of abating. It has gone beyond the original pioneers to the point where it has begun to become accepted in almost every area in every state as an option that parents have. Because of the fact that so many of our families these days have both parents working, I suspect that ten years from now, the number of homeschoolers may level off at about five million, which would be about 10 percent of students. But that will be a very potent 10 percent; it will certainly instigate many of the states to follow California's example of creating public homeschool programs in order to recoup the state aid that they've lost. There are probably over 75,000 students in California today that are in various "independent study programs."

Undoubtedly, as these numbers increase, what we are seeing now as a handful of community learning centers and homeschool resource centers will become the next explosion. The same issue will come forward whether these would be independent homeschool resource centers or programs sponsored by the public schools. The state of Minnesota has begun to set up a bunch of community learning centers that are 24 hours a day and are accessible by computer. This will increasingly be the form that education takes in the future: more akin to libraries than schools, particularly as students learn how to research and find the answers to their own questions and solve their own learning problems. Undoubtedly, the majority of students today have some sense of how to find the answers to their questions by going to the Web and this will only increase in the future. It will get to the point that virtually every student and perhaps their parents eventually will come to understand that the day of the teacher droning in front of a class of bored students is an anachronism. It is no longer possible to assume that there is a body of knowledge that can simply be poured into a group of students, by force if necessary, and they'll be set for life.

As these public home education programs and independent study programs proliferate there will undoubtedly be an attempt on the part of some states to at first encourage, and eventually to try to force, parents who want to

homeschool to do so through these public programs. It is certainly true in California already that if a parent talks to local public administration about the fact that they want to homeschool, they are only told about the possibility of homeschooling through these independent study programs. But it may very well be that the genie is out of the bottle: there are already so many independent and empowered homeschoolers that it just may not be possible to put them back in the box.

An example of this phenomenon took place just a couple of years ago when Dick Armey proposed Rule HR6, which some homeschoolers interpreted to mean that they would be required to be certified teachers in order to homeschool their children. It is debatable whether this was the intent, but the fact is that homeschoolers were galvanized from coast to coast to complain to their Congressmen and Representatives about this potential bill. In the history of the United States including war protests going back forever, there has never been a phenomenon such as that which took place over two or three day's time after this group of homeschoolers was galvanized. The volume of the phone calls shut down the congressional telephone system for two or three days, rendering it virtually unfunctional. This was not lost on the politicians. Shortly thereafter, I heard politicians being interviewed on television come out with statements like, "Yes, but what are you going to do with the homeschoolers?" So this could come down to being quite a battle, which I suspect the homeschoolers will win. And in the process of winning this battle, the public school system will be transformed dramatically, not from within, but from without.

Leading to Standards: This brings me to the question of the future of the so-called "standards movement." It seems to me that the standards movement is a reaction by those inside the system to the malaise that they know is there but most of these people are not capable of thinking outside the box and outside of the systems that they know. The only thing they can think of is doing more of the same of what they've done before. If there is a problem with students, they need more homework; they need higher standards for the information that is to be poured down them in order for them to "compete" with those from other countries. Meeting these standards is not at all connected with what kind of person they will become, their emotional growth, their satisfaction in life, their creativity, because traditional educators in the system simply have ceased thinking about these things partly because they feel they cannot be measured and tested. This is a pull that almost in the exact opposite direction of homeschooling and certainly at right angles at least to the charter school movement. After a few years and various kinds of testing, when people discover that this approach is not helping to raise test scores and is leading to open revolt on the part of students and teachers, it may be that the standards movement will go the way of the back-to-basics movement which was motivated by the same factors. At some point, it will become painfully obvious that it is impossible to

squeeze any more juice out of the old orange. The question is how much damage will be done before this reality is discovered.

Above and beyond any of these trends, I believe it is crucially important to try to unify the various movements in educational alternatives. Unified, this group could have more power than the NRA, and it certainly will have more moral force behind its cause. Alternative educators have to be encouraged to look beyond their particular programs and to stop pretending that they're there only to fix up broken or damaged individual students and admit that the system is broken. Homeschoolers are going to have to admit that they are never going to be the majority and that they have some vested interest in the evolution of a school system that meets the needs of students and is learner centered. Students are going to have to be empowered to take more control of their education and recognize the power they could have and could always have had if they wanted to if they had been aware of their potential power. The same is true for parents.

Programs that give potential teachers hands on experiences in effective education that is learner centered and empowers students must be created in a systematic fashion. There is no doubt that in the next ten or fifteen years there is going to be a dramatic change in the education system. Those people who talk about the separation of school and state are just dreaming and are being absolutist to a fault; the public school system is too ingrained in our culture. There will be a drastic evolution of that system; but if those who understand what kind of education can really be effective for children do not take a stand and become high profile, that evolution may not come to a much better point than it is today. And in the future, we may see public schools that simply sit kids in front of computers, with no teachers in sight, to have the garbage of the information revolution pumped into them.

The future of education must have our voice in the same way that a carrier signal is modulated through a tiny current that it receives through the microphone. That modulation contains a message for the future of education, and it must have input from us. The flapping of our butterfly wings may make all of the difference for the children of tomorrow.

NEWS ABOUT NEW "STANDARDS"

A series of editorials by Daniel Greenberg about the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), originally published in the Metro West News, was published in the May issue of The Sudbury Valley School Journal. Dan explores the reasons why he is convinced that these tests and the education reforms on which they are based are "destructive and sinister." One reason is the key underpinning of the new curriculum guides: "The entire strategy is based on the fundamental assumption that all

children undergo the same developmental process, at the same basic rate, from birth to maturity." This is obviously "wholly contradicted" by the reality of child development.

Another false assumption upon which the tests are based is that "the same extensive body of knowledge must be possessed by every single person in order for society to function successfully." The reality is that as information expands, specialization also increases. The more there is to know, the less possible it is for any single

individual to know it all; thus, individuals instead must concentrate their knowledge in a specialized field. Further, the MCAS tests cover material that is "patently absurd by any common sense standard."

Nevertheless, "the exams are so extensive that they take a week to administer. Because of their importance to student classification and graduation, these exams will become the total center of focus of every classroom in the state. There will be no time for anything else." Finally, Dan states that "the conviction that tests are a useful tool for measuring something significant about a person's ability to perform a task with proficiency" is also a fallacy. There are tests that can measure specific skills; no test can determine who will and will not be successful. The MCAS tests measure "the ability of children to take the MCAS tests." SVS Press, 2 Winch St., Framingham, MA 01701. Tel: 508-877-3030.

The National Coalition of Education Activists agrees with Dan's conclusions. In their Action Newsletter, they state: "Higher scores don't necessarily mean better schools. More and more often, 'low performing' schools are identified solely by scores. And, at the other end, schools are receiving state and district 'seals of approval' simply because scores have gone up. In a study of six urban school districts, the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform found that, 'Schools that spend months on test preparation do not have time to implement high standards.' Research has also shown that high test scores are the results of "high expectations, strong overall preparation, and quality teaching, not test preparation." NCEA, PO Box 679, Rhinebeck, NY 12572-0679.

From BELLWEATHER, Vol. II, Issue 24, June 17, 1999:
A Reservation Success Story

In Northeast Arizona, the Wide Ruins Community School has established a rich environment for children in grades K - 6. However, unable to expand under its status as a federally funded grant school, administrators looked to the Arizona charter law to serve more students. Determined to improve their student's prospects, they sought and received a charter for grades seven and eight. Administrators hope that retaining students for two more years will enhance the prospects of these children whose environment is less than ideal.

Established in 1930, the school serves an underprivileged community. Only about 20 percent of the parents have a high school diploma and unemployment rates hover around 80 percent, in a state where the overall unemployment rates are less than 5 percent. Many homes do not have telephones and the closest supermarket is an hour away. Although gangs are often associated with the inner city, they also have a strong presence on the reservation. As a result of this environment, many of students come to Wide Ruins needing a wide variety of services in order to succeed.

The mission of Wide Ruins Community School is to provide a "quality education for all students." While the basics are emphasized, teaching the Navajo culture, history and language are also an important part of the curriculum. By the time students complete sixth grade, they are able to speak, read and write Navajo. Parents and community members are often invited to attend and assist the students. High tech skills are also emphasized. The school provides a wide array of services to both students and parents.

The numerous programs and staff support is paying off for Wide Ruins' students. Although standardized test scores are below the state average, they are about 40% higher than those of students in the local district schools. The existence of this charter school will allow kids to remain in this safe and nurturing environment at a critical time in their development. Principal Judy Quesenberry expects the charter school will enroll 50 students this fall and more in the future. She believes it will improve their chances for success. We agree.

John Spritzler (spritz@sdac.harvard.edu) writes: The judge in the Curt Doble case dismissed all the charges and said there was no evidence to warrant an arrest. This makes it abundantly clear that Curt is an innocent boy whom Danvers town and school officials knowingly falsely accused of a felony -- threatening to bomb the school. The school principal faced a small revolt of 7 10th graders who announced they would refuse to take the MCAS high stakes exam in April. The principal knew that one of the students, Curt, had been wearing black clothes to school before the recent Columbine violence, and she apparently decided to use that to try to isolate and intimidate the anti-MCAS movement, by accusing Curt of threatening to bomb the school, even though there was absolutely no evidence of any such threat. I think that the public support for Curt was likely one reason why the authorities dropped the charges. They knew the alternative of going to trial with no evidence and an attentive public would lead to their losing even more of their legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Thank you again for your support and solidarity with Curt and the anti-MCAS movement.

SEPARATION OF LIGHTS AND STATE

Received from the SepLight Organization, the Organization for the Separation of Traffic Lights and State

We of SepLight are totally opposed to the State control and arbitrary regulation of traffic lights and traffic laws. We feel that these should be non-compulsory. Every community should be able to make its own traffic suggestions, and every individual should be able to make his or her own travel choice.

Why should there be a State authority to make such simple and basic decisions as which side of the road every person should drive on, when they should stop and when they should go? These are individual decisions, made by individuals within their families. Why should we as individuals accept the authority of arbitrarily determined state mandates, regulating our individual travel decisions. After all, who knows better where we want to go than ourselves?

We were not consulted about placement of traffic lights. Who determined which colors to use. Each family should be able to use whatever placements or color lights they want, or none at all if they choose. Who was it who determined that green should stand for "go?" Probably some left wing environmental group. It is obvious to us who came up with the idea that red means that everyone should stop, stop and look at the red light: clearly a non-so-subtle promotion of communism.

Stopping and going and side of the road should be individual decisions. We're not unaware that the transition to SepLight and complete individualization of travel decisions will be a difficult one. Every driver will have to proceed very slowly, since they cannot make any assumptions about the decisions other drivers will make. Some people will decide not to drive at all. Commuting might become virtually impossible. This could have a considerable impact on our society. We think this will lead to fewer traffic deaths and accidents. People might decide to spend more time with their own families. People might decide to do more walking or bicycle riding, with obvious health benefits. But the underlying absolute is the right of individuals to make their own decisions about where they will go and how they will get there.

For more information, go to our website at fww.SepLight.ind. It is not on the Internet, which is clearly a State military plot for control of international communication. It is on my computer in my basement.

New Charter School Accreditation Organization

From Bellweather (AZ Charter School newsletter): In the education marketplace, parents and students are consumers, just as they are when making a purchase at the mall. However, there is no "Consumer Reports" for charter schools and sources of available assistance have often been lacking. While there are a number of web pages designed to help parents locate and evaluate charter schools, many parents have sought a more concrete method of assessing schools. Arizona charter operators decided to design an accreditation association that would be appropriate for charter schools. As a result, the Association for Performance-Based Accreditation (APBA) was formed. Patricia Shaw is not only the Secretary of the APBA, but also co-founder and President of Intelli-School, the first school to receive APBA accreditation.

The membership application includes basic information about the school, as well as the student-teacher ratio, a mission statement, a vision statement, school demographics, community information and partnerships the school has established. The school must also outline its goals, which must include at least "two different types of measures of academic growth." Complete financial, organizational and academic information must be included in the application. Schools must also provide data about parent complaints and the school's response, a list of board members and member profiles, and media information. A site visit by the APBA Board is also required for accreditation. After acceptance, member schools must provide an annual report and Annual Parent Satisfaction Survey to the APBA. As a part of the APBA mission to provide consumers with "meaningful, accurate and timely information," they are developing a web site. The site (www.apba-az.org) will be up and running soon and will include information and reviews of APBA member schools and candidates. It will also include contact information for the APBA board so that parents can contact them with concerns or compliments. Drexel sees the web site as "a great resource for parents." While most states have a number of accrediting bodies, until now Arizona has had only one. The option of accreditation by APBA has drawn the attention of Arizona district and private schools, as well as interest from schools in other states. When discussing the marketplace, economists "assume" perfect information. In the real world, that is not possible. However, it is true that better information makes better consumers. The creation of the APBA gives another piece of information to Arizona charter school "consumers" and we believe it will contribute to a better "product," which will mean better achievement for students.

Poetry

By Jerry Mintz

Kite With a Broken String

We can all see the kite
As it flies so high
The child of the Wind and the Earth
well into the Night
It forgets just why
It is tied to the land of its birth

A beautiful kite,
The best one could buy,
In the sky it was certainly king,
It forgot that its light
Would certainly die
Were it not for a thin piece of string

And so it let go
Of its tie to the ground
In an effort to fly still higher
It never did know
That its fate was bound
By that string, and it did expire.

It's Alive

It seems my mind is like a sieve
Should I pronounce it live or live
For now it seems that I must strive
To find two rhymes for live and live

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entries by state in zip-code order, and a dozen informative essays about how to start a new alternative, how to start homeschooling, use of computers by alternatives, etc. Includes the Montessori, Waldorf, Quaker, charter, public choice, and at-risk schools. Send \$20 plus \$3 postage. Canada, add \$5. Out of US, add \$10-\$15 for air mail postage. Special for paid subscribers, only \$15 plus \$3 postage

*SUMMERHILL SCHOOL, A New View of Childhood, A.S. Neill, Edited by Albert Lamb. This is a new editing of Neill's writings, an update of the original book, Summerhill. \$15 including postage

*The HANDBOOK OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, edited by Jerry Mintz, Raymond Solomon, and Sidney Solomon. With over 7,300 educational alternatives described, chapters by Ron Miller, Mary Ann Raywid, Jerry Mintz, Pat Farenga, Dave Lehman, Tim Seldin, and others, many indexes. Hard cover reference book published by Macmillan and The Solomon Press. \$75 Contact AERO for sets of labels from the Handbook/Almanac database. Entire list is \$60 per thousand names. Subsets can be custom-created.

*My Life As a Traveling Homeschooler, by Jenifer Goldman, The Solomon Press. An 11-year-old describes her adventures visiting homeschoolers and helping her uncle, Jerry Mintz, start new alternative schools around the US and Canada. Kids everywhere are reading this book and deciding to write their own books! NOW ONLY \$6.50 for AERO-GRAMME subscribers

*GREEN REVOLUTION, the newsletter of the School of Living. AERO-GRAMME readers can become members of the School of Living and get a subscription to the Green Revolution for half price. The SOL is a 60-year-old organization that pioneered the environmental protection movement, consumer protection, and is involved with land trust and communities movements, and is the sponsor of AERO. \$10

NEW! Campus-Free College Degrees, Thorson's Guide to Accredited College Degrees through Distance Learning, by Marcie Kisner Thorson. Correspondence study, experiential learning, independent study, group study, seminars: organized by subject area, type state. \$24.95

NEW! National Charter Schools Directory, published by the Center for Education Reform. It is the 1999 list of all the charter schools in the country, by state, in alphabetical order. \$15

NEW! The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling, Patrick Farenga, President of Holt Associates. 1998 version, great practical overview of how to start homeschooling. \$10.95

NEW! Making It Up as We Go Along., Chris Mercogliano's book about the

history of Albany's Free School. \$15

PHONE CONSULTATIONS:

Want to start a new alternative school or homeschool resource center? Looking for an educational alternative for your children? Looking for a job in alternative education? Set up a private phone consultation with Jerry Mintz. He knows what's going on today in the whole field of educational alternatives and can help you with in-depth answers to your questions. Call 800 769-4171 for an appointment.

Only \$65. In-person consultations arranged individually.

AUDIOCASSETTES:

New! For the first time, here is an expanded list of the tapes from our show, The Education Revolution on the TalkAmerica Network and Cable Radio Network. Tapes may be purchased for \$10, including postage.

#4: John Potter, founder of the New School of Northern VA.

#5: Homeschoolers Leni and Anthony Santoro. She talks about a lending library of educational games and toys she has developed.

#6: Live from Youth Summit in MA, Chris Kawicki, a Hampshire College graduate starting a new school in VT, and with a Berea College student.

#7: Live from NCACS conference in Chicago. Interviews with Marvin Garcia about Pedro Albizu Campos School, and with a teacher at Clonlara School.

#8: Steve Boncheck of Harmony School in Indiana.

#10: Andy Smallman, founder of Puget Sound Community School, Seattle.

#11: Interview with Professor Margit Watts, expert on educational uses of Internet.

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

#15: Joe Weber of Contra Costa Alternative School.

#17 Les Garber of Horizons School, Atlanta.

#19: David Colfax, CA homeschooler.

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

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

25: Mary Leue, founder of the Free School in Albany.

#26. Dr. Robert Ferris, founder of New Orleans Free School

#31. Futurist and author Robert Theobald

#40 Author, Morty Lefcoe, changing your paradigm.

#44. Summerhill and Modern School discussion with Summerhill grad Josh Popino, Jon Scott

#46. Alt Ed Alumni discussion with grads Gabe Prost, Angela Cross, and Jenifer Goldman

#47 Homeschool parent Loretta Heuer

#52. Grassroots Free School Founder Pat Seery, report on Renaissance charter consultation

#53: Ten signs you need to find an alternative, with Mary Addams, Jerry

Mintz

- #57. Daria Brzinski discusses children and holistic medicine
- #61. Role of father in education: Matt Minafo, Bill Heuer, Chris Mercogliano
- #65. John Taylor Gatto
- #67-69: International Student Alliance Camp, with Russian, Chinese and American students
- #72: Tom Williams, Alternative Education Director, Sweetwater District, CA.
- #80: Eerie Halloween stories.
- #81. Ron Miller talks about problems with the standards movement.
- #82: Discussion of boy who was made to remove his Yankee shirt in school.
- #83. Clearwater School, with Stephanie Sarantos and Cory.
- #86: Election day, discussion of what age people should vote, with 13, 14, 15 yr old callers.
- #92. Pathfinder Learning Center, with Josh Hornick and students.
- #96. Zoe Readhead, Head of Summerhill, with parents, student, and Ron Miller.
- #97. Joe Nathan, "father" of charter school movement.
- #99: Mary Addams and son Brad demonstrate question class, organic curriculum.
- #100: Marilyn Mosley of Laurel Springs with staff and students.
- #103. Glen Blomgren of Christa McAuliffe Academy, with students.
- #107 Chris Mercogliano, Albany's Free School, Renaissance trip
- #108 The demise of Cato Charter School
- #109 The Russian Math School Camp
- #110 The School of Living and Heathcote Community
- #111 Betsy Herbert and South St. (homeschool resource) Centre at Goddard Reunion
- #112 Andy Smallman and Puget Sound Community School
- #114 Arnold Greenberg and Liberty School, Maine
- # 115 The Free School Live Out and Kimberly Isaksson's Poetry
- #116 Mary Addams Interviews Marshal Fritz of Separation of School and State Alliance
- #118 Boarding alternative schools: Horizons, Arthur Morgan, the Meeting School, Stonesoup
- #119 Pat Montgomery and Clonlara School
- #121 Amy Cook and Chandra of Venice Hills School, CA
- #124 Jan Smith, homeschooler and owner, freecomputers.com
- # 126 Play Mountain Place, CA
- # 128 Ann Hodges, homeschooler, and NYS Home Ed. Network
- #131 Arnie Langberg and Littleton Crisis, on day of the shooting
- # 132 From NCACS CO Conf, new NCACS staff, etc
- #136 Westchester teens reactions to Littleton
- #138 Interview from England with Zoe Readhead about Summerhill School
- #140 Lise Rubin, parent of students refusing to take MCAS test
- #141 Jeff Grossberg, consulting for building up non-profits

- #142 Bob Barr, public alternatives pioneer, from Alternative Ed Conf, CT
- #144 Summerhill students talk, at Summerhill
- #145 From Summerhill International Democratic Education Conference, Derry Hannam, school inspector, and Helen Hughes, Windsor House School
- #146 Dr. Dennis Jensen, Inet Library
- #147 John Gatto on WBAI
- #148 Int Student Alliance from Walker Creek ranch, CA
- #150 Aftermath of Columbine, Jefifer Goldman
- #153 Gene Sommerfield and son, MCAS test refusers
- #154 Peter Allen, 12 year old co-host
- #155 Mara by computer from Hadera in Israel
- #156 Michael Lalvani, table tennis
- #157 Madelin Suozo, Celestial Harvest
- #158 Stu Fleashman on college financing, from 6 Flags in NJ

VIDEOS

(Note: We have been cataloging AERO's extensive video library of educational alternatives and conferences, with over 150 done so far. Let us know if you would like a list of the ones done to date.)

* New video of Puget Sound Community school, Clearwater School, the democracy workshop at Renaissance School, and video of radio show interview of Clearwater School founder and student at Talk America studio in Seattle. \$25

* New video of International Democratic Education Conference at Stork Family School, in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. \$25

*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 ad

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

PRODUCT: (Add \$3 for postage for books and videos)

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Non-Profit Org.

