

AERO-GRAMME #6

Special National Alternative

Education Conference Issue

The Alternative Education Resource Organization Newsletter

417 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Heights, NY 11577

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Summer 1991

Aero-Gramme is a networking newsletter with information from the spectrum of educational alternatives, including public and private alternative schools, homeschooling, international alternatives, etc. This is a special preliminary version of AERO-GRAMME #6, without photographs and without some international news (not yet typeset). Some of you are already subscribers to AERO-GRAMME. If you would like to get on the mailing list, fill out the form in this issue, or sign your name on the list at the conference.

Networking will be featured at my Friday workshop. All are welcome-Jerry Mintz, Editor.

PUBLIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL NEWS

It seems like every day there is another article about educational alternatives and the need for school reform. Mostly, there articles document the problems and symptoms of the failures of the traditional system, like the disappointing results of the "nationwide math test." But we are also hearing about positive efforts, like the passing of Minnesota's Charter Schools Proposal, which "would authorize groups of teachers, parents, and/or community people to come together for the purpose of founding an 'outcome based' school." For those interested, I have several articles about Charter Schools, including a copy of the legislation, and an article by Joe Nathan.

THE 21st NATIONAL ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

As we write this, the Conference is only a few days away, scheduled for June 27-30 in New London, CT, at Connecticut College. The theme of the conference is: Choices...along the continuum. In concert with that theme, I will be doing a presentation entitled "Networking the Spectrum of Educational Alternatives." Here is a description: "In this workshop we will discuss and demonstrate the importance of communication between different disciplines of alternative education, including public alternatives, alternative higher education, independent alternatives, and home education. We will discuss the progress in creating a comprehensive directory of alternative schools and programs, the GATE conference, and show videos of a variety of educational alternatives in the United States and other countries, including Summerhill, in England."

Thom Brown and Joe Pepin who organized the conference, also have planned a tour of Long Island Sound aboard the research boat Project Oceanography, and a big array of workshops and speakers. There will also be another meeting of the International Affiliation of Alternative Schools and Personnel, which again promises to be exciting (see AERO #5).

NATIONAL COALITION OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVISTS 4th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

I took a train to this conference in Toledo, Ohio, on the way to the GATE conference in CO. Ron Miller could not attend, and considered it so important that he covered the extra expenses necessary to attend. The theme of the conference was "Transforming Education in Troubled times." This relatively new organization had about 100 attendees. Most, but not all, were public school teachers trying to change the system from within. Unlike some other conference I have attended, nearly half of the attendees were people of color. One woman, Jan Elliott, is a Cherokee who has organized a conference called "The Ethics of Celebration of De-celebration. Quincentenary Issues, Education, and the Native American Perspective." She has also been actively protesting some public representations of the Columbus Quincentenary, along with Russell Means. (I recently got to meet Russell with I returned to the school at the Oneida Reservation. He was interested in our helping him start a school for the Navajos) The conference will be December 6-8, at the U of FL in Gainesville. It may be free. Information: 6802 S.W. 13th St, Gainesville, FL 32608. PH:904 378-3246.

At the conference, there was much discussion of multi-cultural education and the destructiveness of tracking and testing. The National Center for Fair and Open Testing was there. They publish a newsletter called FairTest, about testing reform (342 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139-1802).

Bob Peterson is a prime mover in the Educational Activists, and edits a widely distributed newsletter called RETHINKING SCHOOLS (1001 E. Keefe Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53212). There were also a number of parent-activists.

One somewhat disturbing discovery I made was that some activists see private alternatives and homeschooling as antithetical to their needs, taking funds away. I hope that this important stumbling block to more unity in the alternative education movement.

NEW ORLEANS FREE SCHOOL THREATENED WITH CLOSURE

As this is being written, the future of the New Orleans Free School hangs in the balance. The following is the text of a FAX which I sent to the New York Times. They declined to do the story. The AP was interested, as was National Public Radio:

"The New Orleans Free School is one of the best known public alternative schools. It is possibly the only school in the country to have made the transition from independent alternative school to public magnet school, and recently celebrated it's 20th birthday. On June 24th, the school board for Orleans Parish will vote on whether to close the school, ironically on the same day that NOFS founder and Principal, Bob Ferris, is to receive the President's Salute for Exemplary Partnerships for Minority Achievement, in Atlanta, GA.

The stated reason for the school's potential closure is financial, and problems with the physical plant. But Ferris states, in a letter that was sent nation-wide, appealing for help, "At this point, I cannot help but think the top administrators simply want to silence me. I have been and am

an outspoken critic of the bureaucratization of urban public schools and a strong advocate of schools of choice with school-site autonomy."

The New Orleans Free School was featured in the recent PBS documentary, "Why do These Kids Love School." Ferris point out that over 90% of the student body is on free lunch. Yet despite such a low income base, the school's test scores increased 4% in math and 11% in reading last year, while New Orleans scores as a whole dropped. The recent national math test showed Louisiana public school students last among states tested.

Ferris says this is the fourth time the Parish has tried to close the school. For example, five years ago the school was required to double its enrollment or close. It complied, and the demand for the program continues to grow.

At the recent conference of the Global Alliance for Transforming Education in Colorado, more than half the delegates signed a petition protesting the closure of NOFS that was initiated by Dorothy Fadiman, the California film maker who made "Why do These Kids Love School?"

I have a complete text of Bob Ferris's letters at the above phone and address. I've visited New Orleans Free School ten times.

For Further information: Robert Ferris, NOFS, 3601 Camp St, NO, LA 70115. Phone: 504 889-0452.

MORE PUBLIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

John Lloyd of the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs sent a questionnaire to various state alternative education associations, asking them for their position on the issue of choice. Of those that responded, the following ideas "appear to be expressed throughout: 1. Universal accessibility 2. Extensive participation by student and/or parent in choice (ownership). 3. Promotion of valid and quality choices (diversity). 4. Publicly supported and funded." Lloyd concludes that he thinks "it is important that alternative educators across the nation focus on the common issues in a positive way and work together to establish a public message that will best serve the educational needs of the total population."

Vickie Ruttan, of Easton, WA writes: "We are investigating alternative prgograms that might be beneficial to out small rural school. We have 70 students total, K-12. I am a parent-volunteer and Parent-Teacher-Student