There will be lots of free workshops including: art, fossil hunting, astronomy, circus skills, music, dancing, various crafts, lighting, water divining and woodcrafts. There will also be talks and discussions with Roland Meighan, Chris Shute, Alan Thomas and others, as well as self-help legal workshops, networking and empowering resources. Books and resources will be offered for sale. It will take place on a 30-acre camping site; tents, camper vans, and caravans are all welcome. As an alternative, cheap caravans and cottages will be available for rent. For more information email Andy Blewett at: hesfes@choiceineducation.co.uk. Website: www.choiceineducation.co.uk/events.html

IDEC 2000

The Community Learning Center (CLC) International Ad Hoc Committee would like to invite any and all educators to serve as committee members. If you are willing to discuss the idea of the community learning center via e-mail or Internet, can meet semi-annually for seminars and/or workshops, willing to learn new ideas, and to experiment and test the new ideas within your community, then the CLC International Ad Hoc Committee is for you. For more information or to join, please contact Michael Reber, Assistant Professor, Kanazawa Institute of Technology

7-1 Ohgigaoka, Nonoichi-machi

Ishikawa-ken 921-8501, Japan

Tel: +81 76-248-1100 Ext. 2226

Fax: +81 76-294-6701

e-mail: reber@neptune.kanazawa-it.ac.jp

Committee website:

<http://www2.kanazawa-it.ac.jp/englishd/reber/clc1.htm> SPAIN

here is a free education web site from spain, for those who might be interested: <http://www.cgt.es/fedens/aulalibre.html>

From what i can read, myself, the page is maintained by the education branch of the cgt (confederacion general de trabajo). [stiobhard, stiobhard@yahoo.com](mailto:stiobhard@yahoo.com)

#162 Matthew Cross, self-educated non-profit business consultant

Alternative Education Alumni News

Dear Alumni,

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Michelle Senzon and I am happy to tell you that I am the new Director of the Alternative Education Alumni Association (AEAA). I want to give you some background about myself, and the immediate and future plans I have for the development of the alumni association. I am also an alternative alumna.

In 1997 after graduating from Prescott College with a BA in Alternative Education and Creative Expression, I worked for Jerry Mintz at the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO), in New York as Director of Information and Research. I have recently moved out to Durango, Colorado where I am preparing to begin my masters degree at Goddard College in Vermont. My degree will focus on Community Based Learning.

My plan for the development of the AEAA is straight forward and depends on the participation of the alumni and alternative schools. As director of the Alternative Education Alumni Association (AEAA), I will help organize alumni from alternative schools throughout the country into a resourceful working organization, focused on supporting AERO and alternative education. Support can be financial, legal, organizational, artistic or any form an alumni prefers. In this way, local schools will have "hands on support" from alumni, and alternative education as a whole will benefit through AERO's continued hard work.

In the next few days and weeks I will contact alternative schools and request alumni contacts and lists. An alumni leader from each school or geographic area will be appointed to contact the alumni from their school, via a letter explaining the purpose of the Alumni Association and the Alternative Education Resource Organization. I will then compile the email and regular addresses of participating alumni and they will receive an email newsletter with alumni stories, alternative education news and ways to support the AEAA and AERO.

The Alumni who are able to donate \$15 as a "member" will receive a complimentary Education Revolution Magazine. Alumni who can donate \$30 as a "supporter" will receive an Education Revolution Subscription. Those who donate \$50 or more becoming a "sustainer," will receive a subscription and the Almanac of Education Choices. Alumni who choose not to donate will still be invited to join the AEAA however donations are preferred.

AERO has received a grant to fund the development of the Alternative Education Alumni Association for the next two months. During this time we need to become a self sustaining organization through member donations so we can continue to develop the Association after the two month period is over. The Alumni Association will also help support the Alternative Education Resource Organization through their donations.

AEAA members will be encouraged to use the Alumni Association List Serve and the Bulletin Board on www.edrev.org to increase communication amongst the individuals and create regional and national support of alternative schools.

With these tools, local schools can find local alumni and foster a relationship of support, advice, and help. For instance a Durango, CO alternative school can post a note on the bulletin board and I can respond by visiting the school, maybe helping with building project, or simply my sharing alternative educational background.

Starting to create solid links amongst alumni and between alumni and alternative schools is a beginning step in developing community and cohesion in the alternative education world. Our aim is to develop a strong network of those who understand the benefits and importance of educational alternatives. Together, we can work towards strengthening existing alternative schools and organizations. The power of this group could support real educational change and beneficial legislation, promoting educational alternatives for all learners.

I know those of you on this list serve are familiar with the AEAA and I would love your feedback and ideas as I begin to move forward in making the organization a large and powerful force in supporting education alternatives as well as supporting AERO. I would appreciate any constructive thoughts or ideas you may have. I also want to encourage you to become an "Alumni Leader", the emissary to the alumni of your school or other schools you know. You may email me through the list serve or directly at michelleaero@hotmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,
Michelle

ALUMNI STORIES
by Hugh Harris

I went to school at Summerhill.

There has been a lot of hoohah of late about school inspectors wanting to close the school down, and trying to see the wood despite the trees I have come to the conclusion that this might possibly be so, but that it is more likely that they viewed the school with their eyes and their background and found that according to their perception of how life and schools should be Summerhill was short on certain things - like just about every school I have ever had anything to do with, but perhaps not quite as severely short as most.

I don't think boarding schools are a good idea, but if we leave that part out for the moment I can talk about what I personally perceive to be 'education' - learning things - as opposed to the more general idea of a whole lifestyle that might also be called education.

I love the learning things sort of education, and have been learning things all my life, and at age 60 continue to do so as fast as I can. My most recent activities have been to do with designing and making a new member of the woodwind family (which involved of course learning all the technology to make prototypes) in co-operation with another Summerhillian - Tim Israel, who is very interested in the science of acoustics (and learning things).

During the past few years (say ten) I have learnt the basics of mechanical engineering, the stock exchange, economics, British Law, Company Law, first year university science.....etc. Although I find the business subjects relatively uninteresting, they could be very useful in the kind of upside-down economy we have because they help you to be able to get a living without making what I would perceive to be a useful contribution.

During the years prior to that last ten (that is, the previous 50) I learnt speech (age 2 or so, I suppose), riding a bike, reading, maths, English, playing the ukelele, geometry, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, (horsemanship!), and all the other things one might pick up at any state school, which enabled me to go on and learn Commerce, typing, music, woodwork, drawing, screen printing, furniture design, business management, practical mechanics, building, surveying.....in fact, I learnt a whole lot of stuff for some of which I have no qualifications and therefore in which I am deemed to be uneducated, but in which I am sometimes found to be more capable than the qualified, and two subjects in which I am deemed to be qualified but in which I am no more competent than in many of the rest.

The things I learnt at Summerhill were reading and independence and (perhaps surprisingly, perhaps not) not only not to be ashamed of learning things, but also that to learn things can be fun. I learnt French to a reasonable level at Summerhill, and although I cannot do it comfortably now I was able at about 16 to read 'Le Monde', which arrived once a week from Paris, and of course like most Summerhillians I could make things with my hands.

The value of Summerhill for me as an educational (in my narrow sense) tool was that there was no pressure to learn anything - even to read - so that I was never tense about what I was trying to do. I just followed my nose.

I can tell you what I perceive to be the snag also. It was a snag I was unaware of until I reached about age 28, when I suddenly came in contact with a woman who had learnt a few school basics, and I began to ask myself what I might have missed (even though I would not have enjoyed having stuff forced upon me). At that time I also began to wonder what information I might gain from books. I explored, and discovered a whole world that,

although I realised it existed, I had not considered to be of any importance before and now discovered to be one of the most important parts of human existence and knowledge.

A kid does not know what information might be accessed, and although they should not in my opinion be forced to learn anything, I think it would be very sensible if they could see around them the example of adults learning and using their knowledge, and see around them sources of information in use and available so that they understand what the purpose of stored information is. No person can remember all the of information even in a fairly basic technical manual, let alone more complex things, and so books and other sources of information are essential for anyone who wants the power to do many things - they store the information we have not the space in our heads for, and not infrequently lead us to realise things that we did not before know. There is also the question of the beauty of the written word (when it is), the interest of stories, and written humour, plays, words, and music.....need I go on?

Interestingly, my youngest daughter, who has only a few books herself now she is 31, from age six onwards was in the habit of asking if we had a book with whatever bit of information she might have wanted at the time. Unfortunately, I did not at the time appreciate as much as I do now what she was doing, and did not respond as enthusiastically as I might have. Bloody parents!

As to such alarming questions as 'yes, but what do ladybirds do, Dad?' (with the emphasis on 'do') and the impossibility of answering, it taught me something about my own limitations.

(I think I would be a much better parent now than I ever was then.)

Hope you are all well.

Goddard College
by Mary Schroeder-Blumke (Msblumke@aol.com)

In a way, I suppose that I have had no alternative education, except for Goddard. But let me start at the beginning.

The beginning was eighth grade. My twin, Martha, and our friend, Calvin, had gone through kindergarten to 6th grades together, and in 6th grade They gave us some standardized tests. based on these, They promoted us to 8th grade, where (of course) we got straight A's. A week before graduation, we were told in whispers, one at a time and while our classmates watched uncomprehendingly, that They had decided that we were too young to go on to high school, and would have to repeat 8th grade. Of

course, we barely passed the second time, but we read a lot of books, and Calvin let his imagination keep us entertained very well indeed, thank you.

By our freshman year of high school, Calvin (being the smartest of us) had figured out that the reason we were kept back is because he, Calvin, was black (or Negro, as was p.c. in those days). He got into lots of trouble for two months, then decided he'd had enough of that bigoted principal and, when sent to her office for pinching his English teacher, went past the office and out the front door. Within months, he had earned his GED and joined the army; at 16, he was in Korea. He has been a bit of a rolling stone ever since. Martha and I had turned passive-aggressive; we suffered through high school like the obedient children we were, but we finally caught on to the why's and wherefore's when we made friends with a girl who was in our class, became valedictorian, had a phd from Penn at age 22, and was a year younger than us. Our passive-aggression backfired, as it almost always does; by the time we awoke to the fact that the best revenge is doing well, Martha had a severely adhd son to raise, and I was at Goddard.

Goddard was my salvation, although the healing I found there took many more years to complete. At Goddard, one learned what one wanted to learn; I graduated with major credits in three subjects, including education, and gravitated, with some detours, into teaching gifted children. I have for years been determined to put myself into a position where I could intervene should anyone try to do to a child what was done to me, and I have stayed in the public schools precisely because there is where it is most likely that a child will be harmed by the calousness of The System. There have been times when I did some good; some of my students have done much better for my presence than they would have without it, or so they tell me. A memorable success was a lovely young woman who changed her mind about suicide; a memorable failure is one who showed no signs of her intentions, even in retrospect. I have fought with administrators and with parents; even when I lost, at least the kid knew that there was someone on his side. I have always tried to live by the philosophy that somebody should believe the kid's side of the story, because if the kid is lying, well, so, I've believed a lie, but if the kid is telling the truth, someone MUST believe him. And every kid, no matter how unloveable, is entitled to an advocate. Martha, Calvin and I had none; our lives would have been different, and infinitely less painful, had someone been on our side. For various reasons, nobody stood up and said "You can't DO that", even our parents. I will never allow that to happen to a child under my care. Winning or losing the battle is almost immaterial; what matters is that the child have someone who recognizes the worthwhileness of his emotions.

I teach at Central High School, which is the academic magnet school for

the city of Philadelphia, and the second oldest (after Boston Latin) public high school in the nation. We get a wonderful spectrum of kids, including some who live in the suburbs and actually pay tuition to attend. Virtually all of our students who graduate -- and that's most of them -- go straight to college, although for some only Community College is within reach; we get kids from the worst slums, as well as those with real wealth. Last year our graduating class won something like (I think) ten million dollars in scholarship money. The kids I admire most are those who struggle the hardest to get to us; several years ago, for example, we had a girl whose parents were non-contenders, so she lived with several friends in an abandoned house with no heat, no electricity, no water, no you name it. But she graduated...I work with children who are identified as being at risk; last year's group included the most manipulatively passive-aggressive girl I've ever met, and a boy whose name is already known in the classical music world, and I do mean world, but whose performance schedule kept him from completing assignments at Central. The girl is now gone; the boy is doing well. My primary assignment is teaching English to kids who are identified as Mentally Gifted. There is never a boring moment, but lots and lots of stress and reward.

At the beginning of each school year, I tell my students that there is so much out there to learn that there is no way to teach it all, even within my subject -- English -- so that what I am going to teach them is how to read (11th-graders are shocked; by January most of them understand), how to develop vocabulary (as opposed to learning a set list of vocabulary words), how to think, how to analyze the ideas they find in literature and elsewhere, and how to enjoy these processes. Then I do all these things in front of them. It works for me, and for most of the kids. Of course, nothing works for everybody. But they write, and argue, and most of them learn a great deal; some of them even come back in later years and say thanks.

So, that's my story -- an alternative within the least alternative of educations, the public school system.

Julie Daviscommunity that we have started to develop is noticeable not only to the staff, but to the students. For the most part, as I'm sure you know, these kids feel so withdrawn and distanced from
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and activities of interest to homeschoolers and alternative schools.

Every Saturday at 1 PM families are invited to a guided tour that is free with museum admission. On December 11th from 9 to 11 AM the museum will offer "Mixing Media," a workshop that features special gallery tours and hands-on activities for children 5-10 years old. To pre-register for the workshop and more information call (212) 570-7710

For older kids get the "Pre- and Post- Visit Materials for Junior High School Students" study guide with projects like "Making Your Own 'Self-Portrait' Timeline" and "Analyze an Ad." Also for teenagers there is "Artists and Youth: A Dialogue" that enables high school students to meet exhibiting artists and "Youth Insights" that trains high school youth to give public tours of current exhibitions. For more information on these programs call (212) 570-7710.

If you're feeling left out because you don't live in the New York Metropolitan area the Whitney has, of course, a website; www.whitney.org.

After reading Jerry's report of his British trip and the Summerhill/IDEC Conference I want to acknowledge the tremendous work he did at the Conference. Whether it was setting up the meeting for the next IDEC Conference, running the !; !; ~~-23±ÄfÄkÄpÄöÄöÄUÄVÄ; Ä-ÄÄÄÈÇÇ \$ÇEÇIÑxÑyÑzÑ{ÑÌÑÒÖÖÖÖPÖQÖüÖ†ÖÖÖ•ààOàPàÈàÑà' à÷â&â' âuâvâ/âfâ' â÷âÛâÛâÄâOâcâäâÿ ä&ä' ä&äOädämäÉäïäÿ|ääLâôâfiâ, äÿäöä~ çççççççççççç ç !ç"ç#ç\$ç%ç&ç' ç(ç) . -ÚÒ , ÒÒ; ç\$\$\$ @Ä_auction, doing his radio show, or his constant documenting of the conference on film, video or in his notebook, he was always busy. Whatever was going on at the conference it was clear that he was imagining how it could be used later so that more people can be brought together, or supported in their efforts or so that more people can be informed of all the organisations, schools, people and events around the world engaged in education for freedom. Well done Jerry. Summerhill Study of Graduates I thought people on the list might like to know that a new subscriber to our magazine, The Education Revolution, told me that he had done an extensive study on Summerhill graduates and had publish two articles about it in 1968. His name is Dr. Emmanuel Bernstein, and he has sent me copies of the articles which appeared in the Fall 1968 issue of Humanistic Psychology and the October 1968 issue of Psychology Today. The articles tell of his summer of visiting fifty Summerhill graduates and families in the London area. He gives some statistical results and some impressions, and a lot of anecdotal stories. It is fascinating, but too much to summarize. The people he visited were universally wonderful to him, and most really loved Summerhill. AERO can make photocopies for \$10, including postage.

B

CREATING FUTURE LEARNING SYSTEMS

By Don Glines

IMAGINEERING -- Imagining, Inventing, Implementing -- is the key to development of the new lifelong learning systems essential for future generations. The education structures which currently exist worldwide are not appropriate for now, and certainly not for the decades ahead. Indeed, they have not been defensible for the majority of the past century.

Significantly different visions of what could be are needed for the immediate, near, and far term futures. Truly creative change processes are required to overcome decades of neglect. More important, though, than the mechanisms, emerging technologies, and step 1-2-3 how-to-do-it recipes is an open-ended, individualized, person-centered learning philosophy which reflects total dissatisfaction with the present forms and outcomes of schooling. The belief must also lead to bold actions which unleash the potential for breaking the existing lockstep, discontinuous, iron-caste patterns.

...Education which fosters "peace, justice, understanding, tolerance, equality, and health for the benefit of present and future generations" ... cannot be accomplished to their desired levels under the competitive, repetitious, cognitive focused, group-paced, 20th century structures which dominate nations....

...Major industries spend ten percent on research and development (R & D); smaller companies allot five percent. Educators spend only one-fourth of one percent; most of what is claimed as R & D is only for invalid "standardized" assessments. It is no wonder that schooling -- not learning -- yet dominates. Limited improved approaches and opportunities are created, and the few new discoveries are not widely adopted. The minimal but significant research available from past decades is rarely utilized. Tradition prevails!

...Education ... can do more than independently promote technology, economic competition, and basic literacy. Suicide rates have remained high in many Asian school cultures. Eleven plus examiniatin syndromes in Europe have resulted in the educational have and have not separation.

Comprehensive plans found in North America have maintained an assembly line mentality without individual deviations; they have maximized the outcome potentials for at best fifteen percent of the learners.

...Futurists of all walks of life are almost required to help communities with envisioning. Education today is not learning; it is politics. Governments and local school controls have chorused the whims of those who sing loud and long for "accountability" or other trendy popular voter tunes that will keep them in power. It is time to help the majority unlearn what has been, before helping them learn what needs to unfold. Educators and community leaders must be disoriented before they can be oriented to the possibilities for the future.

There have been some exciting, successful, creative renewal programs in the past; there are even a few in the present. Unfortunately, all have operated as a minority; they have never been able to overcome tradition on a large scale.... Ironically, the reliable research that is available overwhelmingly supports moving away from the "regular" practices toward easy to implement, already studied, non-traditional methods.... These starting points ... include nongraded environments, individualized instruction, personalized curriculum, continuous progress, self-directed evaluation, twelve month opportunities, affective and psychomotor domain focus, all day caring, food, and clothing needs for youth in poverty, and Person Centers for disciplinary priorities. To achieve these and yet to come twenty-first century visions, communities should turn to creative educators; there are a few. How to be "creative" is more important as a "class" than budget or management; it is a talent to be cultivated.... Though long a cry but never resolved, beyond 2000 finally demands the invention of completely different university preparation and staff development plans; huge doses of creativity are essential. Not all educators can be visionaries, but those who are pied pipers can lead followers. Pioneering communities should focus on hiring the leaders and teachers who can help disorient and then orient the populace out of the dark ages of schooling into the light of potential learning systems for future generations. Imagining is not enough....Inventing and Implementing must combine with Imagining to equal IMAGINEERING. To overcome continuing repetition of ... disappointments, communities can reflect upon a variety of successful improvement models. One is the creation of industry style research and development centers....Research and Development Centers of a critical mass proportion can provide local systems, states, and nations the opportunity to support educational "astronauts" who are willing to explore new horizons....The leading education communities can achieve significantly different and significantly better learning environments on existing budgets. They can utilize school-within-school plans; magnet schools; cluster school choices of conventional, modified, and innovative; community learning centers; laboratory school concepts; and a host of others. Rigid state and national mandates can be waived with permission in most counties. These centers should be staffed with creative, inventive, imaginative, take-a-risk, envision-the-alternative-futures personnel. They would enlist "astronaut-minded" volunteer students. Families willing to assist the development of new learning approaches would enroll their offspring and participate in the ongoing designs evolving from continuous IMAGINEERING. The process involves implementing well-researched successful practices; creating new inventions and testing these first time potential additions; providing alternate means for evaluation; and offering parents, students, teachers, and administrators immediately available optional programs and learning climates.

We went by car. On the way we stopped to eat in the middle of the highway, well I don't mean the highway where the cars go. Then we'd get run over. I meant like there are these restaurants next to the highway for people to stop at. We ate there at a salad bar.

We got to Six Flags around 1:30. We went to the parking lot to the administration building because Jerry was going to do his radio show from Six Flags because it was homeschool day. We waited in the waiting room for about 20 minutes. Walter, who was in charge of publicity and electricity, helped us look for a place to hook up our cables for the radio stuff. We found an outside place near the roller coaster. He was also in charge of the phones, and helped us find people there to go on the show who would talk about Six Flags.

After we got that set up, we put everything back in the van and we went on some rides. He let us go in free because we would be helping them get money by giving them publicity.

I went with Alex and Dima who went on the Batman and Robin roller coaster. I didn't go. It was too scary and fast. They were like laughing when they got off and they said it was great.

Then we all went on the bumper car ride. It was really fun, except it was so short. I only got bumped twice and I bumped five or six people.

Then we all went over to the runaway train. I said to Jerry, "Are you sure you want to go on this?" And he said, "No, it doesn't look too rough." But I thought it was higher and faster than he thought, and it was.

I wasn't afraid to go, but Jerry said he sometimes has a problem with his back. It went all the way up and it zoomed down in circles. Then it went up again and down really fast again. It was fun. It was the first time I went on one that was that fast.

Then we went to do the radio show. We set up the station. Then Jerry got on the air. First Jerry talked to Crystal who was calling from Six Flags and she talked about Six Flags and homeschooling. I was able to listen to the show by listening to a small speaker that was connected to the radio stuff. Jerry interviewed a guy from Connecticut. I heard other people call in from different parts of the country.

After the show we split up and went on more rides. First I played game where you squirt water to make it go in the middle of a circle. I didn't win. Some of the games I liked, but some of the games I didn't like because they cheated.

Then we went on the sky ride. We went over the whole amusement park. We saw some go carts and the free fall ride and rock island and the sunset and the moon. That was just part of nature.

Then we met Alex and Dima. They were late because of lines. Then we drove home. We went to Brooklyn to drop off Dima and Alex. They gave me two books. His father me a book on woodworking. Dima gave me a joke book called Garfield's Insults, Put-downs and Slams.

The whole trip was fun. My favorite thing was the bumper cars. I'd like to go back to Six Flags again.

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!¿!¿!¿!¿;Two teachers are needed to start a new alternative program in Waldoboro Maine. Creative, self-starting educators will develop a new 7 - 12 alternative program for MSAD #40. This will be a chance to create a program from the ground up in beautiful midcoast Maine - which has the highest concentration of nontraditional programs in the State, as well as a very supportive regional alternative education association. Hiring now for the year beginning in Sept. Teachers need secondary certification which would allow them to be certifiable in Maine. Please contact: Frank McCabe, PO Box L, 145 Calers Corner Road, Waldoboro, Maine, 04752. Tel: 207-832-2101.

GERMANY
Johannes Wollbold is managing the website of the German Association of Free and Alternative Schools (BFAS) and has added a homepage in English. The other pages are in German (except her report on IDEC 98 at Vinnitsa), and include addresses and websites of 41 German alternative schools,

information archive of BFAS, and current news. She tells us that there is still the "Schulpflicht" (obligation for children to go to school) and that there has been no substantial change in laws applying to homeschooling (it is still illegal). But recent decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court and the Federal Administrative Tribunal created a climate more favorable to free and alternative schools. So many new alternative schools were founded. The English homepage is at: <http://www.paritaet.org/bfas/homepage.htm>.

The Booroobin School is a democratic school empowering students through self directed, natural learning based on the Sudbury Valley School model, for students 4 to 19 years. Campus on regenerating rainforested land with large sprawling fig trees, fruit trees, a river and waterfall close by, with approved plans for boarding accommodation and environmentally friendly octagonal School buildings. Affordable tuition fees, good diverse resources, treehouse, big swings. Currently finalizing government approval for recurrent funding. Derek Sheppard, PO Box 660, Maleny Qld 4552, Australia. Tel/Fax: 61 07 5499 9944. Email: booroobin@squirrel.com.au. The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools released the First Annual Charter School Parent Satisfaction Survey today. The study, conducted by Dr. Lewis Solmon, former dean of UCLA's Graduate College of Education, included 5,023 parent surveys from 83 charter schools. The survey asked parents to grade their child's charter school, and 66.4 percent of parents gave their child's school an A+ or A. In a similar statewide study of all public school parents conducted last spring, only half as many parents (37 percent) graded their child's school with an A+ or A. Nearly three out of four parents also said they would re-enroll their child in the charter school. In contrast, only 25.7 percent of charter school parents rated their child's previous school as an A+ or A, showing that charter school parents were dissatisfied with the previous school. The characteristics rated most important were overall quality of education, amount the child has learned at the charter school, quality of school's math instruction, and qualifications and performance of teachers. The least important characteristics were demographic makeup, extracurricular activities, school buildings/facilities and supervision provided by state agencies/boards. These ratings demonstrate that charter school parents value quality education more than "extras," like well-appointed buildings and extracurricular activities. The entire survey is available on the Center for Market-Based Education web site at www.cmbe.org.

Teri, a Christian unschooler, tells us how she resolves the conflict of original sin vs. freedom and kids being natural learners: "People take original sin as being born "bad". I think that is not wholly true. Where I do believe that people are born into sin, I believe that means that we as humans can never reach a state of perfection, as we will always make

mistakes and therefore hurt other people. But I feel that people who focus on original sin miss the statement in the bible that God created us in his own image. Therefore, it is the conclusion of this admittedly puny brain that we as humans are capable of great, beautiful and wonderful things, as well as the horrific atrocities caused by sin. I believe that history will bear that out. I believe that because God created us with wonderfully curious minds that we will gravitate towards learning. I hope that answers your question. If we can help Christian unschooling moms feel less isolated, or help one mom who feels burned out from "school at home" we will have done what we felt called to do."

The Home Educators' Seaside Festival 2000 will take place next May in England. Outside of the USA, the HESFES is the world's largest gathering of home educating families. The Festival is taking place in Dorset. Workshops will include art, fossil hunting, astronomy, circus skills, music, dancing, various crafts, lighting, water divining and woodcraft. There will also be talks and discussion with Roland Meighan, Chris Shute, Alan Thomas and others. Self help legal workshops, networking and empowering resources. Many other activities are planned, including football, volleyball, face painting, toddler play area, parachute games, tag, bulldogs and lots more, barn dances with live bands, children's' cabaret, dance music, bands, comedy and jam sessions. Tents, camper vans, and caravans all welcome. As an alternative, cheap caravans and cottages will be available for rent. Email: hesfes@choiceineducation.co.uk. Website: www.choiceineducation.co.uk/events.html. WHY OUR STREET CHILDREN ARE THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO CHANGE GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS
by Fleur Watson

It has become evident that the more charities we have, the more people become dependent on them. Most of these organizations see people as victims as opposed to survivors. This perpetuates the myth that we are not responsible for the situations we find ourselves in -- it is a sorry message to be relaying to the world because it tells us that we are also helpless to change those circumstances. Surely the only way we can really help people is to empower them to take control of their own lives. The only thing that keeps us in poverty, distress, and hopelessness is our thinking. When we believe we are victims, we become victims, when we believe we are powerless, we become powerless, when we believe that nothing can change, nothing does!

Wrong thinking is at the root of all the problems we face world-wide. In order to change our thinking, we need to change the way we are educated. Each individual has, within themselves, the answers to every problem they will ever encounter, they just have to learn how to access those answers.

It begins with mastering our minds, the most powerful computers known to man. Sadly our educational institutions are conformist and suffer from lack of vision. We are taught that cramming our brains with information in order to pass exams is the way to succeed in life. Children should be encouraged to express their innate creative talent and not be forced to conform to the standards that somebody else has set. We do not all have the same abilities and interests, but we all have a part to play in life.

Schools also teach us how to compete with each other. Since you can only have one winner at any one time, we are, in effect, teaching failure to the majority of our children. Other people set goals and targets for us and we feel that we have failed when we do not live up to their expectations. This is completely crazy because we can never be happy trying to please everyone else to the detriment of ourselves. To learn that we are perfect as we are is the most important lesson a child can ever learn. Yet it is never taught. How can you be creative in a system that is always telling you how to be, what to be, what is acceptable, what is not acceptable? This just produces drones.

Millions of street children grow up without love, without direction, without discipline, without respect, without hope. They learn from an early age to fight for survival. We ignore them, treat them badly, feel disgusted by them, but most of all, we fear them because they are a reflection of society as a whole. We have created them and the reality is too painful to acknowledge, so we spend billions of pounds trying to secure ourselves and our assets from the threat they pose. Wouldn't it be easier and cheaper to feed them, love them and support them? What a sad indictment of humanity that we are so shortsighted not to see that we have become so materially obsessed that we have lost our spirituality, our compassion and our love for each other. We are creating a very bleak future for ourselves. However, it could so easily be turned around to our advantage.

My vision is to open homes for children where they will be loved, cared for and have the opportunity to receive a more spiritual education. They need to be made aware of the power of the mind and how it can create the life you wish to lead. It is also important to teach children how to take care of their bodies, exercise them, feed them and heal them. Learning to communicate and express our feelings is equally important. I think every child should learn to meditate, a clear and peaceful mind is a creative and happy mind. It is also important to teach children about our environment. Earth is our home we must take care of it. I feel the rigidity of the existing classroom structure where teacher fills pupil with facts and figures is outdated. I would introduce a system where we learn about nature, in nature. Classrooms need to be more relaxed, places where we learn and discuss things together. Children have as much to teach society as we think we have to teach them; we should listen to them more.

On the matter of street children, it is clear from meeting them that many are exceptionally talented -- some of these kids, given the opportunity, have the natural ability to run companies or countries -- they are natural entrepreneurs/ survivors. If there is a failure here, it is with our inability to provide stimulating schools for them.

I grew up and spent the first 18 years of life living in Africa and it was here that the idea started taking shape. I have been involved with children's charities in some form or another since then. Most recently, I have worked with Christina Noble Children's Foundation; their focus is on street children in Vietnam and Mongolia. I visited Vietnam 5 years ago and talked to many of the street children. I was struck by how intelligent and resourceful they are and how much they respond to affection and someone who will listen to their problems. It was during this visit that I decided to do something long term to help them. I believed money was not enough; I felt we needed to change the way society viewed them. I turned to the Net, looking for like-minds who would support the idea and help me to bring it to reality. My idea is to set up an initial establishment which will be a center to not only house children but to educate them and provide health care for them as well. The educational side will also be open to those children who work on the street but live with their families. Once we have one project up and running, I see the Foundation as a source of supply to assist other satellite organizations all over the world who operate on the same guidelines, curriculum, etc. The one thing I do want to avoid is mass bureaucracy. I have some excellent people who have already offered their expertise to help once things get going. What I desperately need now is the help/input from people who have the experience at ground level.

SCOTLAND

The first Scottish primary school dedicated to Gaelic-only teaching has been opened, Glasgow Gaelic School, catering to 109 pupils aged five to 12. All members of staff, including the school's secretary and janitor, are fluent in the language. Children will learn all subjects in Gaelic, but will be taught English as a second language from the age of seven. Glasgow is the first Scottish authority to open such a school, with the role expected to rapidly expand to the schools' full capacity of 200.

Previously, Glasgow children were able to learn Gaelic at a unit at Sir John Maxwell Primary School in the city. There are estimated to be between 75,000 and 100,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland and there has recently been an upsurge in interest. Many of the children attending the new school are likely to be learning the language from scratch. One of the first tasks for the children is to choose a permanent name for the school to replace the current title, which was chosen for the sake of convenience. BBC News.

COMMENTARY ON SUMMERHILL SITUATION BY A SUMMERHILL GRADUATE
By Gus Dudgeon (Summerhill "57)

What most people haven't grasped about the current Summerhill situation is that the reason for the problems with the Blair government has nothing to do with a general waning of interest in freedom in education. On the contrary, freedom in education is gaining ground daily, inexorably. Education is moving out of government's hands as inevitably as salt did in some dim forgotten past. The real crux of the matter is that A S Neill's true heyday has not arrived yet, but it is coming as surely as day follows night.

Neill was wise enough not to put a premium on common sense, because as soon as you do that, people who don't possess it focus on the premium rather than the sense -- at which point it ceases to be common sense. It becomes "premium sense," which our world tries to run on and does so very badly: everyone's belief system (which they put a premium on) vying with everyone else's. Meanwhile, good old unsung common sense is what is actually keeping the world going round. Neill knew this and had the honesty not to add trappings to his work. We have become so accustomed to force-fed knowledge over so many centuries, that we can't help laying at least a ghost of the same trip on others; but Neill refused to surrender to the temptation.

When you can't think for yourself, you need people to tell you how much weight to give to [others] pronouncements. But to pander to this need is to perpetuate the problem. Knowing this, the last thing Neill wanted to be was an "authority," and he took pains to avoid being cast in that role. Thus, not being an authority, not looking like authorities look like, how can we expect the bureaucratic mind to take him seriously?

Win or lose in enforcing the provisions of their Notice of Complaint, the Blair government has already failed in achieving their purpose of uniformity of education, because it's too late. Diversity of education is already upon us, and it is a tide that will drown all such reactionary thinking in due course. I would not be at all surprised if in thirty years time more schoolchildren had heard of A S Neill than Sigmund Freud. I will certainly be doing all I can to bring that reality about -- and there are many more like me. So take heart, people. Neill's day is virtually upon us. All we have to do is practice a little kindness toward the British authorities by preventing them from making asses of themselves in the meantime. Of course, that would be no mean feat in itself.

New Programs for Homeschooled Kids,

by Katherine Long, Editor, Times Guide to Schools

The number of Washington students who are schooled at home has soared in recent years, and a key factor in the movement's growth is the public-school establishment's acceptance of homeschooling as an alternative to the

classroom. In 1985, the state's most powerful education lobbies fought legislation legalizing homeschooling; today, even the influential Washington State School Directors Association offers seminars to educators on how to build cooperative partnerships with homeschoolers. The result: a new breed of student, the hybrid homeschooler. Districts across the state are creating homeschool resource centers and alternative, or "independent study," programs. Supported by tax dollars, these programs offer classes to homeschoolers or allow them to consult with teachers, then do the lion's share of their schooling at home. The reasons for teaching at home run the gamut. One thing unites them all: Homeschoolers share a belief that school is not the best place for all children to learn.

Although they consider themselves homeschoolers, Cyberschool students are officially enrolled in the Edmonds School District, and the district receives state funds to operate the program. Classes are small and cater to a range of ages. The Cyberschool gives enrollees a budget of \$400 yearly to spend on textbooks and classes. Parents use the money to buy books and pay for gymnastics or ice-skating lessons for physical education. The Cyberschool offers classes that parents can't teach at home -- German, Latin and Japanese, math puzzles and games, science, drama and music. There are two labs of multimedia computers with high-speed Internet access and a library of CD-ROMs. Web: <http://taxis.seattletimes.com/schoolguide/>

will take place next May 14 to 21 in England I am teaching a photo & journal writing class to underprivileged 4th & 5th graders. I am teaching a photo & journal writing class to underprivileged 4th & 5th graders. I am teaching a photo & journal writing class to underprivileged 4th & 5th graders. I am teaching a photo & journal writing class to underprivileged 4th & 5th graders.

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@`graders in Delray Beach Florida and am wondering if there is someone teaching a similar class that would like to be pen & photo pals. Class's goals are for students to "learn to be comfortable in expressing their feelings and cope with their realities" PLUS HAVE FUN! Our program is underwritten by a grant and supported by Palm Beach Photographic Center.

If interested please have your class write to us at Denise Felice/ Attn: Confidential, Palm Beach Photographic Centre, 55 NE 2nd Avenue, Delray Beach, FL33444.

HORSES ARSES AND ROCKETS

Malc Dow, another Summerhill former student tells this story, with obvious applications:

The US standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and English expatriates built the US railroads. Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used. Why did 'they' use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing. Okay! Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads in England, because that's the spacing of the wheel ruts. So who built those old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe (and England) were built by Imperial Rome for their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? Roman war chariots first made the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels and wagons. Since the chariots were made for, or by Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing. Thus, we have the answer to the original question. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman war chariot. Specifications and bureaucracies live forever. So, the next time you are handed a specification and wonder which arse came up with it, you may be exactly right. Because the Imperial Roman war chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war-horses.

There's an interesting extension to the story about railroad gauges and horses' behinds. When we see a Space Shuttle sitting on its launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. Thiokol makes the SRBs at their factory at Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs might have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory had to run through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses behinds. So, the major design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined by the width of a horse's arse. Brown 1175 S.W 116th,

Mother and daughter team, Jennifer and Tammy Day, have developed a company called Children Believe, which is also the name of a booklet they have produced. Together, they have gathered and developed practical fun tools to support and empower children, their parents and families. The booklet explains what "children believe" and why, describes creative visualization, family tools and games, what grown-ups believe, and many helpful resources. Jennifer Day says, "As children grow and become independent individuals, it is natural that they question adults. Their belief is not always literal, nor are adults necessarily believed by the children as we intend to be! But, bless their little hearts, believe us they do! That is one of the most important pieces of information I ever received about parenting!" Artist Tammy Day did the delightful illustrations. Children Believe, PO Box 253, Kilauea, HI 97654.

"There is more to video games than meets the eye -- at least the eye of a disapproving adult. If you've ever sat down and tried to play one, you'll know they are not simple games. They require agility, sophisticated and fast-moving strategy, concentration and unbelievable persistence," states Romey Pittman in The Fairhaven School News. Fairhaven, as part of their commitment to encouraging students to take responsibility for their own education, has video games in the computer room, and it is always a busy place. Indeed, he says, "It is by far the most intense locus of human interaction in the building, facilitating the learning of many a life lesson." Romey cites Dr. David Deutsch, a British physicist, Dr. Margaret Shotton, and a recent Washington Post article, all strongly in favor of video games. 17900 Queen Anne Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20774. Web: www.fairhavenschool.com.

A new book has been published challenging the two dominant forces shaping education in America today: the "back to basics" approach that looks at children as passive receptacles into which facts and skills are poured; and the test-driven "raising standards" version of school reform currently in vogue. The book, *The Schools Our Children Deserve* by Alfie Kohn, demonstrates how both these methods reflect a fundamental lack of understanding about how and why children learn, and describes how the best teachers help students become critical, creative thinkers who are enthusiastic about learning. Teachers, parents and others interested in education will find this book informative. Houghton Mifflin, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116-3794.

The Galloway Small School was founded two years ago by a group of teachers and parents determined to preserve the principles of the closed Kilquanity School, which allowed the development of the whole child and encouraged

pupils to take responsibility for their own education. The school can trace its origins back to A.S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill School. The Galloway Small School has now moved into a 240-year old mansion on six acres and will begin to board students in the near future. It accommodates students aged 10 to 17 in both day and boarding capacities. Carnsalloch, Kirkton, Dumfries DG1 1SL, Scotland. Email: gss@godd.demon.co.uk. Web: www.godd.demon.co.uk.

A variety of schools that allow all students to participate in decision-making are described in a document called Students Decide. The four models each operate in distinctly different ways, but each empower students to take charge of their education. The pamphlet is available from Parliamentary Education Office online <http://www.peo.gov.au>. Linda Dobson's new book, *Homeschooling: The Early Years*, is a guide for parents on homeschooling children from the ages of 3 to 8, the ages most critical in preparing for a lifetime of learning. Parents will discover how to tailor homeschooling to fit their family's unique needs, give children unlimited learning on a limited budget, receive advice from other homeschooling parents, make an adventure a lesson, and more. The book is available in paperback from Prima Communications, 3875 Atherton Road, Rocklin, CA 95765.

South Street Centre was founded in 1987 to provide a form of education which recognizes all stages of children's growth, while honoring and supporting homeschooling parents in their roles as caregivers and teachers. This year's programs include Playtime for Families with children 18 months to 4 years, Young Homeschoolers for families with kids 4 to 6, Collaborations, designed for children 7 to 10, and Thursday Program, for high school aged kids. Each of these programs provides opportunities for students to interact with others and produce collaborative projects. PO Box 227, Boulder Creek, CA 95006. Tel: 831-338-2540.

February 9-10, 2000, Galt House Hotel, Louisville, KY. Educating At-Risk Youth Conference. Skill-building workshops, keynote sessions, workshops, exhibits. Council for Educators of At-Risk and Delinquent Youth, 521 Lancaster Ave., Room 300, Richmond, KY 40475-3102. Tel: 606-622-8122.

April 17-20, 2000, Baltimore, MD. Association for Childhood Education Int'l 108th Annual Conference. Theme is Moving Beyond Our Assumptions of Education and Learning: A New Role for Families, Schools & Communities. ACEI, 17904 Georgia Ave., Suite 215, Olney, MD 20832-2277.

April 27-29, 2000, Richmond, KY. National Trainers Conference. For trainers working in juvenile justice, child welfare, education, and human services. S.J. Hollon, College of Law Enforcement, Eastern Kentucky Univ., 300

Stratton Building, 521 Lancaster Ave., Richmond, KY 40475-3102. Tel: 606-622-8078.

July 23-25, 2000, Westin Galleria, Houston, TX. World Future Society 10th Annual Conference. Theme: Future Focus 2000: Changes, Challenges & Choices. Discussions, workshops, informal interactions. 7910 Woodmont Ave., Suite 450, Bethesda, MD 20814. Tel: 1-800-989-8274.

December 13-17, 2000, Sydney, AU. Student Representative Councils: Building a Better Today. Topics include: Celebrating Cultural Heritage, Challenges Facing Young People in the 21st Century, The Environment: Preserving Our Future, SRC's Furnishing Their Home in the Global Village. Charles Kingston, 1 Gladstone St., Bathurst NSW Australia 2795.

. f, Julian Warmington, from Wellington, Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Kia ora! I am: a fairly well desocialized 28 year-old WASP male; in my third year of teaching; have experience teaching in te reo Maori (the Maori language) (Maori=first nation peoples of New Zealand), working with special needs children (cerebral palsy, severe delayed development, hearing impaired), and have worked with all ages from 5 - 13 year olds, including half a year with one room of 5 - 10 year olds. I have been fascinated by alternative education AS Neill style for 5 years and seek opportunities to follow this interest elsewhere as there are few such schools here. julianw@paradise.net.nz (ph.hm) 0064 04 499-2994 (cell) 0064 021 254 1361

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@Äastudents, inherits a delightful group of students most of whom have been
with the charter school since its inception. We are seeking a teacher who
has knowledge of the world, who is charismatic in teaching style and
competent to "invent" an integrated curriculum appropriate to this age
group. We are actively encouraging minority application. Position will be
available 1/3/00. Contact Anne Evans at ameadavom.com or at school
707-547-2480.

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@ÄXe have not given any information about us it's time to do it...The Carl
Rogers Person Centered School is a small private school in Hungary,
Budapest. It was established in 1989 to give chance for the person centered
approach in pedagogy in Eastern European environment.

The last school year (1998/99) was very hard for Rogers School. We got into

serious financial situation because of the rent we had to pay for the previous school building. In this situation the financial help of the Edwards Foundation was very important. It helped us to survive! Thank you for that!

The summer was very busy. Late June we had to leave our last place but for that time we had not have a sure new one. We had a building rent contract offer by one of the city councils in Budapest. There was a partly free school building which was quite in a bad condition. We took our all boxes there but of course we wanted to have a separated own building or a separated part of a building. However on the end of July we had to choose this one because of having a permission of running the school takes a month or more in Hungary. (Every time a school moves only one street up or down it must get a brand new permission for the school.) We were afraid of missing time! On top of everything we did not get a permission for our high school grades! Came an official in August and told that she had not find the library (!) - of course not because the books were in boxes - she did not believe that the we were able to start the school year on 1st September. Finally we got a one year permission for running an elementary school until grades 8 and we stayed in that problem building.

Now we live together there with a small English international private school and a state school. The state school is moving out from the building step-by-step. This year they have still six grades. (In the same building there is a Christian private kindergarten also.) The rent we have to pay now is much more affordable than in the previous years. The social mixture of the children in this common used building is rather interesting: from the rich international kids to the poor gypsy students who go to the state school and live at an orphanage near our school building. This school year we have 102 students in 8 grades from age 7 to 14. We have 20 permanent teachers and aound 10

Because the building was in quite bad condition we decided to renew and fix it. Paul Aerts and the Teachers Without Borders' Flanders Section with 8 people came to help us for a week. They drove thru countries from Belgium to Hungary in order to paint window frames, desks, fix garden gate etc! They worked as volunteers, it was great! It really helped.

As the next Democratic School conference in Japan I involve some of my students to work on it. We will see.

I have very little time to follow this alternative education serve list, but it is very informative and interesting. For me the information (news, discussion etc.) about the home schooling system was the most interesting. If anyone is interested in the life (projects, rules, methodes etc.) at our school please contact us. Istvan Csata /Rogers School - Budapest. Our new

address: Carl Rogers Person Centered School, 1113 Aga utca 10, Budapest, Hungary Tel/fax: 36-1-209-36-09, 31-1-209-36-08. E-mail: roginf@freemail.hu

Anna Gador, principal, Katalin Csizmazia, teacher. Istvan Csata, teacher (aumpista@dpg.hu)

Marcia Mitrowski, marpoet@aol.com: Experienced, committed, intelligent teacher needs a position in an alternative school within the metro NYC area to the tip of eastern Long Island. Interest in teaching literature, history, and the arts (often called Core subjects). Enjoy middle school students and their energy. Have traveled to Japan, China, Western and Eastern Europe (last two with students). Most recent teaching was in a multi-aged classroom with students 10-15 years old. Want to be part of a diverse school community that respects the opinions, beliefs, and dreams of students, teachers and parents. Likes team work, but functions independently. Please e-mail or call 631-287-2811.

A Revolution in Alternative Education:
New Schools for a New Age

30th Annual International Alternative Education Conference

June 22-24, 2000

Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center Bloomington, Minnesota (Located adjacent to The MALL of AMERICA - the nations largest mall.)

The Conference

See national leaders in cutting edge choice programs address best practices that will revolutionize the way you serve students.

- * State exhibits from around the nation
- * Legislative Initiative for Innovation
- * Over 50 practitioner workshops
- * STARS-A statewide youth organization
- * Organize national association with a website
- * Graduation Standards
- * Professional Networking Opportunities
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- * Brain Based learning
- * Experimental learning
- * Vendors

Located in Minnesota: the National leader in legislation promoting

alternative, home of the nation's largest alternative programs serving over 12% of the state's student population (including winners of the past National Dropout Prevention Network) and home of the nation's only youth organization of alternative programs.

Sponsored by: The Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs, The Minnesota Department of Children Families and Learning, and General Mills Foundation.

Keynote Speakers

Alfie Kohn was recently described by Time magazine as "perhaps the country's most outspoken critic of education's fixation on grades and test scores." His criticisms of competition and rewards have helped to shape the thinking of educators-as well as parents and managers-across the country and abroad. Kohn has appeared on more than 200 TV and radio programs including the Today show and two recent appearances on Oprah; his work has been described on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, in U.S. News and World Report, the Harvard Education Letter, and dozens of other magazines and newspapers. Website: <http://www.alfiekohn.org/>

Alan November was selected as one of the first Chista McAuliffe Educators for pioneering the role of children as important community problem solvers. As author, designer, and practitioner, Alan has successfully guided schools to use technology to improve student learning. His use of humor, practical stories, and engaging style challenges people to see the big picture. "With knowledge, wit, and insight, he inspires his audience to pack up the school bus and venture out onto the information superhighway." He really makes you think." "An iconoclast whose common sense we cannot afford to ignore."

Crystal Kuykendall speeches reflect her own unique background rich and replete with personal victories and numerous professional responsibilities. A former school teacher, University Instructor and Executive Director of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, Kuykendall holds a Doctorate in Educational Administration. She gives over 100 speeches annually but finds time to mother, serve as school/church volunteer and mentor for "at-risk" youth. "While most people have trouble fitting their busy daily activities into 24 ours, Dr Kuykendall seems to grab another 12 from somewhere to achieve an extraordinary array of goals."

Tentative Agenda

Thursday

9:00 - 4:30: Breakout sessions, Alfie Kohn

4:30 - Evening Social Mixer,

Mega Mall, on your own

Friday

9:00 - 4:30: Breakout sessions, Crystal Kuykendall, Alan November
Evening Dinner/River Cruise

Saturday

9:00 - 12:00: Breakout sessions

For a breakout presentation proposal or further information contact:
David Bly at (507) 645-3051
Email: dbly@gvppmail.nfld.k12.mn.us

Registration

Be part of the educational revolution sweeping America and help shape the
New Schools for the New Age.

Name

Organizational Address

Telephone

Email

Please check one of the following price options.

Full conference - all three days: \$200.00

One day: \$110.00

Please send to:

David Bly

Northfield ALC

801 Washington Street

Northfield, MN 55057

Phone (507) 645-3061

Fax (507) 645-3025

Email: dbly@gvppmail.nfld.k12.mn.us

Attractions

Mall of America is located within walking distance (or free shuttle) the
conference site. It is the largest fully enclosed retail and family
entertainment complex in the United States featuring Camp Snoopy, a full
size amusement park, and the fourth floor Entertainment District including
nightclubs, restaurants and comedy. Other recreational activities may be
arranged depending upon interest. These could be arranged with
transportation Wednesday or Thursday evenings, or Saturday afternoon/
evening on a first-come-first-served registration at participants cost.

Please indicate interests and circle preferred day:

- () Golf - Wed Thur Sat
- () Mystic Lake Casino - W Th S
- () City Lakes Tour - W Th S
- () Twins Baseball - W Th S
- () Valley Fair Amusement Park - W Th S
- () Canterbury Downs Racetrack - W Th S
- () Theater - W Th S
- () Historical Society - W Th S
- () Science Museum - W Th S

Accommodations

The newly remodeled Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center features a unique decor depicting Minnesota Wildlife and Native American history. It is located 4 miles from the Mneapolis/Saint Paul International Airport and offers a 24-hour Airport Shuttle service. Additional amenities include: indoor and outdoor pool, sauna, exercise room, game room, cocktail lounge with weekend entertainment, coffee shop and dining room. With the Mall of America attractions, airline travelers should not need to rent a vehicle.

Room rate:

\$90 Single/Double Occupancy (+ \$6 each additional adult)

For reservations:

Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center
2201 East 78th Street
Bloomington, MN 55425-1228
Tel. (800) 328-1931 or (612) 854-3411
Fax (612) 854-1183

For updated details please refer to the MAAP website at www.geocities.com/maapmn

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Public Alternatives

From Anne Evans: 37 years ago a small group of parents founded a parent-run cooperative preschool in Santa Rosa. Now this same group of parents have grandchildren who have entered the same preschool, but this time the parents were not satisfied to let the public school system swallow up their children -- so together with the grandparent group, they applied for a charter for a parent controlled cooperative charter school. The school is now k - 6 (shortly to become k - 8 if the membership so decides) and it is democratic in that all stake holders have a vote. Children have been responsible for their part in the school day, making boundary rules and conduct rules, etc. The school has grown into a cooperative of three schools under one blanket: preschool, children's center (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and charter school. Our web page is under construction at <http://www.srec.sonic.net> . Please visit us! Anne

Rhonda Goebel; (rrands@chicago.avenew.com) writes: I have found that the school establishment does an effective job at reproducing itself by disallowing virtually any movement, however slight, away from their established norm, sometimes to the point of self-contradiction or hypocrisy. For example, we had a staff discussion on how to implement concepts from a book on brain-based research. I pointed out that according to one of the research items listed in the book people naturally begin to read anywhere between the ages of 4-10, and asked how we can include this vital piece of info in our school. The principal immediately stepped in to

say that because of outside pressures, we could not adapt that info to our school. So we continue to have pull-out reading services for kids as young as 6, spending thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars on forcing young people to read before they are ready. These kids are shamed, many plagued long term with feelings of inadequacy. Wildly enough, it seems all the staff agreed with the principal. Another example: We will be 'trained' in how to facilitate inquiry into subjects, following the lead of the children's interest. Yet all the packaged curriculum will not only remain and be expected to be followed (tenured teachers have actually lost their jobs for not following the script), but will be added to. Millions of taxpayer dollars are spent on the purchase and update of packaged curriculum, just in our district alone. And then the taxpayers get to also pay for our futile training so we can perceive and label ourselves as a 'progressive' school system. All at the expense of children's natural growth. Teaching in the establishment has been the most illogical reality I've ever experienced.

Lisa Brick (unity@gti.net) tells us that "the second year at Unity School is starting much smoother than the first. There is some built-in, ongoing support this year and all indications look positive. A second application for a Unity charter school was submitted to the New Jersey DOE for next September! The learning environment is modeled after ours, including the democratic governance and sustainability pieces. I am pleased that the vision is spreading and feel acutely aware of how our integrity and success is imperative for its continued growth. While there are individuals getting involved with charter schools with differing objectives, there remains the opportunity for those with a deep commitment to the evolution of our children, society, and planet to play a proactive role in changing a system that has worked to the disadvantage of so many, if not all, in deep systemic ways. I honor those who choose out of the system with home schooling and un-schooling, and I honor those who remain working within the system to transform its goals and methods. Neither path can assure personal success, however this term is defined, for the young people involved, yet both can provide opportunities to make an enormous, hopefully beneficial difference in the lives of many. I continue to appreciate all that you have seeded and support!"

"Only about one quarter of American students can write at a proficient level, according to a report released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Just one percent of the nation's students scored in the "advanced" range. 16 percent of fourth and eighth grade students and 22 percent of twelfth grade students scored below "basic," unable to show even "partial mastery of the knowledge and skills" expected at their grade levels. Authorized by Congress and administered by the Federal Government's National Center for Education Statistics, the assessment center has been testing students in a range of subjects since 1969. The 50-minute tests are

designed to test narrative, informative and persuasive writing skills. The report showed a significant gender gap, with girls outscoring boys by 16-20 points at all grade levels, and about twice the percentage of girls as boys scoring in the "proficient" level." From "Most Pupils Can't Write Well, Report Says" by Jodi Wilgoren, The New York Times, September 29, 1999.

The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools has released the First Annual Charter School Parent Satisfaction Survey. The study, conducted by Dr. Lewis Solmon, former dean of UCLA's Graduate College of Education, included 5,023 parent surveys from 83 charter schools. The survey asked parents to grade their child's charter school, and 66.4 percent of parents gave their child's school an A+ or A. In a similar statewide study of all public school parents conducted last spring, only half as many parents (37 percent) graded their child's school with an A+ or A. Nearly three out of four parents also said they would re-enroll their child in the charter school. In contrast, only 25.7 percent of charter school parents rated their child's previous school as an A+ or A, showing that charter school parents were dissatisfied with the previous school. The characteristics rated most important were overall quality of education, amount the child has learned at the charter school, quality of school's math instruction, and qualifications and performance of teachers. The least important characteristics were demographic makeup, extracurricular activities, school buildings/facilities and supervision provided by state agencies/boards. These ratings demonstrate that charter school parents value quality education more than "extras," like well-appointed buildings and extracurricular activities. The entire survey is available on the Center for Market-Based Education web site at www.cmbe.org.

"Nine widely used middle school textbooks were examined over a four year period by Project 2061, a long-term effort of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, to improve science, math and technology education in schools. Not one was rated satisfactory, including the new selection of texts that has just entered the market. The study says the texts cover too many topics, fail to develop any of the topics well and offer classroom activities that are nearly useless in helping teachers and students understand important concepts. Two of the most popular textbooks, "Glencoe Science" (Glencoe/ McGraw-Hill, 1997) and "Prentice Hall Science" (Prentice Hall, 1997), received some of the lowest ratings." From "Failing Grade for Science Books" by Tamara Henry, USA Today, September 29, 1999. (<http://www.usatoday.com> or <http://www.edbriefs.com>).

Alternative certification has been a dramatic success to date, and according to The Center for Education Reform's Newsletter No.54, more states are opening up the teaching profession. Massachusetts began a bonus program to attract outstanding teachers. Applicants say it is the "alternative path the state created that drew them to the program" as well

as the monetary bonus. "In fact, the characteristics of the new teachers reflects a greater diversity, depth and equality than one normally finds among the ranks of traditionally-credentialed teachers." The Newsletter also reports that California's Teacher's Association attempt to unionize all charter schools has failed, but a compromise bill is still a possibility. 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 204, Washington, DC 20036.

In Massachusetts, the number of applicants for the original 15 Charter Schools which opened in 1995 has tripled. The demand for all of Massachusetts' 34 Charter Schools has doubled as well. The number of charters allowed in that state is capped at 37, all of which have been issued. Currently, a bill is being considered to increase this number to almost 80. Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center, Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, 85 Devonshire St., 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109.

Mike Halloran, the founder of Venture School in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District and one of the early founders and leaders of LeARN (CA alternative education association), died of cancer at age 63. The memorial service for him was held on Friday, August 20, 1999 at St. John Vianney Church, Walnut Creek. The family asks that memorial donations go to Venture School's Halloran Opportunity Program in Education, 3280 East Crow Canyon Road, San Ramon 94583.

When Erin Gruwell, an English teacher at Wilson High School realized that her "at-risk" students had no idea what the Holocaust was, she and her students undertook a life-changing, eye-opening odyssey against racism, ignorance, and misunderstanding. They learned to see in books such as The Diary of Anne Frank and Zlata's Diary the parallels to their own lives; they called themselves "The Freedom Writers" in honor of the civil rights activists "The Freedom Riders." Significantly, all 150 Freedom Writers have graduated and are attending college. Their story has been published in a book called The Freedom Writers Diary and is available from Laurie Matranga, Marketing Mgr., Doubleday, 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036.

Beth Pratt (bethprat@massed.net) writes: We are a grades 8-12 program. Our hours are from 2:30-9:30 PM, Monday through Thursday. The program began by servicing the kids that no one else wanted. I have been a full-time teacher since 1997 and was a part-time director/teacher in 1996. We are very popular with the school committee, the superintendent and the high school administration. They all have their own agendas, but for the most part, we are left on our own to work with some pretty disenfranchised kids. The sense of community that we have started to develop is noticeable not only to the staff, but to the students. For the most part, as I'm sure you know, these kids feel so withdrawn and distanced from school for many different reasons. While the reasons have an affect on the students learning, drawing them back in, is where we believe that we are making a

difference. This year, our goals are to provide ongoing staff development in the areas of differentiating instruction within a classroom; portfolio assessment; and educating linguistically and culturally diverse students within the classroom. I would love to be in contact with other alternative programs. We are located in central MA. Boston has a big alternative program, but it might be better to talk to people who are coming from a smaller city, like Fitchburg. Thank you in advance for any support and help you can offer. I am certified as a principal/assistant principal 5-9 and 9-12 and I am transferring my doctoral work from UMass/Lowell to Nova Southeastern University in September. I look forward to hearing from you. H: (978) 249-2849 and W: (978) 345-3244.

A Canadian public alternative school sees issues such as inadequate/unstable housing, low level of education, expulsion from regular school, physical and emotional abuse, drug and alcohol problems, and lack of family support, as getting in the way of youth completing their education, obtaining jobs, and overall, finding their way to independence. The School focuses on helping students overcome these barriers, educate themselves, and become successful independent individuals. Tracey. Email: pathways@intergate.bc.ca.

MAAP: the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs has a large website for alternative educators and students at <http://www.informns.k12.mn.us/~0287maap>. "We have 80,000 students in 800 schools in the state. We can offer anyone a lot of support. We have contact numbers for most of our leaders and links to many related alternative sites. We are also hoping to host the next International Alternative Education Conference in Minneapolis in June of 2000 and are therefore sending a group to promote it at this weeks conference in Connecticut. Bill Jepson, MAAP webmaster.

International News and Communications

What is IDEC? by David Gribble

IDEC stands for International Democratic Education Conference. It is not the name of an organization or a group. At every year's conference a school volunteers to run the conference for the next year. (In practice there has sometimes been a delay in finding a volunteer, and this year a choice had to be made between several schools.) Every so often different groups and/or individuals have called for an official structure of some kind -- such a request came this year at Summerhil -- however, letting individual schools plan a conference results in an exciting variety. Once representatives of a school have agreed to run a conference, everything is in their hands -- dates, guest speakers, costs, accommodations and the conference's style. The length of the conferences have varied from the first one's two days to two weeks in 1997. The longer conferences have

included days of sight-seeing and varied social and cultural events. Sometimes there has been a full program of prepared talks and workshops, and sometimes the program has been entirely decided by the participants after they arrived. Some conferences have been funded entirely by the host schools or by outside agencies. Some schools have had to charge a fee. All decisions about such matters are made by the host school.

The first conference was held in 1993, in Israel, at the Democratic School of Hadera. A few teachers and students from democratic schools attended a large conference in Jerusalem, called "Education for Democracy in a Multi-cultural Society." A small group of students and teachers was invited to Hadera for two days after the big conference, and the discussions were so stimulating that it was agreed to meet annually.

For the first four years it was known as the Hadera Conference, and David Gribble sent out a newsletter two or three times a year. There were few contributors, and eventually it was abandoned. In its place is now Jerry Mint's internet IDEC listserve.

There are differing views as to the purpose of the IDECs. Some see them as an opportunity to discuss shared problems in a supportive atmosphere, others hope to spread the idea of democratic education by inviting people not already involved with education alternatives. Some see them as a way of improving the public's perception of the host schools in their own countries. The purpose of any given conference is decided by the school that is organizing it.

Usually you can get an invitation by simply expressing a desire to attend, but for the second conference at Sands a limit was set on the number of people from any one school, and it was suggested that at least half the delegates from each school should be students.

The 2000 IDEC is to be held in Tokyo, and will probably have new delegates from India, the Philippines, Thailand and Korea. The total cost per person will be \$180 which will include accommodations, food and transportation to and from the airport. If you are interested write to Tokyo Shure IDEC Committee, 1-9-19 Kisimachi, Kita, Tokyo 114, or email them at info@shure.or.jp. David Gribble.

AUSTRALIA

Pine Community School is a small independent school offering alternate primary education. It is located in a semi-rural setting on the northwestern outskirts of Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Its motto is "Happy Children Learn" and it practices child-centered education. The school's new web-site is <http://www.uq.net.au/~zzpcs/home>. You may wish to add this to your list of links to schools offering alternative education. Regards, Bruce McClenahan, Director.

The Booroobin School is a democratic school empowering students through self directed, natural learning based on the Sudbury Valley School model, for students 4 to 19 years. The Campus is on regenerating rainforested land

with large sprawling fruit trees, a river and a waterfall close by. The Campus includes a treehouse and big swings. Plans for boarding accommodations and environmentally friendly octagonal school buildings have already been approved. Tuition is affordable. We are currently awaiting final government approval for recurrent funding. Derek Sheppard, PO Box 660, Maleny Qld 4552, Australia. Tel/Fax: 61 07 5499 9944. Email: booroobin@squirrel.com.au.

Adrienne Huber (a.huber@cowan.edu.au) writes: The literacy assessment project I am undertaking necessitates that I find out what literacy assessment has already been done in the middle school years (about Years 6-10.) I am working with teachers and students at local independent and government schools to help them to articulate their needs. The Association of Independent Schools in Western Australia is funding the project with federal government money. The Association is developing a National Literacy Plan for Independent Schools. The plan needs to be flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of school philosophies. I believe it is critical that alternative forms of assessment be included in this report. I would be very interested to hear about the alternative assessments used at Summerhill.

BRAZIL

Helena Singer writes:

I have developed a list of how many free schools are in each country and when they were created. I based my data on your directory (Almanac), the list of the German and the Austrian Associations, the Summerhill Review and some correspondence that I exchanged with people all over the world. When I arrive home, I'll translate the book and send it to you. The research was finished in 1994, so it is not real current. Also, I'm beginning to work on opening a free school in Brazil, with Ricardo Semler, the entrepreneur to whom you gave my e-mail address almost one year ago. So, to some extent, you will be the godfather of the first Brazilian free school, and I'll keep you informed about that. Once again, thank you for everything (hsinger_99@yahoo.com).

CANADA

Brent Cameron (brentcameron@intouch.bc.ca) writes: My daughter who founded the Wondertree Foundation for Natural Learning at age 6 is now enrolled in a university level music program without any credits from school, without ever attending school. Personal representation and negotiation are at the root of success in achieving your goals. I am convinced that schooling is about a) maintaining teacher's jobs, and b) about keeping children busy so that their parents can keep working on the economic assembly line of society. All deference to "education" is but a smokescreen for the obedience to the politics of authority and social order. Real education

begins at the moment of choice and personal design. Wondertree Foundation for Natural Learning, Box 38083 Vancouver, BC V5Z 4L9.

GERMANY

Johannes Wollbold is managing the website of the German Association of Free and Alternative Schools (BFAS) and has added a homepage in English. The other pages are in German (except for her report on IDEC 98 at Vinnitsa), and include addresses and websites of 41 German alternative schools, information archive of BFAS, and current news. She tells us that there is still the "Schulpflicht" (obligation for children to go to school) and that there has been no substantial change in laws applying to homeschooling (it is still illegal). But recent decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court and the Federal Administrative Tribunal created a climate more favorable to free and alternative schools. As a result new alternative schools were founded. The English homepage is at: at <http://www.paritaet.org/bfas/homepage.htm>.

HUNGARY

Dear Jerry and Everyone: We have not communicated in some time. It's time to do it..The Carl Rogers Person Centered School is a small private school in Budapest, Hungary. It was established in 1989 to introduce the person centered approach to Eastern Europe.

The last school year (1998/99) was very difficult. We were in serious financial trouble because of the rent we had to pay for the previous school building. The financial help from the Edwards Foundation was very important. It helped us to survive! Thanks for that!

We were very busy this summer. In June we had to leave the building we had been using as a school without the certainty of a new location. The city councils of Budapest offered us part of a building. We took all our belongings there even though the building was in very poor condition. On top of everything we did not get permission to open a high school. An official from the government almost closed down the school because she could not find a library. Of course she couldn't find a library. All the books were still in boxes This school year we have 102 students in 8 grades from age 7 to 14. We have 20 permanent teachers and around 10 volunteers.

Because the building is in such bad condition we decided to fix it. Paul Aerts and the 'Teachers Without Borders' Flanders Section with 8 people came to help us for a week. They drove thru countries from Belgium to Hungary in order to paint window frames, desks, fix garden gate etc! They worked as volunteers, it was great! It really helped.

I have very little time to follow the alternative education listserve, but it is very informative and interesting. For me the information (news, discussion etc.) about the home schooling system is the most interesting. If anyone is interested in the life (projects, rules, methodes etc.) of our

school please contact us. Istvan Csata /Rogers School - Budapest. Our new address is: Carl Rogers Person Centered School, 1113 Aga utca 10, Budapest, Hungary Tel/fax: 36-1-209-36-09, 31-1-209-36-08. E-mail: roginf@freemail.hu
Anna Gador, principal, Katalin Csizmazia, teacher. Istvan Csata, teacher (aumpista@dpg.hu)

JAPAN

Last spring, the Global School of Japan was closed. Its founders are planning to create a Global Village, which will be open to everyone. They have opened a networking center in Takasago. For more information, contact Kazu by email: modernlove@mtd.biglobe.ie.jp.

November 26 - 28, Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Kyoto, Japan hosted. Empowering Youth in the Global Society. an inter-generational dialogue between youth and elders concerning issues of critical relevance for the future. Speakers were invited from Japan and other countries to share the ideas they thought would most empower youth in the coming century. To allow participation by students in other countries, the program established links with institutions and NGOs through an Internet Webpage. Statements from the speakers and prominent proponents of democracy (such as the Dalai Lama, Helmut Schmidt, Jody Williams, Simon Peres, Nelson Mandela, etc.) were posted before the conference to stimulate discussion of youth issues by students throughout the world. Robert Kowalczyk, Professor Kinki University, 1-Minamigoshi-cho, Okazaki Sakyo Ku, Kyoto, Japan 606-8334. Journey East, Director, Group 21. Tel: 81-75-771-1949. Fax. 81-75-771-1949.

IDEC 2000

We are members of the Tokyo Shure IDEC 2000 Japan committee. We are happy we will be hosting IDEC 2000. Going forward we want to share information about the next IDEC. We booked the National Olympic Memorial Center located in central Tokyo from July 9 to 15, 2000. This center is well facilitated. There are plenty of rooms for workshops. We booked a music room, a gym and a big meeting room. It also has accommodations for convention participants. These rooms are cheap and very clean. The center is next to a big park and close to some historical buildings. Transportation is also convenient. We are planing to have a symposium on the first day of IDEC. We have applied to several foundations for funds. We've gotten some positive responses. Please apply for similar funds in your country. Don't hesitate to ask us for more information. Tokyo Shure IDEC2000 Japan Committee.

The Community Learning Center (CLC) International Ad Hoc Committee would like to invite any and all educators to serve as committee members. If you are willing to discuss the idea of the community learning center via e-mail or Internet, can meet semi-annually for seminars and/or workshops, are

willing to learn new ideas, and to experiment and test the new ideas within your community, then the CLC International Ad Hoc Committee is for you. For more information or to join, please contact Michael Reber, Assistant Professor, Kanazawa Institute of Technology
7-1 Ohgigaoka, Nonoichi-machi
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Tel: +81 76-248-1100 Ext. 2226
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Committee website:
<http://www2.kanazawa-it.ac.jp/englishd/reber/clc1.htm>

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

From the Guardian Newspaper, July 23, 1999 - London, UK:

SCHOOL OF PEACE STRIVES TO TAKE ROOT IN ROCKY GROUND by David Sharrock in El Khader, Bethlehem.

On a rocky, parched hilltop a Palestinian school called Hope Flowers, which has peace and coexistence at the core of its curriculum, is under threat, its roll rapidly falling as the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority discourage parents from sending their children.

Ibrahim Issan, its self-effacing, graying, weary but still dynamic head, could not have expected to make so many enemies by establishing a school which wants to teach its Palestinian pupils how to live in peace with their Jewish neighbors.

"We're adding a drop of water to the sea of peace," he says.

While practically everyone also has been talking for years about peace in this conflict ridden area of the Middle East, Mr. Issan has been doing something about it. But neither the Israelis who are threatening to demolish the school, nor their "peace partners," the Palestinian Authority, seem keen on his efforts to raise a new generation of Palestinians with a different attitude.

Hope Flowers began as a kindergarten in a shed attached to Mr. Issan's home in South Bethlehem. growing year by year until, two years ago, it had 350 pupils. But when Hamas suicide bombers struck in Ben Yehuda shopping street in Jerusalem in August 1997, the subsequent Israeli closure of the West Bank nearly smothered Hope Flowers.

"It was right when we were doing registration, and the checkpoints prevented the children and their parents from getting here," says Gene Sandretto, a volunteer teacher from California.

An Israeli army checkpoint near the school meant that the only way Mr. Issan could reach it was by scrambling over a hill. When he got there he found the soldiers were even refusing to allow through a water container - water is not piped to this part of the West Bank.

"On top of that, the supervisor of schools for the Palestinian Authority was pressing families not to register with us," says Mr. Sandretto. "The families were vulnerable to pressure and we lost 150 students."

The PA has tried intermittently to close Hope Flowers, on the grounds that its efforts to promote coexistence between Jews and Arabs threaten "national interests."

The school has faced other threats. Last year Sheikh Ahmen Yassin, the spiritual leader and founder of the militant movement Hamas, returned from Saudi Arabia with £31m to spend on Islamic schools. These schools went on a recruitment drive, offering terms which sharply undercut the £190 annual fee charged by Hope Flowers. As a result the school lost another 75 pupils.

Just when it looked as if things could not get any worse, the Israeli military authority which runs the occupied territories decided that a new kitchen block being built in the school's grounds was "illegal."

It was a moot point when it comes to building in the occupied territories, Palestinians know that if they apply for permission it will almost always be denied.

Jewish settlers, on the other hand, seize ever more hilltops with impunity. Under the law of the occupied territories, the whole school is an illegal construction.

"With Oslo, everyone was confident that this area would be incorporated into Area A or B (Palestinian full or civilian control) soon," says Mr. Sandretto. "But when the peace process broke down, we'd already built the school and now we are still 100 yards from Area A."

The case is now grinding through the courts.

Just to rub salt in Hope Flowers wounds, on the adjoining hilltop the large Jewish settlement of Efrat is carving out another access road and has taken the opportunity to create further claims on the ground by erecting a caravan settlement less than two miles from their perimeter.

"We're waiting to see if the new government has the balls to throw them out," says Mr. Sandretto.

What makes Hope Flowers unique in the West Bank is its lessons in peace and democracy education. Every week each class has a lesson on the subject suitable to its level of understanding, from practicing kindness to animals to basic ideas about negative effects of stereotyping, and engaging in dialogue with Israelis.

Israeli volunteers teach Hebrew, science, English, computers and art; in return they learn Palestinian culture and Arabic. The school makes frequent field trips to Jewish areas and has developed joint projects with about a dozen Jewish schools. In 1995 it "twinned" with the Democratic School of Hadera.

Yet in spite of these positive contributions in the spirit of the Oslo accords, Hope Flowers does not receive a penny from the Israeli or the Palestinian authorities. It survives on donations, chiefly from Jewish, Christian and Muslim organizations in the United States and Europe.

Mr. Issan, a Palestinian refugee from 1948 who grew up in the Deheisha camp in Bethlehem, says he began to build his school after realizing that he knew absolutely nothing about the Israelis or the Jews.

"I had been fed nothing but negative images and stereotypes throughout my childhood. I knew that I was not special in this and that no good would ever come of it if we want peace here.

But some people are suspicious of us, they accuse us of being collaborators with the enemy. But in spite of everything I believe we have made progress. The problem is that the peace process stalled and there is a lot of anger, which I face every day and sympathize with."

He has high expectations of Israel's new prime minister, Ehud Barak, and hopes he will don the mantle of the former Labour prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin.

"The PA is not yet ready for peace, they haven't the courage. It's a psychological problem for them."

Five years from now, Mr. Issan hopes, his school will have truly flowered.

"I hope to have helped build an open-minded, democratic society. We have a lot of fanatics, but my dream is for Muslims, Jews and Christians to live together. It will not happen without hard work."

ISRAEL:

Hello Jerry! I appreciate very much the work you do in helping the Kluch School and Hope Flower School! My congratulations to you and your organization. Hello to all the dear IDECers dispersed around the world! Thank you again Jerry for letting me participate in your program yesterday. It was a new experience for me. Mara, The Democratic School of Hadera. (Mara participated in The Education Revolution radio show, listening on her computer and sending in comments during the show by e mail. We discussed the following article which she had sent us).

Here are excerpts of an article composed with the help of Yaakov Hecht, the Director of the Institute for Democratic Education:

Reasons for the Main Crises that the Educational System is Facing

There are, in my opinion, three main reasons that led to this situation:

1. The lack of communication between the employment market and the educational system -- assuming that the educational system is supposed to prepare its pupils for the future world outside the school, and simultaneously to be a microcosms of that reality.
2. The revolution in the subject of human and child's rights and its manifestations at the school -- the traditional school was set up in a world that is substantially different in its perception of the concept of human rights.
3. The information and communication revolution and the encounter with the

school -- a school that considers its primary goal to provide missing information to the pupil, is now becoming rapidly useless. That is because new technological means perform this task in more efficient ways, that improve rapidly.

The educational system tries to deal with the crises it faces using three basic ways:

A. Denying the existence of the problem - action is required, yet none is taken.

B. Attempts are being made to change difficulties that cannot be changed or that do not exist -- actions that are not needed are taken. Some of these changes contradict each other. As a result we witness the phenomenon of schools "flooded" with projects.

C. When the solution is actually the problem, and we try to solve the problem by more of the same solution. More values education, more discipline, more competitiveness; the solution is the more the merrier. The outcome is a system that is less effective and relevant which leads to feelings of frustration for many who deal with education -- educators and others.

The new conditions force us to create a educational system that is based on a new, democratic conceptual world. The redefined school will be designed to help the students develop their own powers to choose and to create the reality they want to live in, and to help them see the reality as a diversified, multi-directional one. After this redefinition, the student will be shifted from the passive position s/he occupied in the old school that defined for the student his or hers goals, objectives, desired outcomes and the exact ways to achieve these. The name we use to describe this new system is "A Democratic School." The democratic school does not offer a magical solution to the situation at hand. It offers possible futuristic directions. The goals of the democratic school are education for independence and education for human dignity.

In my opinion the education system is at an obvious strategic turning point. The fundamental conditions for the operation of the system have changed: The goals have changed, the tools have changed, the target audience has changed. I believe that the educational system is ready to make the transition from statements to action. The situation today is different from the past since the past experiences were done top to bottom, that is from the academy or the intellectual elite to the field. Today, on the other hand, the pressures come from different directions -- from field educational personnel, from the parents, from the students, from the makers of educational policy, from the academy and from the work places. We are in a completely new situation, one that demands a thorough and urgent change, one of whose not arbitrary direction, for the public who wants to live in a democratic world, is the democratic school.

ENGLAND-ISRAEL

Summerhill School's difficulties with education inspectors from the British Ministry of Education was documented in an article in an Israeli newspaper, Ha'aretz. The article by Dafna Lewy-Yanowitz briefly recounts A.S. Neill's life and his establishment of the school in 1917 where his daughter, Zoe Readhead, grew up. A short interview with Zoe was included in the article. She believes that the violence seen in today's schools is largely due to the traditional school system's lack of respect for children or for their emotional growth and well being. In a democratic school, such as Summerhill, she says, "children cannot grow up to be violent adults."

POLAND

I'm an Englishman living and working in Poland. At present I am exploring the avenues leading to the possibility of setting up a school close to the Sudbury Valley School model in Poland. The important elements seem to be establishing an environment in which the children are fully responsible for the management of their own learning and participate in the running of the school on an equal footing and with equal rights to the staff. I want to establish links locally, with sympathetic people and professionals from various disciplines and I want to establish wider links with people in Poland who already have some experience of moving in these directions within the Polish educational context and legal framework.

After reading Jerry's report of his British trip and the Summerhill/ IDEC Conference I want to acknowledge the tremendous work he did at the Conference. Whether it was setting up the meeting for the next IDEC Conference, running the auction, doing his radio show, or his constant documenting of the conference on film, video or in his notebook, he was always busy. Whatever was going on at the conference it was clear that he was imagining how it could be used later so that more people can be brought together, or supported in their efforts or so that more people can be informed of all the organisations, schools, people and events around the world engaged in education for freedom. Well done Jerry. David French. Email: david@campus.filus.edu.pl.

SCOTLAND

The first Scottish primary school dedicated to Gaelic-only teaching has been opened, Glasgow Gaelic School, catering to 109 pupils aged five to 12. All members of staff, including the school's secretary and janitor, are fluent in the language. Children will learn all subjects in Gaelic, but will be taught English as a second language from the age of seven. Glasgow is the first Scottish authority to open such a school, with the role expected to rapidly expand to the schools' full capacity of 200. Previously, Glasgow children were able to learn Gaelic at a unit at Sir John Maxwell Primary School in the city. There are estimated to be between 75,000 and 100,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland and there has recently been an upsurge in interest. Many of the children attending the new school are

likely to be learning the language from scratch. One of the first tasks for the children is to choose a permanent name for the school to replace the current title, which was chosen for the sake of convenience. BBC News.

The Galloway Small School was founded two years ago by a group of teachers and parents determined to preserve the principles of the closed Kilquarity School, which allowed the development of the whole child and encouraged pupils to take responsibility for their own education. The school can trace its origins back to A.S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill School. The Galloway Small School has now moved into a 240-year old mansion on six acres and will begin to board students in the near future. It accommodates students aged 10 to 17 in both day and boarding capacities. Carnsalloch, Kirkton, Dumfries DG1 1SL, Scotland. Email: gss@godd.demon.co.uk. Web: www.godd.demon.co.uk.

SPAIN

Here is a free education web site from Spain, for those who might be interested: <http://www.cgt.es/fedens/aulalibre.html>

From what I can read, myself, the page is maintained by the education branch of the CGT (confederacion general de trabajo). stiobhard, stiobhard@yahoo.com

UKRAINE

From Oleg Belin of the Stork Family School in Vinnitsa, Ukraine: "I am glad to tell you that the Alternative Education Center at Stork School works. We fully realize that it keeps going to a great extent owing to your kind help and encouragement. We are also grateful to Fred Bay for sharing ideas with us and we thank him along with O.P. Edwards Foundation for their generous contribution.

In April, May and June, the Center organized two seminars and a conference. The subject of the April seminar was bringing up free children in elementary school. Actually it was a two-week training course for teachers and educators of children of the 3 to 11 age group. It was attended by more than 40 teachers from the city of Vinnitsa and the region, and by a number of students of the teacher-training college and the Pedagogical University. The seminar was based on the experience of Stork School Montessori groups and was lead by a prominent trainer of Montessori teachers from the Netherlands, Elizabeth van Santen. She had been closely observing pre-school and elementary groups for 8 years and had visited us several times during that period. This time she stayed with us for two weeks and did a great job at the seminar together with our Montessori teachers.

The second seminar was dedicated to an alternative method of essential musical education worked out by Lev Vinogradov (Moscow). It is a method of developing education rather than the usual training of performance skill. It helps to develop the ability to improvise and to deal with practically

any musical instrument. The students come to understand and to feel music. Besides, it helps the children to feel free and relaxed. That seminar lasted 4 days and was attended by 30 teachers and students from all over the region. We've arranged for L. Vinogradov to come again on August 17. He promised to continue the seminars on a regular basis. We also intend to broaden the geography of participants.

In June, we had a 3-day conference which was an attempt at a critical view and comprehension of the Stork School experience and its perspectives for the nearest future. Next year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Stork School. We are planning to arrange a special conference devoted to that date. It goes without saying that we look forward to having you and other friends of ours from different countries at our jubilee. In the meantime, I hope you are enjoying the Summerhill Conference. Take care. Oleg"

Stork Family School's Trip to Moscow: The parting was sad. You should have seen the teenagers bidding farewell after the IDEC-98 conference, which was held at Stork Family School in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. You should have seen the tears in their eyes, the hugs and sad smiles; you should have heard their promises to meet again.

As soon as the Stork students came back to school after vacation, they started planning a journey to the Moscow School which took part in the conference with The Self-Determination School, the Kluch, and the Moscow International Film School. At last on the 24th of November our plans and dreams came true. Money was raised and a bus hired for a week. a group of students, staff members and parents started for Moscow.

The next day we arrived at the Self-Determination School. The day we arrived was the beginning of the annual LyceumWeek; it was a week of immersion into Pushkin's cultural and social environment. The School headmaster, Alexander Tubelsky, acted as the Lyceum's headmaster, the students played the role of the Lyceum students and the teachers of Lyceum teachers. All of them were dressed like the people of the early 19th century. They addressed each other and talked to each other in the manner of high society people of Pushkin's time. The school was all decorated accordingly. You could hear and see a lot of poetry, plays, romances and music created by Pushkin. The atmosphere was warm and friendly. We were overwhelmed, it was terrific. But unfortunately we could spend just a few days at Tubelsky's school. And then we had to part again. C'est la vie! The group stayed at the Self-Determination School for five days, but part of the time was given to visiting the other two schools. We had a short visit to the Kluch, where we were received like close relatives. They taught us to sing some of the songs and psalms they usually sing. Since they learned some of ours during the Conference, now they sing our songs and we sing theirs.

Then they took us to their neighboring school called "Kovcheg," which means "Ark." It is a wonderful school for handicapped children. At the

International Film School we got a gift of video films taken during the IDEC-98 conference. They also greeted our representatives (we couldn't all go there) warmly and heartily.

The few day's time we stayed in Moscow was hardly enough to satisfy our longing of friendly communication with our Russian friends. And of course we couldn't visit almost any of the numerous cultural and spiritual centers and places of interest in Moscow. We just found a little time to visit a couple of museums, churches and monasteries. Our visit to Moscow was really unforgettable. We are sure that our close contacts with Moscovites will go on and we will visit each other again and again. Oleg. Email: aistork@vinnitsa.sovam.com.

Dear Jerry, I've visited your site and I can say that the activities you organized are really great and useful, especially for our present-day situation. Thank you for doing this work! The educational systems throughout the World are in extreme need of it. Until now, I had not heard about the Stork Family School in Vinnitsa or other activities of your organization in Ukraine. We have an alternative system of education, "Autodidactics," which includes: learning at least 3 foreign languages; reading literature masterpieces of other nations without translation; and the most important thing is that "Autodidactics" makes any learning fantastically interesting and passionate. Here in the Ukraine, we have a lot of activities: every month we organize philosophical education lectures, some linguistic training's, seminars i.e. "Theory and Practice of Friendliness," Valery Kourynsky performances of "Theater of Thought," and many others! There is a large following of "Autodidactics" all over Ukraine in such big cities as Lviv, Dnepropetrovsk, Charkov, Zaporizhia. Also we (the group in Kiev) cooperate with the same groups in Moscow and Krasnodar (Russia). Currently we are working on the creation of a book for children, which will help them learn 5 languages (English, French, German, Russian, Ukrainian), with unique methods of parallel learning of these languages. We are only in the early stages and we need the support of people who have dealt with the difficulties of publishing in Ukraine. We don't have experience, but we have a great desire to change something, to raise up the level of Culture and Beauty in Ukraine. With all my respect, Yuliya Sapoznikova. Website: <http://victorian.fortunecity.com/brutalist/278/>. Email: xlyulya@inec.kiev.ua.

Alternative Education Alumni News

Dear Alumni,

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Michelle Senzon and I am happy to tell you that I am the new Director of the Alternative Education Alumni Association (AEAA). I want to give you some background about myself, and the immediate and future plans I have for the development of the alumni association. I am also an alternative alumna.

In 1997 after graduating from Prescott College with a BA in Alternative Education and Creative Expression, I worked for the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO), in New York as Director of Information and Research. I have recently moved out to Durango, Colorado where I am preparing to begin my masters degree at Goddard College in Vermont. My degree will focus on Community Based Learning.

My plan for the development of the AEAA is straight forward and depends on the participation of the alumni and alternative schools. As director of the Alternative Education Alumni Association (AEAA), I will help organize alumni from alternative schools throughout the country into a resourceful working organization, focused on supporting AERO and alternative education. Support can be financial, legal, organizational, artistic or any form an alumni prefers. In this way, local schools will have "hands on support" from alumni, and alternative education as a whole will benefit through AERO's continued hard work.

In the next few days and weeks I will contact alternative schools and request alumni contacts and lists. An alumni leader from each school or geographic area will be appointed to contact the alumni from their school, via a letter explaining the purpose of the Alumni Association and the Alternative Education Resource Organization. I will then compile the email and regular addresses of participating alumni and they will receive an email newsletter with alumni stories, alternative education news and ways to support the AEAA and AERO.

The Alumni who are able to donate \$15 as a "member" will receive a complimentary Education Revolution Magazine. Alumni who can donate \$30 as a "supporter" will receive an Education Revolution Subscription. Those who donate \$50 or more becoming a "sustainer," will receive a subscription and the Almanac of Education Choices. Alumni who choose not to donate will still be invited to join the AEAA however donations are preferred.

AERO has received a grant to fund the development of the Alternative Education Alumni Association for the next two months. During this time we need to become a self sustaining organization through member donations so we can continue to develop the Association after the two month period is over. The Alumni Association will also help support the Alternative Education Resource Organization through their donations.

AEAA members will be encouraged to use the Alumni Association List Serve and the Bulletin Board on www.edrev.org to increase communication amongst the individuals and create regional and national support of alternative schools.

With these tools, local schools can find local alumni and foster a relationship of support, advice, and help. For instance a Durango, CO alternative school can post a note on the bulletin board and I can respond by visiting the school, maybe helping with building project, or simply my sharing alternative educational background.

Starting to create solid links amongst alumni and between alumni and alternative schools is a beginning step in developing community and cohesion in the alternative education world. Our aim is to develop a strong network of those who understand the benefits and importance of educational alternatives. Together, we can work towards strengthening existing alternative schools and organizations. The power of this group could support real educational change and beneficial legislation, promoting educational alternatives for all learners.

I know those of you on this list serve are familiar with the AEAA and I would love your feedback and ideas as I begin to move forward in making the organization a large and powerful force in supporting education alternatives as well as supporting AERO. I would appreciate any constructive thoughts or ideas you may have. I also want to encourage you to become an "Alumni Leader", the emissary to the alumni of your school or other schools you know. You may email me through the list serve or directly at michelleaero@hotmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,
Michelle

ALUMNI STORIES
by Hugh Harris

I was a Summerhill student.

There has been a lot of hoohah of late about school inspectors wanting to close the school down, and trying to see the wood despite the trees. I have come to the conclusion that this might possibly be so, but that it is more likely that they viewed the school with their eyes and their background and found that according to their perception of how life and schools should be Summerhill was short on certain things - like just about every school I have ever had anything to do with.

I don't think boarding schools are a good idea, but if we leave that part out for the moment I can talk about what I personally perceive to be 'education' - learning things - as opposed to the more general idea of a whole lifestyle that might also be called education.

I love the learning things sort of education, and have been learning things all my life, and at age 60 continue to do so as fast as I can. My most recent activities have been to do with designing and making a new member of the woodwind family (which involved of course learning all the

technology to make prototypes) in co-operation with another Summerhillian - Tim Israel, who is very interested in the science of acoustics (and learning things).

During the past few years (say ten) I have learnt the basics of mechanical engineering, the stock exchange, economics, British Law, Company Law, first year university science.....etc. Although I find the business subjects relatively uninteresting, they could be very useful in the kind of upside-down economy we have because they help you to be able to get a living without making what I would perceive to be a useful contribution.

During the years prior to that last ten (that is, the previous 50) I learnt speech (age 2 or so, I suppose), riding a bike, reading, math, English, playing the ukulele, geometry, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, (horsemanship!), and all the other things one might pick up at any state school, which enabled me to go on and learn Commerce, typing, music, woodwork, drawing, screen printing, furniture design, business management, practical mechanics, building, surveying.....in fact, I learnt a whole lot of stuff for some of which I have no qualifications and therefore in which I am deemed to be uneducated, but in which I am sometimes found to be more capable than the qualified, and two subjects in which I am deemed to be qualified but in which I am no more competent than in many of the rest.

The things I learnt at Summerhill were reading and independence and (perhaps surprisingly, perhaps not) not only not to be ashamed of learning things, but also that to learn things can be fun. I learnt French to a reasonable level at Summerhill, and although I cannot do it comfortably now I was able at about 16 to read 'Le Monde', which arrived once a week from Paris, and of course like most Summerhillians I could make things with my hands.

The value of Summerhill for me as an educational (in my narrow sense) tool was that there was no pressure to learn anything - even to read - so that I was never tense about what I was trying to do. I just followed my nose.

I can tell you what I perceive to be the snag also. It was a snag I was unaware of until I reached about age 28, when I suddenly came in contact with a woman who had learnt a few school basics, and I began to ask myself what I might have missed (even though I would not have enjoyed having stuff forced upon me). At that time I also began to wonder what information I might gain from books. I explored, and discovered a whole world that, although I realized it existed, I had not considered to be of any importance before and now discovered to be one of the most important parts of human existence and knowledge.

A kid does not know what information might be accessed, and although they should not in my opinion be forced to learn anything, I think it would be very sensible if they could see around them the example of adults learning and using their knowledge, and see around them sources of information in use and available so that they understand what the purpose

of stored information is. No person can remember all the of information even in a fairly basic technical manual, let alone more complex things, and so books and other sources of information are essential for anyone who wants the power to do many things - they store the information we have not the space in our heads for, and not infrequently lead us to realize things that we did not before know. There is also the question of the beauty of the written word (when it is), the interest of stories, and written humor, plays, words, and music.....need I go on?

Interestingly, my youngest daughter, who has only a few books herself now she is 31, from age six onwards was in the habit of asking if we had a book with whatever bit of information she might have wanted at the time. Unfortunately, I did not at the time appreciate as much as I do now what she was doing, and did not respond as enthusiastically as I might have. Bloody parents!

As to such alarming questions as 'yes, but what do ladybirds do, Dad?' (with the emphasis on 'do') and the impossibility of answering, it taught me something about my own limitations.

(I think I would be a much better parent now than I ever was then.)
Hope you are all well.

HORSES ARSES AND ROCKETS

Malc Dow, another Summerhill former student tells this story, with obvious applications:

The US standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and English expatriates built the US railroads. Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used. Why did 'they' use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing. Okay! Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads in England, because that's the spacing of the wheel ruts. So who built those old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe (and England) were built by Imperial Rome for their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? Roman war chariots first made the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels and wagons. Since the chariots were made for, or by Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing. Thus, we have the answer to the original question. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman war chariot. Specifications and bureaucracies live forever. So, the next time you are handed a specification and wonder which arse came up with it, you may be exactly

right. Because the Imperial Roman war chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war-horses.

There's an interesting extension to the story about railroad gauges and horses' behinds. When we see a Space Shuttle sitting on its launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. Thiokol makes the SRBs at their factory at Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs might have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory had to run through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses behinds. So, the major design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined by the width of a horse's arse.

Goddard College

by Mary Schroeder-Blumke (Msblumke@aol.com)

In a way, I suppose that I have had no alternative education, except for Goddard. But let me start at the beginning.

The beginning was eighth grade. My twin, Martha, and our friend, Calvin, had gone through kindergarten to 6th grades together, and in 6th grade they gave us some standardized tests. Based on these, they promoted us to 8th grade, where (of course) we got straight A's. A week before graduation, we were told in whispers, one at a time and while our classmates watched uncomprehendingly, that they had decided that we were too young to go on to high school, and would have to repeat 8th grade. Of course, we barely passed the second time, but we read a lot of books, and Calvin let his imagination keep us entertained very well indeed, thank you.

By our freshman year of high school, Calvin (being the smartest of us) had figured out that the reason we were kept back is because he, Calvin, was black (or Negro, as was p.c. in those days). He got into lots of trouble for two months, then decided he'd had enough of that bigoted principal and, when sent to her office for pinching his English teacher, went past the office and out the front door. Within months, he had earned his GED and joined the army. At 16, he was in Korea. He has been a bit of a rolling stone ever since. Martha and I had turned passive-aggressive; we suffered through high school like the obedient children we were, but we finally caught on to the why's and wherefore's when we made friends with a girl who was in our class. She became valedictorian, had a Ph.D. from Penn at age 22, and was a year younger than us. Our passive-aggression backfired, as it almost always does; by the time we awoke to the fact that the best revenge is doing well, Martha had a severely ADHD son to raise, and I was at Goddard.

Goddard was my salvation, although the healing I found there took many

more years to complete. At Goddard, one learned what one wanted to learn; I graduated with major credits in three subjects, including education, and gravitated, with some detours, into teaching gifted children. I have for years been determined to put myself into a position where I could intervene should anyone try to do to a child what was done to me, and I have stayed in the public schools precisely because there is where it is most likely that a child will be harmed by the callousness of The System. There have been times when I did some good; some of my students have done much better for my presence than they would have without it, or so they tell me. A memorable success was a lovely young woman who changed her mind about suicide; a memorable failure is one who showed no signs of her intentions, even in retrospect. I have fought with administrators and with parents; even when I lost, at least the kid knew that there was someone on his side. I have always tried to live by the philosophy that somebody should believe the kid's side of the story, because if the kid is lying, well, so, I've believed a lie, but if the kid is telling the truth, someone MUST believe him. And every kid, no matter how unlovable, is entitled to an advocate. Martha, Calvin and I had none; our lives would have been different, and infinitely less painful, had someone been on our side. For various reasons, nobody stood up and said "You can't DO that", even our parents. I will never allow that to happen to a child under my care. Winning or losing the battle is almost immaterial; what matters is that the child have someone who recognizes the worthwhileness of his emotions.

I teach at Central High School, which is the academic magnet school for the city of Philadelphia, and the second oldest (after Boston Latin) public high school in the nation. We get a wonderful spectrum of kids, including some who live in the suburbs and actually pay tuition to attend. Virtually all of our students who graduate -- and that's most of them -- go straight to college, although for some only Community College is within reach; we get kids from the worst slums, as well as those with real wealth. Last year our graduating class won something like (I think) ten million dollars in scholarship money. The kids I admire most are those who struggle the hardest to get to us; several years ago, for example, we had a girl whose parents were non-contenders, so she lived with several friends in an abandoned house with no heat, no electricity, no water, no you name it. But she graduated...I work with children who are identified as being at risk; last year's group included the most manipulatively passive-aggressive girl I've ever met, and a boy whose name is already known in the classical music world, and I do mean world, but whose performance schedule kept him from completing assignments at Central. The girl is now gone; the boy is doing well. My primary assignment is teaching English to kids who are identified as Mentally Gifted. There is never a boring moment, but lots and lots of stress and reward.

At the beginning of each school year, I tell my students that there is so much out there to learn that there is no way to teach it all, even within my subject -- English -- so that what I am going to teach them is

how to read (11th-graders are shocked; by January most of them understand), how to develop vocabulary (as opposed to learning a set list of vocabulary words), how to think, how to analyze the ideas they find in literature and elsewhere, and how to enjoy these processes. Then I do all these things in front of them. It works for me, and for most of the kids. Of course, nothing works for everybody. But they write, and argue, and most of them learn a great deal; some of them even come back in later years and say thanks.

So, that's my story -- an alternative within the least alternative of educations, the public school system.

Teachers, Jobs, and Internships

BLUE ROCK SCHOOL in West Nyack, NY, about 1/2 hour from NYC, is seeking a new director beginning in summer 2000. Blue Rock is a small private alternative school for grades pre-K through 6. It was founded in 1987. The school focuses on hands-on learning and education in the moment, with the aim of fostering children's natural curiosity and confidence by allowing them to learn from their own inquiries and at their own pace. The school also strives for a balanced education of mind, body, and feelings. We have an excellent, dedicated staff, an active and supportive board, and an involved, enthusiastic parent body. We are looking for a director with a passionate interest in childhood development and a strong commitment to alternative education. Duties will include administration, parent and student relations, and community outreach. Please send cover letter and resume to: Search Committee, Blue Rock School, 110 Demarest Mill Road, PO Box 722, West Nyack, NY, 10994. E-mail: delro@attglobal.net.

Two teachers are needed to start a new alternative program in Waldoboro, Maine. Creative, self-starting educators will develop a new 7 - 12 alternative program for MSAD #40. This will be a chance to create a program from the ground up in beautiful mid-coast Maine - which has the highest concentration of nontraditional programs in the State, as well as a very supportive regional alternative education association. Hiring now for the year beginning in Sept. Teachers need secondary certification which would allow them to be certifiable in Maine. Please contact: Frank McCabe, PO Box L, 145 Calers Corner Road, Waldoboro, Maine, 04752. Tel: 207-832-2101.

Job opening for 5/6 grade combination class: Santa Rosa Charter School is in the heart of Telecom Valley and the wine country. It is 10 minutes from the resorts of the Russian River and one hour north of San Francisco. Our school is a 127 student strong k - 6 public charter school (no. 75 in the state). We have a four year track record and teach an international curriculum. The teacher who inherits this class of 24 students, inherits a delightful group of students most of whom have been with the charter school since its inception. We are seeking a teacher who has knowledge of the

world, who is charismatic in teaching style and competent to "invent" an integrated curriculum appropriate to this age group. We are actively encouraging minority application. Position will be available 1/3/00. Contact Anne Evans at ameada@vom.com or at school 707-547-2480.

Erin Nugent is seeking a teaching position in an alternative school in the St. Louis area. She would like to begin this fall, if possible. Contact her 7340 Forsyth #308, University City, MO 63105. Tel: 314-726-4595.

Non-traditional, creative free-thinking educator with 8 years in special education and 23 years experience working with kids seeks a position where highly educated, flexible, hardworking teachers are needed. If you need a teacher who thinks quickly on her feet, can teach with minimal supplies and minimal, if any, budget - a teacher who works well independently with all kinds of cultures and socio-economic backgrounds - a teacher who specializes in reaching the hardest-to-reach students - let's talk. No area too remote - no challenge too large. Teaching is my passion and the public schools are killing me. Let me be that pure teacher you have been looking for. Nikki Lardas, 912-653-5240, NL1701d@mail.com, 49 Hopeful Acre Lane, #5, Pembroke, GA 31321 (yes, I will be happy to relocate - anywhere on the planet.)

Our small beach-side community would like to see someone move here to start an alternative school. We have a charter middle school at SeaSide but no high school as yet. The area is growing and possibilities are here. I could be a contact person if anyone is interested. Mary Byrd, (850)231-5573, hpyrd@scti.net, fax: (850)231-2806

The Community School has two positions and one internship open for the term beginning in October 1999. A teacher/counselor is needed to work closely with a group of educators and students, aged 16 to 20, who are working in an intensive, residential learning community. The residence runs in two 5 1/2 terms each year. A residence coordinator is also needed who will coordinate house/car/grounds maintenance, food shopping, and so on. One or two internships per term are being offered for teachers/counselors who are interested in learning more about Relational Education and the work the Community School is doing with students who have left high school. If you are interested in any of these positions, please specify which one(s) and send a resume to Dora Lievow, or email your questions to her at dora@cschool.acadia.net. If you are interested in the internship please email Emanuel Pariser at emanuel@cschool.acadia.net. The Community School, Box 555, Camden, Maine 04843, Tel: 207-236-3000/3498, Fax: 207-236-2505.

The Venice Community School, a small K-12 alternative school in Visalia, CA, is looking for a teacher for the Discovery Program, ages 5-7. The classroom has room for eight children in a creativity based classroom in a

rural setting at the base of the Sierra Mountains. No credentials required. Must love children and be open to training; experience is preferred.

Email: AmyCooke@aol.com. Tel: 559-592-4999.

"External Affairs Director: The National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS) is seeking applicants for a Director of External Affairs. Qualifications: Minimum of five years' teaching or related work, two years in an alternative setting, grant writing and development experience, office/administrative experience, freedom to travel. Must view education as liberation and be fluent in the struggles for alternative education and social justice. Direct inquiries, letter and resume to: Terri Wheeler, Clonlara School, 1289 Jewett, Ann Arbor MI 48104. Initial salary is \$25,000.00. Interviews to be conducted in early February, 2000. Resumes accepted now to January 15, 2000."

Julie Davis has spent the past 7 years teaching at Sapporo University in Japan and half of each of those years traveling and studying in the Middle East, Asia, and Scotland. She is currently completing a one-year post-graduate education program in Maine and will need 4 months of student teaching to become certified. She would prefer to do this in an alternative school in Canada, the US, or overseas. The arrangement would require a school/mentor teacher, and a supervisor who would periodically correspond with Julie's student director in Maine. Ideally, the "supervisor" would be a person in a local University. The school would provide a mentor or mentors and would require only periodical correspondence with the Supervisor. Contact Julie Davis at 795 Rue Principale, Clair New Brunswick, Canada, E7A 2H5. Tel: 1-506-992-0197. Email: juliedavis75@hotmail.com

Julian Warmington, from Wellington, Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Kia ora! I am: a fairly well desocialized 28 year-old WASP male; in my third year of teaching; have experience teaching in te reo Maori (the Maori language) (Maori=first nation peoples of New Zealand), working with special needs children (cerebral palsy, severe delayed development, hearing impaired), and have worked with all ages from 5 - 13 year olds, including half a year with one room of 5 - 10 year olds. I have been fascinated by alternative education AS Neill style for 5 years and seek opportunities to follow this interest elsewhere as there are few such schools here.

julianw@paradise.net.nz (ph.hm) 0064 04 499-2994 (cell) 0064 021 254 1361

Juliette Zaiser, experienced educator wishes to be part of a holistic, progressive, alternative school community dedicated to a holistic educational philosophy. Current certification and licenses in the state of Oregon and the Territory of Guam. Working on certification with National Association of Drama Therapists. Undergraduate degree from UCLA in theater arts. Graduate degree (M.Ed.) from Univ. of Guam in Special Education.

Experience with learners of all ages; in home-, charter, college, public, private and prison schooling venues; with multicultural, foreign and American groups. Willing to discuss and explore future avenues and possibilities with anyone in any location. May be contacted by e-mail at zaiser@write.me.com.

I am interested in putting a message on your website. I am currently seeking employment in a school that is based on FREE choice or a children's home that offers children a loving, respectful, and alternative environment. I have a Master's Degree in Special Education. I have worked in public schools, an alternative school, and a group home for sexually abused children. I am seeking a stimulating environment where I can live and work while fulfilling the ethical requirements inherent in my philosophy of BEING with children. Thank you so much for your help-- and your book. I have made several great contacts through your work. I appreciate that! Lori Wrenn: blovins@hotmail.com

My name is Syd Fredrickson, and I'm living in Seattle. I have lived in intentional communities, studied consensus and facilitation and worked both in and outside of communities (Twin Oaks, in Louisa, VA where I began formally practicing) as a mediator & facilitator for groups. I then did event organizing and admin. support for a couple of non-profits while getting my M.Ed. I'm currently looking for a teaching position, preferably in a democratically-run, ecologically-oriented school. I would also be a good special programs coordinator (i.e. service projects, internships, individual research projects...) if not a full-time teacher. I've been communicating with and visiting some schools like this for the past year, and also talking with groups who would like to start new schools. I am most interested to work with teens, so I have not put a lot of time yet into visiting schools that only have kids under 12. I'm finding it difficult to find a place to teach, though I have so much passion and a good variety of experience in teaching, facilitating, being responsible for kids of all ages! I find this group and the publication of THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION to be a life line, for which I'm very grateful. Syd Fredrickson, Seattle WA sydf@u.washington.edu, and syd@scn.org.

Marcia Mitrowski, marpoet@aol.com: Experienced, committed, intelligent teacher needs a position in an alternative school within the metro NYC area to the tip of eastern Long Island. I am interested in teaching literature, history, and the arts (often called Core subjects). I enjoy middle school students and their energy. Have traveled to Japan, China, Western and Eastern Europe (last two with students). Most recent teaching was in a multi-aged classroom with students 10-15 years old. Want to be part of a diverse school community that respects the opinions, beliefs, and dreams of students, teachers and parents. I like team work, but function independently. Please e-mail or call 631-287-2811.

I had taught many of them how to play table tennis. Oli, whom I had met when he first came three years ago was now ready to leave the school and go on to college. Jonas, from Germany, whom I had met when he first came and spoke little English, was now quite fluent and very self-assured. Meng-An, from Taiwan, had become the best table tennis player in the school, and was planning to go to the United States to live with relatives and continue his education. We had some nice matches while I was there.

Uri is now a student at Summerhill, but I had met him previously at several IDEC conferences when he was a student at the Democratic School of Hadera, in Israel. His parents have moved to England. He was very involved in the upkeep of the computer room. Chris and Natasha are children of current staff members Ian and Lenka. She is a Summerhill Alumna herself. They had just come from the United States when I last visited, but are all quite central to the school by now.

Many of the students and staff had just participated in a march on 10 Downing Street to protest the treatment of the school by OFSTED, the office of inspection. Among other things, the school had been told that its non-compulsory lessons conflicted with the imposition of the national curriculum. A pile of letters was given to Prime Minister Tony Blair's office. The Summerhillians were accompanied by many supporters, including English homeschoolers who realized that if Summerhill were discredited that they would be next.

At the end of each of the three yearly terms, Summerhill has a big End of Term Party. It goes on through the night with popular dancing, country dancing, and snacks, as students leave for a one-month break. At this party the highlight was rapping in French, German and Japanese, with Henry and William, grandchildren of A.S Neill, now staff members, doing the record-scratching. Actually, I missed most of this because I was doing a radio show on the Talk America Network from the school office. I interviewed Carmen and Nathan, 14 year old Summerhill students who had participated in the march on 10 Downing Street, as well as a demonstration of the Summerhill meeting which took place at the House of Commons! I also interviewed Susan, Nathan's mother, and a strong supporter.

At midnight there was a gathering of all Summerhillians in a big circle, with those who were leaving in an inner circle as all sang Auld Lang Syne, followed by a lot of hugs and tears.

I met several Summerhill Alumni at the EOT. One of them was a soft-spoken Japanese boy who helped us repaint the lines on the tennis court. His name is Yoshiki, and he told me he has just been accepted into the Royal Scottish Academy of Music. At my request he then played a very difficult and beautiful selection from Ravel on the piano. He said he learned music at Summerhill, which arranged private lessons for him. I met another former student who is now running his own photographic studio in Amsterdam, and a third, an American, who has a Japanese restaurant called Saga in a very fancy part of London. At his invitation we ate there on the last day and it was great.

William Smith, an American film maker, was at Summerhill making a documentary about the school. We helped him find funding to continue his project and release a film giving an accurate picture of Summerhill to help counteract the slanderous accusations made by OFSTED.

After the End of Term party he brought us to the train and we traveled to Albert and Popsy Lamb's house in the Cotswolds near Stroud, one of my favorite places in the world. Albert edited the new Summerhill book, a more recent editing of Neill's writing, and both he and Popsy were students in the school. While we were there we went to a new site of one of those mysterious crop circles, afterward visiting Avebury, a standing stone circle similar to Stonehenge and also thousands of years old. We also visited Bath and the Roman ruins. While there, we met two people who were aware of the Summerhill situation and very supportive of the school. One was from a comprehensive school and had students doing street theater. She said Summerhill was her ideal, but she couldn't go that far in her school. The other was a former teacher in a Quaker school, now running a health-food restaurant.

I was originally going to give a talk at Flexi-college in the north of England, but that was canceled when the college faced a sudden financial crisis and was threatened with closure. Nevertheless, Mary Ann Rose, a homeschooler who lived near Stroud, decided to track me down at Albert's house and came over with her oldest son to interview me. She has created a program and publications to help beginning home educators. She works with a support group of 60 families.

Returning to Summerhill for the IDEC on the evening of the 22nd, I met some of the first attendees. Many of them were AERO-related, and some were surprises. One of those was David French, who had first e-mailed AERO from Poland and wants to start a democratic school there. Another was Christos Voulis, who originally contacted us from Greece and wants to start a school there. He expressed his great thanks for the support we had given him and even showed us an AERO article which had been translated into Greek and put into his journal. Also, Helen Hughes an AERO member from Windsor House School, a public alternative in Vancouver, Canada, joined us

Tokyo Shure arrived from Japan with a group of 15, including 12 students. Jim Connor arrived. He is a board member of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools and will teach this year at Upattinas School in PA. He had just been bicycle-riding in Spain. And had visited a school there, Los Muchachos, which takes students, some of whom are orphans, and trains them to be circus performers. He said they have new branches in South America.

The next day the conference opened, and was to be governed in the style of the Summerhill democratic meeting, with a Summerhill student chairing. We talked about how decisions were going to be made during the conference. Decisions were made about quiet times, smoking, etc.

At one point, a special meeting was called because some people had been kept awake by noise the night before--some Summerhill students and

attendees had broken the quiet hour rule that had been previously made. After long discussion, it was decided to appoint "beddies officers," and two volunteered and were approved. But some were impatient with the meeting process and wanted to "get on with the conference." A proposal was made to end the meeting before the powers of the beddies officers were defined, and it passed, a decision which had at least one unfortunate result, which I'll speak about later.

There were a total of 167 people at the conference, made up as follows: 123 delegates, 19 Summerhill students, 16 other students/children and 9 Summerhill staff. They came from 19 different countries. (Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, England, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Palestine, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, United States, Wales)

I took the participants through a networking exercise at the start of the conference. We made a big circle and brought various categories into the center and asked a few of each to explain their connection and background in a few seconds. The categories included those from out of the country, from democratic schools, from state schools, writers, administrators, students, etc. It was a quick way for people to get to know each other.

Beyond Tokyo Shure and Summerhill there were not many students from democratic schools at the conference. About fifteen Summerhill students participated in the conference and their involvement was strong. We hope some of them will come to next year's IDEC. One student came representing Sands School, and one student came from Hadera School in Israel. One great workshop involving students was led by David Gribble. Democratic education was discussed from the student point of view, with many questions for the students coming from the audience.

There were several workshops specific to the crisis which Summerhill is facing. One was about how alternative schools should be inspected and involved discussion of creating standards which would make sense to democratic schools. For example, one standard could require that a large majority of the students should vote that they like going to their school. Another could require empowerment of students.

Derry Hannam was one of two school inspectors to attend the conference. He gave a very well documented talk about why schools that empower students and are learner-centered are more effective.

For my radio show that week I interviewed Derry. I also interviewed Helen Hughes from Windsor House School in Vancouver. We did the show from the office. Uri had worked very hard the evening before to download Realaudio player so people would be able to hear the radio show live from the Internet and had finally succeeded. After the show I went over to the computer room to see what the reaction had been. I discovered, to my surprise, that they had been listening to the first 15 minutes of the show, which started at 11 PM, when the beddies officer came in and ordered them to shut it off! Despite protests, Uri complied with the order, although it

seemed that the sound was disturbing no one, and people later said that the officer was out of line. Thus, incomplete democratic process interfered with at least 10 people's desire to hear the radio show!

One of the first keynote speakers was Gerison Lansdown who presented the case for children's rights and discussed her work with the United Nations. Also, Roland Meighan from Education Now talked about "the Next Learning System." He called it an extension of the learner-centered approach-an approach we all pioneered starting in the 60's that recognizes individual learning styles-but that the best way to present it is as the system of the future. Among other things, he showed us a cartoon of a line of animals including a monkey, squirrel, elephant, and fish, with the following instruction: To be fair, each of you must pass the same test-climb the tree!

I did a workshop, introducing participants to IDEC and showing the video from last year's IDEC at the Stork School in Ukraine. Later in the conference we had a meeting over lunch of IDEC people to discuss where the conference might be next year. To our surprise, there were several strong bids to host the conference from Tokyo Shure in Japan and the Hope Flower School in Bethlehem, along with an offer last year from Alexander Tubelsky of the School of Self-Determination in Moscow, which I reminded the group about.

After the first meeting we seemed hopelessly deadlocked. The Hope Flower School and Hadera agreed they might be able to co-host. Tokyo Shure with their large representation had clearly been working hard on their bid, and even passed out to the group a flyer they had prepared featuring a proposed budget, funding sources, and accommodations.

As we went into a second meeting during supper, I think we all assumed that we wouldn't be able to make a decision about the site, and the question might drag on through the year. But unexpectedly, Hussein Issa said, "As much as we need the conference at our school next year, I think that Tokyo Shure deserves to have it there, as they have clearly done more work on preparation. I suggest we have it in Japan next year, and that Hadera and Hope Flower co-host the next year." We had complete consensus on the suggestion, and a lot of energy behind it. We felt that this would give us a good lead time to get support for the conference in Tokyo, and even more time to get support for the Hadera/Hope Flower conference. We even suggested that funds should be found to bring Hope Flower students to the Japan conference to better prepare them for the next year.

Lost in the shuffle was last year's offer by Tubelsky, but since we had no confirmation of the offer from last year, the case was moot. We did have communication from Oleg Belin of Stork, wishing us well, regretting that they couldn't come to Summerhill, and describing their first steps toward becoming a regional center for democratic education.

The group also recommended that we create a more formal organization and decision-making process during this year. Everybody left with good feelings and surprise that we had come to consensus.

That evening there was a band providing music and calling for country dancing. Meanwhile I prepared to lead a benefit auction that took place after the dance. People bid on donated home visits, a week as a student at Summerhill, a rare, original Neill book, "That Dreadful School," Japanese origami, kiwi soap and other items from New Zealand, a Summerhill T shirt, etc. The auction raised almost 300 pounds.

Throughout the weekend people swam in the Summerhill swimming pool, played table tennis, and I even got some tennis in. The weather was great.

Michael Newman, the Summerhill staff member who helped coordinate and moderate the conference, somehow managed to always keep his good sense of humor throughout. He and other Summerhill students and staff members worked hard through the whole conference to make it a great success. The students were an important presence.

On the last day each school represented at the conference made a presentation. There was also a discussion about the need for an international organization. Jesse Mumm and Jim Connor of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools said they wanted to set up an organization designed specifically to rescue schools which were under attack in some way. In the discussion we talked about how AERO had been able to find financial help and other support for schools which had been in crisis, including Hadera School, Hope Flowers School, Rogers Person Centered School in Budapest, The school of Self Determination, The Moscow International Film School, and The Eureka Free University in Russia, the Free School in Albany, New York, and the Stork Family School in Ukraine.

Of course, we have left out many details, since I could not attend all workshops. After a final meeting, various groups began to leave after a very productive conference. We will stay in touch through the IDEC listserve.

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄÛÛ^fffiA new subscriber to The Education Revolution told me that he had done an extensive study on Summerhill graduates and had publish two articles about it in 1968. His name is Dr. Emmanuel Bernstein, and he has sent me copies of the articles which appeared in the Fall 1968 issue of Humanistic Psychology and the October 1968 issue of Psychology Today. The articles tell of his summer of visiting fifty Summerhill graduates and families in the London area. He gives some statistical results and some impressions, and a lot of anecdotal stories. It is fascinating, but too much to summarize. The people he visited were universally wonderful to him, and most really loved Summerhill. AERO can make photocopies for \$10, including postage.

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ÄÄÄÄ Ä!ÄÛ^ffiA year ago Margaret Allen of Miami e mailed me about alternative schools she knew of in Guatemala. She also mentioned us to her friends Rita and Roberto Vizcaino (ritanaleb@hotmail.com)who subsequently sent us the following information about their school in Guatemala. They had wanted to attend the IDEC at Summerhill but were not able to get funding in time. They hope to go to next year's IDEC. --JM

We are coming out of over 35 years of war against ourselves and the processes of dialog, democracy, and participation still have to be developed so that all of the groups that make up our multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual Guatemala have a true and conscious grasp of them. In spite of it all we would like to share our experience so that it can reach other educators and so, allow us to indirectly participate in the IDEC and find a place among those with a history of Education for Democracy.

The school started functioning in 1978, in a small rented house with the characteristic of every room being surrounded by a garden. This cultivated our first 13 students, who for a period of one year experimented an ideal relationship among themselves and with the faculty.

The next year we grew unexpectedly and this brought the classic problems of people interacting within a group. There was a struggle for power among the faculty, the students, and even the parents of the students. By the end of the second year we found new facilities which we were able to lease at a very low price. These new facilities consisted of an old abandoned house built in the middle an acre of land. It had a pool that had until then been converted into a warehouse and the garden had been used as a dumping site for broken bottles from a brewery.

This house had enough room for us to operate for a few years, but then the growth of the school forced us to build new classrooms; these were made out of plywood. These classrooms functioned for about 5 years, time at which they had to be replaced. The new classrooms were then built with bamboo with cloth for wallpaper; they turned out to be beautiful, spacious, well vented, and with great illumination. All this went along perfectly with the spring time weather of our country. We spent several very pleasant and original years in these classrooms. They were not modified until two or three years before our eviction, time at which they were replaced by prefab classrooms still surrounded by gardens. After calling this place home for 18 years the land was sold to a developing company that decided to build a huge apartment complex in it. After being evicted we were lucky enough to find a new place to lease almost immediately. This new place was in the outskirts of the city and very close to where now we are building our own installations.

Our initial purpose when the school was created, was to concentrate on highly intelligent children. The marketing of such concept proved to be unexpectedly difficult in our country, so during the first years the school had very few students and they didn't fit the original profile but were a typical sample of school-age children. Suddenly, after three years of functioning with under 50 students we grew to 175 children and the problems common to large groups started. Instead of handling them in a traditional manner, we opted for the development of some alternative model. Under advice from a psychiatrist, we went for the Anglo-Saxon justice system. Each child in a conflict could choose an attorney among the students, who in light of their natural tendency to be fair, had been chosen for such positions. The other party could choose a DA. It did not take long before we achieved "success," and two weeks later no one wanted to be in class.

The students wanted to be taking part in the "trials" and discussing their own problems. Parents started to worry by what seemed a waste of time and an abandonment of traditional education. The situation reached conflict when a group of students from 8th grade (14-15 year olds) wanted to try a teacher for making a six-hour long test, and not being present while it was being administered; they had none to answer their questions about the test. The demand was presented in a legal paper. The teacher overreacted to it and presented herself with her lawyer, threatening to sue for the "lack of respect towards authority of the students".

Lawyer and teacher could not restrain the enthusiasm we all felt. It was not perfect, but it was a fair way to solve interpersonal problems. We clearly let everyone know the rules of the game: that she had agreed when we talked about the "trials," and that we were committed to the experience, everyone, from principals and teachers to students. This teacher had the option of attending the trial or resigning. Faced with this situation, the lawyer calmed his client and told the children that they could not try anyone, much less call him/her delinquent if there was not a previously established law. The teacher then went to trial with the privilege of it being behind closed doors. From that day forward, the students stayed after classes, working in a new constitution. The process of citizenship was then based and strengthened in the students, teachers, and parent's conscience. It is now called Naleb' City.

We have undergone fascinating experiences as well as deep apathetic times. We have in fact observed the creation and growth of a nation within a nation. The school community has reflected most of the events affecting our country by reproducing them in a smaller scale. We have had coups d'etat, the Naleb' Constitution has been annulled three times; we've had sieges to the school's snack shop, strikes, groups of guerrilla students, etc. Overall the children have acted like in their real world, with all the national problems of the past years being played by them in the much more controlled environment of the school. Our students have learned to solve problems inherent to large groups of persons through dialogue, and compromise. We have evidence of this as some of them have successfully

employed the techniques learned in school to solve problems at the companies where they work. We must remark that due to totalitarianism military governments of the past, we were, at times, afraid to carry on with our labor, but fortune was on our side in this respect and we never suffered for it.

In 1998, the OAS Pro-Peace Commission heard about our experience and the General Coordinator sent a group to observe the school for four months. The outcome was a note indicating that "they were greatly impressed when they measured the real impact of the methodology developed by Colegio Naleb' throughout these past 18 years".

Four months later we received a commendation from the Ministry of Education in Guatemala, and in it the importance of disclosing our program to other educational institutions was acknowledged. We were prompted to aid in the process of bringing our methodology to others.

We must mention that we function under full recognition by the government since we fulfill every academic requirement. Also, according to letters received from the admissions office of several universities in the country, our high school graduates perform consistently well in the admission examinations. Although in other countries, there are schools that have also implemented the idea of a student government, we feel that the process of dialogue through which we promote moral values and the importance of the common wealth, while strengthening the individual makes us unique.

We are currently in the process of building our own installations and for this we have mortgaged all we own. Still we are US \$650,000 short to create a Regional Center for the Education for Dialogue (CRED for its initials in Spanish) and the establishment of a pilot program which would last for a year and involve ten schools and ten companies. We feel that we have a commitment to our country, Guatemala, to spread the fruit of our experience, elementary in its conception, evident in those countries where democracy has deep roots, but still needed in most of Latin American countries where for years a culture of silence has been a mean of survival. We are convinced that education is the only way to teach democracy to large groups of people that have so far lived in segregation and oppression.

Once again, thank you for inviting us to your IDEC. We deeply regret not being able to attend, but we hope that in the future we'll have another chance to do it. Meanwhile we can only ask you to get in contact with us and help us to tell our story to the attendants to the IDEC. All comments and criticisms are more than welcome, and we would greatly appreciate if you could help us contact institutions and individuals that could aid us in reaching our goals. As we thank you again, we wish your IDEC to be a huge success.

ANHELEISHA'S STORY ABOUT THE SIX FLAGS ADVENTURE

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soon as you do that, people who don't possess it focus on the premium rather than the sense -- at which point it ceases to be common sense. It becomes "premium sense," which our world tries to run on and does so very badly: everyone's belief system (which they put a premium on) vying with everyone else's. Meanwhile, good old unsung common sense is what is actually keeping the world going round. Neill knew this and had the honesty not to add trappings to his work. We have become so accustomed to force-fed knowledge over so many centuries, that we can't help laying at least a ghost of the same trip on others; but Neill refused to surrender to the temptation.

When you can't think for yourself, you need people to tell you how much weight to give to [others] pronouncements. But to pander to this need is to perpetuate the problem. Knowing this, the last thing Neill wanted to be was an "authority," and he took pains to avoid being cast in that role. Thus, not being an authority, not looking like authorities look like, how can we expect the bureaucratic mind to take him seriously?

Win or lose in enforcing the provisions of their Notice of Complaint, the Blair government has already failed in achieving their purpose of uniformity of education, because it's too late. Diversity of education is already upon us, and it is a tide that will drown all such reactionary thinking in due course. I would not be at all surprised if in thirty years time more schoolchildren had heard of A S Neill than Sigmund Freud. I will certainly be doing all I can to bring that reality about -- and there are many more like me. So take heart, people. Neill's day is virtually upon us. All we have to do is practice a little kindness toward the British authorities by preventing them from making asses of themselves in the meantime. Of course, that would be no mean feat in itself.

Note: This Fall Jerry Mintz interviewed John Taylor Gatto on WBAI, the Pacifica Radio station in New York City. We hope this is a prototype for similar shows.

BabsC45@aol.com: Dear Jerry: As a teacher whose been in the system for the last 20+ years, I've amassed a lot of very strong feelings about what is wrong with our educational system, and have felt quite helpless to contribute in a meaningful way, which I would really like to do. I am a violin teacher in a small, upper middle class Westchester suburb. I love my job, but always feel that there's something more that I should be doing for society, through my job. In addition, not many of my colleagues speak my language, the language of a passionate educator, who loves to teach, and longs for a more creative, unusual, stimulating and courageous teaching environment. I look to recreate my wonderful high school experience, and long to give back to the community in a meaningful way. I don't know if you can direct or advise me. Perhaps you know of a community of educators who feel as I do. The charter schools interest me, and you talked about that today. If you have any response at all, please let me know. Thanks for a great show today. Barbara.

Jerry, I just finished listening to your show. Great job! You have a gentle manner and a way of keeping the show focused on the issue. I will call in to let WBAI know how much I enjoyed it. I hope it becomes a regular show. You and Gatto speak of the necessity of choice, organic and interest-driven education, etc. Further, Gatto went on to mention some practices he maintained as a public school teacher: sending kids out of the building, providing a menu of options, negotiating learning goals. In addition, I use most of my knowledge as a teacher in power to creatively work the system to the benefit of the students - i.e., getting them credit for nontraditional experiences that are not based on course work. I believe all these things are necessary. But my experience has been disappointing. I feel stuck sometimes as a public school teacher. We are happily homeschooling our own children, but I strive to create a better alternative within public schooling. How can a traditional public NYC school with some progressive leanings move towards a vision of education as organic, interest-led and humane? Who are the people working on this issue? What are concrete actions that have been taken to forward this action? Michael.

wkazir@epix.net: Dear Mr. Mintz, I can't begin to tell you how excited I was hearing your program on the Utrice Leid show yesterday! My wife and I are home schooling our three children and are always looking for resources to help us in improving their experience. Listening to the discussion with Dr. Gatto, I couldn't help but be amazed. My wife handles the chief responsibilities of our children's education and I can't wait to fill her in. Please keep up the work of informing parents and others about the choices available to enable us to truly help our children the best we can so that they can help themselves now and into the future. Sincerely, Wazir.

I heard the discussion on WBAI with Utrice, Jerry and John G. It was invigorating. I have 3 kids. My 12 year old son is in the public school system. I don't look forward to another year of mediocrity. I will visit the school more and raise hell if that's what it takes. Thanks for the resource (Almanac). I will order it and share it with other families. Thanks. Camille.

Jerry--Congratulations!!!!!!! I sent the info to school board members I argue with. A radio show and a big personality like John Taylor Gatto might intrigue people who usually don't understand why we need to transform education! Yay, Jerry!!! Kimberly.

Jerry, Best of luck to you. People even in populated areas need your show & Magazine, and many more like them. The alternative education community has been slowly (VERY) letting outsiders hear their stories. I believe the fear was (is) that individual schools would become too large. We are now at a point where if we continue there will be so many options that possibly

almost certainly would have achieved bugger-all in the world and been a depressed nonentity. Thank you Neill, thank you Summerhill, and thank you everybody that was there with me. I love the bloody lot of you! All the Best, Gus Dudgeon.

"When private schools accept significant levels of public funding, they usually must comply with a rather high degree of government regulation. Countries that heavily subsidize private schools also regulate and inspect them in areas that many American private schools might find objectionable, such as course content, testing policies, student admissions, tuition levels, teacher hiring and salaries, and composition of governing boards." This is the finding of the Center on Education Policy after reviewing information from research studies and government documents about private school funding and regulation in 22 countries. The results are available in a booklet called *Lessons from Other Countries about Private School Aid* from CEP at 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 619, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-822-8065. Fax: 202-822-6008. Web: www.ctredpol.org.

The Journal of Family Life; Empowering Young People is considering changing its name and would appreciate suggestions from readers. The Journal is the quarterly publication of the Albany's Free School in New York. The latest issue features interviews with Grace Llewellyn and Joseph Chilton Pearce; an article by Linda Coco and Ralph Nader called "Corporate America's Exploitation of Our Children"; one about "Democracy in the Night Schools of Rajasthan" by Mary John; and much more. Their address is 22 Elm St., Albany, NY 12202. Web: <http://www.empireone.net/~freeschool>.

Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities, a new journal on alternative education, is seeking essays, poetry, and other writing from young persons ranging in age from those who are quite young to those who are in college. The writing submitted need not be on education and learning per se, though such pieces are especially welcome. Young writers wishing to submit work for us to consider should send their pieces to Samara Miles, the journal's Associate Editor in charge of young persons' submissions, at moonsong@ix.netcom.com. Word files attached to e-mail messages are particularly welcome. If, instead, the writer wants to send a hard copy of her or his work, (s)he should mail it to the journal's editor, Richard J. Prystowsky, School of Humanities and Languages, Irvine Valley College, 5500 Irvine Center Drive, Irvine, CA 92620.

From Education Now, Summer 1999: "Current research on the brain shows that early neuron synapse connections are established at a phenomenal rate during the first three years or so. They begin to tail off by about age ten." The article entitled "After Five, Your Brain is Cooked" continues: We can actually see (via PET/CAT scans) how stress affects a young child's brain; we can monitor the changes that occur in serotonin levels. We can

note that early, frequent and intense stress in childhood tunes the brain to set stress regulation mechanisms at a high level. This can sometimes result in a child learning and operating in a state of persistent fear; and this eventually seems to cause changes to the overall structure of the brain which are most irremediable." While children are naturally and very rapidly learning in the very early years, the best approach to children under five is not formal curriculum or early reading programs, it is "social interaction, laughter, and play." 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ.

I am teaching a photo & journal writing class to underprivileged 4th & 5th graders in Delray Beach Florida and am wondering if there is someone teaching a similar class that would like to be pen & photo pals. Class's goals are for students to "learn to be comfortable in expressing their feelings and cope with their realities" PLUS HAVE FUN! Our program is underwritten by a grant and supported by Palm Beach Photographic Center. If interested please have your class write to us at Denise Felice/ Attn: Confidential, Palm Beach Photographic Centre, 55 NE 2nd Avenue, Delray Beach, FL33444.

From: Christina Hall (christinahall@crosswinds.net)

I was very glad to see the focus on Columbine closer to the actual source of the problem. It gets ridiculous watching blame being pointed at gun owners, Hollywood, TV and everything else under the sun. I really admire Jerry Mintz and all he has done. As a parent I feel a lot safer with him doing the work he is doing, that is a very big deal.

A small group of parents in Ukiah are planning to start a democratic school/learning center in the next year. We're strongly influenced by the writings of Ron Miller and the holistic education concepts and therefore are seeking to design a Holistic/ Sudbury model. The Mariposa Institute has been formed to promote alternative education in our area of Northern CA. The Institute will be developing a web site for the (now closed) Mariposa School archives (www.pacific.net/~mariposa). I think it's important to find ways to build alliances with other alternative/ holistic/ progressive (etc.) schools and organizations, and the NCACS just might be one way to do this (along with AERO, etc.). Mariposa School was a member of NCACS, but we weren't very active in promoting the idea. I've been impressed by their more recent revitalization efforts. I'd appreciate any thoughts on this. Thanks very much. Larry Sheehy. Email: mariposa@pacific.net.

From Syd Fredrickson, M.Ed., Seattle, WA:

I'm already getting the Education Revolution. And so glad that I am. I'll be visiting two democratic schools in Virginia, seeing Gesundheit's land, where (because of my responding to Patch Adams' ad in your magazine) I will have a first chance to get familiar with the area/talk to them about my

ideas for starting a community school there; AND, attend the Twin Oaks Women's Gathering--where I used to live--seeing lots of friends there at the end of next month. I would feel so stranded and out of the loop if not for the networking made possible by the Almanac of School Choices, Education Revolution Magazine, and these electronic links. Jerry, again, Thanks!

I just put up a website called: www.youthpower.net and an organization called Power to the Youth. It is an attempt to involve and empower youth in taking charge of their own education, both in and out of "the system." A fledgling, two-week old organization that it is, I am asking for help of all types and would be most grateful for any effort you could make in sending us your suggestions; spreading the word to others who might be able to help, especially young people; advising me of any cheap advertising opportunities in any journals, magazines that you know of; and, if you feel so obliged, becoming a member or making a much-needed contribution. I'm 19 and my bank account is a whopping 32.50. The money goes directly to funding the site, and most of all creating publications and pamphlets to give to young people across the country. So with that, I thank you and hope to hear from you soon! Bill W.

Alan Benard, a director with the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools would like to invite you to explore their new Web site, <http://ncacs.org>. "The site includes an online brochure which explains who we are and what we do, as well as news from our member schools and programs. Visitors to the site from outside the US are especially alerted to our International Outreach page. Thanks to Jerry Mintz, and AERO for the opportunity to spread the news." NCACS, 1266 Rosewood Unit 1, Ann Arbor MI 48184 USA, ncacs1@earthlink.net

Arnold Greenberg writes: Liberty School, a democratic learning community in Bluehill, Maine had its second graduation recently; ten students graduated and received beautiful handmade diplomas written and artfully drawn by younger students. Liberty is an independent school that receives tuition from the various towns in Maine, so 95% of students come free. To graduate, students petition the graduation committee and document that they have met the minimum requirements of the state, but more important, they propose a Graduation Project around an essential question which they work on and then present to the school community. This "rite of passage" project has great meaning for both the students and the school because the students feel a sense of accomplishment, that they have studied or worked on something in depth and they have been recognized, celebrated and honored. Our hope is that younger students begin thinking about their Graduation Project and begin building their curriculum and activities around it. That's happening. When young people feel respected, and equally important, trusted, they feel allowed to be themselves and it is wonderful to see the real person emerge

and gain a sense of his or her own power. It's been an exciting year!

Mother and daughter team, Jennifer and Tammy Day, have developed a company called Children Believe, which is also the name of a booklet they have produced. Together, they have gathered and developed practical fun tools to support and empower children, their parents and families. The booklet explains what "children believe" and why, describes creative visualization, family tools and games, what grown-ups believe, and many helpful resources. Jennifer Day says, "As children grow and become independent individuals, it is natural that they question adults. Their belief is not always literal, nor are adults necessarily believed by the children as we intend to be! But, bless their little hearts, believe us they do! That is one of the most important pieces of information I ever received about parenting!" Artist Tammy Day did the delightful illustrations. Children Believe, PO Box 253, Kilauea, HI 97654.

"There is more to video games than meets the eye -- at least the eye of a disapproving adult. If you've ever sat down and tried to play one, you'll know they are not simple games. They require agility, sophisticated and fast-moving strategy, concentration and unbelievable persistence," states Romey Pittman in The Fairhaven School News. Fairhaven, as part of their commitment to encouraging students to take responsibility for their own education, has video games in the computer room, and it is always a busy place. Indeed, he says, "It is by far the most intense locus of human interaction in the building, facilitating the learning of many a life lesson." Romey cites Dr. David Deutsch, a British physicist, Dr. Margaret Shotton, and a recent Washington Post article, all strongly in favor of video games. 17900 Queen Anne Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20774. Web: www.fairhavenschool.com.

A new book has been published challenging the two dominant forces shaping education in America today: the "back to basics" approach that looks at children as passive receptacles into which facts and skills are poured; and the test-driven "raising standards" version of school reform currently in vogue. The book, *The Schools Our Children Deserve* by Alfie Kohn, demonstrates how both these methods reflect a fundamental lack of understanding about how and why children learn, and describes how the best teachers help students become critical, creative thinkers who are enthusiastic about learning. Teachers, parents and others interested in education will find this book informative. Houghton Mifflin, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116-3794.

A variety of schools that allow all students to participate in decision-making are described in a document called *Students Decide*. The four models each operate in distinctly different ways, but each empower students to take charge of their education. The pamphlet is available from

Parliamentary Education Office online <http://www.peo.gov.au>.

Home Education News

(Ed note: AERO did a consultation to encourage North Star's development): Kara WillowBrook writes: I have been a homeschooling mom of three kids for 13 years. In September another homeschooling mom and I opened a democratically run homeschool resource center, North Star. We currently have 18 children, K-6, enrolled. Kids attend anywhere from 1 to 5 days a week. North Star Center is part of a growing movement designed to provide a more holistic, child centered alternative to traditional education. Our hands-on, multi-sensory approach is geared to meet the needs of many learning styles. Our philosophy is that children are natural learners and do best in a non-coercive atmosphere that actively supports their own curiosity and interests. In North Star's less structured environment children are free to move and talk at will pursuing their own unique interests and developing their own unique talents. Children are given the experience of thinking and discovering for themselves, rather than always being told what to think and do. This maintains their natural love of learning as well as promoting the important life skills of perseverance, self-motivation, and initiative. It's really been an adventure! We have been amazed (and thrilled) by how quickly the kids have caught on to this system, and how completely they have claimed ownership of their school. We've had some ups and downs in our first month, but this is definitely one thing that just shines. I don't know if our center would be up and running this year if it weren't for the help and ideas and inspiration that I've gotten from everyone. Thanks for considering us and helping us launch! Kara and Shari. North Star School & Homeschool Resource Center is located in Port Orchard, WA. Email: WillowWake@integrityol.com or shari-weber@usa.net. Web: www.northstar.homepage.com.

Linda Dobson's new book, *Homeschooling: The Early Years*, is a guide for parents on homeschooling children from the ages of 3 to 8, the ages most critical in preparing for a lifetime of learning. Parents will discover how to tailor homeschooling to fit their family's unique needs, give children unlimited learning on a limited budget, receive advice from other homeschooling parents, make an adventure a lesson, and more. The book is available in paperback from Prima Communications, 3875 Atherton Road, Rocklin, CA 95765.

South Street Centre was founded in 1987 to provide a form of education which recognizes all stages of children's growth, while honoring and supporting homeschooling parents in their roles as caregivers and teachers. This year's programs include Playtime for Families with children 18 months to 4 years, Young Homeschoolers for families with kids 4 to 6,

Collaborations, designed for children 7 to 10, and Thursday Program, for high school aged kids. Each of these programs provides opportunities for students to interact with others and produce collaborative projects. PO Box 227, Boulder Creek, CA 95006. Tel: 831-338-2540.

Teri Brown, a Christian unschooler, tells us how she resolves the conflict of original sin vs. freedom and kids being natural learners: "People take original sin as being born "bad". I think that is not wholly true. Where I do believe that people are born into sin, I believe that means that we as humans can never reach a state of perfection, as we will always make mistakes and therefore hurt other people. But I feel that people who focus on original sin miss the statement in the bible that God created us in his own image. Therefore, it is the conclusion of this admittedly puny brain that we as humans are capable of great, beautiful and wonderful things, as well as the horrific atrocities caused by sin. I believe that history will bear that out. I believe that because God created us with wonderfully curious minds that we will gravitate towards learning. I hope that answers your question. If we can help Christian unschooling moms feel less isolated, or help one mom who feels burned out from "school at home" we will have done what we felt called to do." 1175 S.W 116th, Tigard, OR 97223

Re: Jailing of Karen Maple: (Compilation from Several Sources)
In Vermont, a school will carry a student on their rolls even though that same student is not in attendance, for whatever reason, of that school. After as many as 6 months, the school will contact the state to inform them a child was not in attendance and then reimburse the state the funds which they provided for that student. But, what if a student has been carried on the school roll for 3 years and has not been in attendance all that time due to his mother's decision to homeschool him? Once it is found out that a school has done so, that would be quite a 'chunk of change' that school must reimburse the state. It is easy to see why any school would want to prevent a student from leaving their domain, especially a special education student who is bringing in thousands of extra dollars.

The story begins so typically. Seventh-grader Trevor Maple was bored at school, displayed a short attention span, and read at a second grade level. Academic problems escalated into social problems. He even went to live with his grandparents to give another school system a try, but to no avail. his school's vice-principal advised Trevor's mom that homeschooling could be a perfect alternative. His mother, Karen Maple, then made the choice to homeschool her son after years of intolerable treatment of her son by that elementary school and the school's repeated failure to teach him anything. Trevor's scores improved markedly, as did his self-confidence when he was in a learning environment that didn't call him "learning disabled." However, school officials deemed the test results suspect. Then, eighteen months after homeschooling began, the school called to ask if Trevor was absent because of illness. Karen thought this strange, but was

assured it was a clerical mistake. This was before the school sent a letter to the state's attorney claiming that Trevor was a child in need of supervision.

Enter several court appearances over two years, always with a public defender, always denied the ability to submit SAT scores into evidence. To date, Karen has had three public defenders, as has Trevor. Karen was arrested, found in contempt of court for failure to bring Trevor to a juvenile court hearing on August 13. Diane Wheeler, Franklin County deputy state's attorney acting as prosecutor, states, "Essentially, Ms. Maple holds the key to the cell door," meaning they don't intend to release her until she offers up custody of Trevor as her bail. If Karen fails in her plight, we all fail. (Update: She has been released but is being fined \$100 a day until she produces her son for the court) Call 802-933-4514 for information on how to help. CM

HomeSource offers classes to homeschooling families. The program is available to students, K-12. They offer computer technology--have 20 computers on site, 'Hands on Math Manipulatives' classes, etc. They have a 1 teacher/5 students ratio in their classes and contract with off-campus resources for other activities, such as tennis lessons, swimming, horseback riding, going to the symphony, etc. They expect to serve 600-700 students next year, their third year of operation. They have an excellent relationship with their district and its superintendent, have had no complaints from the Teachers' Association. The law the center operates under does not require certificated teachers. HomeSource, P.O. Box 40884, Eugene, OR 97404. Tel: 541-689-9959. Fax: 541- 689-1051. Web: www.betheltech.com. Email: paulaw@betheltech.com.

The Home Educators' Seaside Festival (now in its third year) is, outside of the USA, the world's largest gathering of home educating families. HES FES 2000 is taking place in Dorset, from May 14 to 21, in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a few minutes walk from a medieval village, near to many local attractions and places of interest. There will be lots of free workshops including: art, fossil hunting, astronomy, circus skills, music, dancing, various crafts, lighting, water divining and woodcrafts. There will also be talks and discussions with Roland Meighan, Chris Shute, Alan Thomas and others, as well as self-help legal workshops, networking and empowering resources. Books and resources will be offered for sale. It will take place on a 30-acre camping site; tents, camper vans, and caravans are all welcome. As an alternative, cheap caravans and cottages will be available for rent. For more information email Andy Blewett at: hesfes@choiceineducation.co.uk. Website: www.choiceineducation.co.uk/events.html

Homeschoolers and their supporters should be wary of the recent study released by the Home School Legal Defense Association, according to an article by Larry and Susan Kaserman, "HSLDA Study: Embarrassing and

Dangerous" (Home Education Magazine, Summer, 1999). The reasons stated are that the study draws conclusions about homeschoolers based on an unrepresentative sample; ie, only homeschoolers "who took Iowa tests through Bob Jones University Testing service, whose parents completed the questionnaire, and whose questionnaires were not eliminated because of administrative problems." The sample homeschoolers included in the study were further limited in several other ways. In addition, the authors assert, the study fails to meet criteria of social scientists in four key ways: coverage error, sampling error, measurement error, and non-response error. HEM, PO Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855. Tel: 509-486-1351. Web: <http://www.home-ed-magazine.com>.

Since Six Flags Great Adventure first created Home School Day, other businesses in New Jersey have followed suit. The Camden Aquarium now has six home school days planned for the next year. The Philadelphia Zoo holds Zooschool for elementary homeschoolers every week during the school year. Liberty Science Center also has a Home School Day each year. Nancy Plant explains in "New Jersey: A School Without Walls??" that much more is happening in Jew Jersey for homeschoolers as more and more organizations reach out to this growing population. "These organizations provide, among other things, the 'Socialization' everybody (except us) worries about so much." Unschoolers Network, Two Smith Street, Farmingdale, NJ 07727.

A new experiential, democratic school and homeschool resource center has opened this fall in Washington. The North Star School and Homeschool Resource Center was founded by Shari Weber and Kara Willowbrook with the goal of empowering parents who have ultimate control over their children's education. Students, from kindergarten to grade six, are registered as homeschoolers with their school districts. Therefore, North Star does not have to comply with state attendance regulations and students can be enrolled one to five days a week. Teachers ("facilitators") don't have to be accredited and are aided by high school age homeschoolers ("apprentices"). The school now has 14 students enrolled, will eventually have 30 a day, and may add a junior high school. For more information call 360-876-7706. 1880 Lawrence St., Port Orchard, WA 98366.

A revised second edition of The Homeschooling Handbook by Mary Griffith has recently been released. This book covers all the basics of what parents need to know before deciding to homeschool and answers questions that arise along the way. Practical advice is given on topics such as how homeschooling works, research on its effectiveness, costs involved, and how and where to find materials and resources. It is available from Prima Publishing, 3875 Atherton Rd., Rocklin, CA 95765.

This note is to announce that I have finally finished a long overdue updating of my Homeschool Resource Guide, formerly posted on Prodigy. It

is now on @Home at <http://members.home.net/ct-homeschool/guide.htm>. The Guide has grown to over 400 entries, 320+ of which have web links built into the listing. I have also added short linked pages providing a brief history of the Guide and describing some tips for navigating it. Check it out if you can or at least save a bookmark for future reference. I plan to restructure the Guide next month to speed up access and usefulness of the contents. After all the work I have done on this, I'd like to be sure people see it. And there is no advertising to wade through, just pure content. Enjoy. Richard Shalvoy. Email: ct-homeschool@home.com.

From Leslie Moyer, moyerles@wiltel.net: "misc.education.home-school.misc/ is a great, extensive compilation of many different homeschool resources--I highly recommend it. For those that have previously linked to Richard Shalvoy's Prodigy page, this is the head's up to change the link."

New Programs for Homeschooled Kids,

by Katherine Long, Editor, Times Guide to Schools

The number of Washington students who are schooled at home has soared in recent years, and a key factor in the movement's growth is the public-school establishment's acceptance of homeschooling as an alternative to the classroom. In 1985, the state's most powerful education lobbies fought legislation legalizing homeschooling; today, even the influential Washington State School Directors Association offers seminars to educators on how to build cooperative partnerships with homeschoolers. The result: a new breed of student, the hybrid homeschooler. Districts across the state are creating homeschool resource centers and alternative, or "independent study," programs. Supported by tax dollars, these programs offer classes to homeschoolers or allow them to consult with teachers, then do the lion's share of their schooling at home. The reasons for teaching at home run the gamut. One thing unites them all: Homeschoolers share a belief that school is not the best place for all children to learn.

Although they consider themselves homeschoolers, Cyberschool students are officially enrolled in the Edmonds School District, and the district receives state funds to operate the program. Classes are small and cater to a range of ages. The Cyberschool gives enrollees a budget of \$400 yearly to spend on textbooks and classes. Parents use the money to buy books and pay for gymnastics or ice-skating lessons for physical education. The Cyberschool offers classes that parents can't teach at home -- German, Latin and Japanese, math puzzles and games, science, drama and music. There are two labs of multimedia computers with high-speed Internet access and a library of CD-ROMs. Web: <http://taxis.seattletimes.com/schoolguide/>

The National Home Education Network is a community of peers working together to create a national organization that recognizes and respects the enormous diversity in the homeschool movement. NHEN strives to foster an

understanding of homeschooling at the national level as well as to facilitate networking among grassroots organizations. Currently we are building a "media kit" for those outside the homeschool community. If you have information that you think might be helpful in this area, please contact Linda at ldobson@aldus.northnet.org. The NHEN website <http://nhen.org> is now being built. If you have web expertise and would like to help develop the NHEN website, contact Helen at HEM-Editor@home-ed-magazine.com. If homeschooling politics is your interest, contact Sheila at hsmick@aol.com. The Support Group Committee is busy compiling a comprehensive list of active support groups nationwide. Contact Leslie at moyerles@wiltel.net. To find out more about how you can participate in this exciting new organization, you may subscribe to the general NHEN email list at <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe/NHEN>. Box 244, 22 Westerville Square, Westerville, OH 43081.

When I tried to find out who was on our school attendance review board, I was told that it wasn't public information. I began to hear stories from people who had gone before this board who had many stories of being harassed and degraded. The real problem here is that they are targeting children with health problems. The parents are having trouble getting the child's work from the schools, and then being penalized for keeping their sick children home. This review board has told people that they are lucky their children have turned out as well as they have, with parents like them. One woman, whose son had a twisted bowel from birth, was told that she had never done anything for her son in the entire 16 years of his life. They have told parents that if they tried to home school their children, they would be put in jail, and their children taken away. This past school year we had a change in California, in the way the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) money is allocated. There is no longer an excused absence; if the child is not at school, the school doesn't get the ADA money. So now the schools want the kids there, sick or not. It is obviously all about the money. It has caused a lot of trouble for a lot of people. I got involved because I felt that they were not running the review board with the right intentions. The goal of this board is supposed to be to help keep your child in school, by doing anything necessary to make it easier for that child to be there. So, if you have heard of anything like this happening in other places, or have any ideas, I would appreciate the info. Holly

o Next year's conference will be hosted by Minnesota (below). :Alternative Education Internships, and "" in New York City individuals who of education is going to change. W

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by Jerry Mintz might be happening. Of course, given chaos theory, anything is possible. But the best guesses are that the future of education is going to change. W

COVER PHOTO

HOMESCHOOL RESOURCE CENTER CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Readers may recall that AERO did a consultation for a group of people in upstate New York in a town called Horseheads. They had been running a diagnostic and tutorial program there for twenty years called the Achievement Center. They have developed wonderful and innovative techniques for students with various learning disabilities, and with others who simply want to excel academically. The parents of some of the students began to ask, almost demand, that the Center become full-time.

That's when the owner/director, Laura Satterly-Austin, called upon AERO. We did two consultations with them, the second with a group of parents and potential students. It seemed to us that establishing a homeschool resource center in conjunction with the tutorial programs would be the best way to go. They greeted these concepts with great enthusiasm. One parent said, "Originally I was thinking of this just for my child with learning problems. But I don't want my other children to miss out on it!"

As a result, the homeschool resource center opened this year in September. They helped the parents write their Individual Home Instruction Program forms to their local school districts, to become homeschoolers. Using the same teachers they have been using in tutorial work, they established groups in mixed grade levels. They take at least one field trip a month. "Students brainstormed and came up with our center rules and consequences. We voted on them and posted them."

The feedback has been very positive, Austin says. "They say they never want to go back to regular school. Reports from the parents are extremely favorable. We hear such comments as 'The other night we caught them reading,' 'They are so relaxed and happy now, our whole family life in the evening has changed for the better!'"

The potential for this particular approach is quite amazing when you

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;~\Û^fifSigns made by supporters of Summerhill School, in England, for the protest march to the Prime Minister at #10 Downing StreetThe IDEC at SummerhillThe IDEC at Summerhill
Wewe came with us to the IDEC this year. He is the IDEC in

27

Two Summerhill students from different cultures
19Zoo Readhead, current head of Summerhill
which was started by her father, A.S. Neill

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Veteran Summerhill student
15

the march on 10 Downing Street,
while on Talk America Show

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Summerhill graduate who was accepted to
Royal Scottish Academy of Music

13

Stephen, a student from the United States
displaying his Summerhill Leaving Certificate

The Crop Circle we visited near Avebury,
as seen from the air (photo Lucy Pringle)

20

Albert Lamb, sitting in an Avebury standing stone

17

Homeschooler Mary Anne Rose at Lamb House
is teaching

12L front: Kageki from Tokyo Shure, Hellen Hughes from
Windsor House in Vancouver, Jim Connor from Upattinas,
Far right, Lynette Gribble, background, Tokyo Shure students and others

14(you could cut the guy out on the left)Center: Derry Hannam 26Young
participant plays with oversized Summerhill chess set

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¿~\ÛÛ^fifiSummerhill students and alumni play basketball

1Zoe Jane Playdon, a presenter at the IDEC and
business consultant, hosted us in London after the IDEC

3Alex Morganuv meets Madonna in London after IDEC
--at Taussaud's Wax Museum

2It took a few minutes before Jerry realized he was sitting
next to a wax scupture of Brian of the Beachboys,
"watching" a TV set above.

7 Articles about attack by Blair government on
Summerhill bulletin board (see below). Construction from a distance
photoThe new school building under construction,
with funds still needed

Closer photoTemporary building for Naleb

8 crop to centerAnheleisha at Six Flags (right)By an

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Public Alternatives
International News And Communications
 What is IDEC, by David Gribble
 News from Australia, Brazil, England Germany, Hungary, Japan, Israel,
 Palistine West Bank, Poland, Scotland, Spain, Ukraine

Alumni Stories, Summerhill, ,
Horses Arses and Rockets, by

Conferences

The 30th Annual International Alternative Education Conference
, b
Democratic Schools,,

What Does Rap Music Have to do With All of This

nheleisha'sStoryAbouttheSixFlagsAdventureeedback from Gatto Show on

WBAIAERO Advisory Board Meetings

During the past year members of the AERO Advisory board have met a half dozen times to discuss how AERO can become more sustainable and effective in its mission. Jeff Grossberg did several consultations with us. Board member Elina Sheppel ran one session, and Matthew Cross of the Leadership Alliance led our last two sessions, the latter hosted by Pathfinder Learning Center in Amherst, MA. At the most recent session, the Advisory Board created the following mission statement:

"Building the critical mass for the Education Revolution, by providing resources which support self-determination in learning, and the natural genius in everyone."

Let us know if you are interested in joining the AERO Advisory Board. Current members are listed at the bottom of page 2.

PHOTO 10

Ron Miller (foreground) at Advisory Board Meeting at Earthlands, in MA

PHOTO 9

From L: Nick Stanton, Vivian Howell, Matthew Cross, Jerry Mintz

PHOTO 11 cut me out if you can

Advisory Board participants Fred Bay and Corinne Steele

The Treelumni Stories SummerhillHorses Arses and Rockets

May 10-14, Yellow Springs, OH, Conference of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, Antioch University, Alan Benard, 1266 Rosewood, Unit 1 Ann Arbor, Mi 48104, 734 668-9171, e mail- NCACS1@earthlink.net

June 22-24, Bloomington, MN, 30th Annual International Alternative Education Conference, A revolution in Alternative Education, New Schools for a New Age, , MN mall) David Bly, Northfield ALC, 801 Washington Street, Northfield, MN 55057, Phone (507) 645-3061, Fax (507) 645-3025, July 9-15, Tokyo, Japan, The 8th meeting of the International Democratic Education Conference, , , hosted by Tokyo Shure, Kageki Asakura, Tokyo Shure 2-11-8 Kishimachi, Kita, Tosko, Japan, 081 333903135 (or call AERO at 800 769-4171)

PHOTO Melanie and graduates of term # 51.

Top, L to R Fran Beaton, Toby Casey.

Bottom L to R: Melanie, Kieth Palka, Orville Vanderpool, Lauren Withers
t 1999 Globe Newspaper Company. What Does Rap Music Have to do With All of This

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Creating Future Learning Systems. CI

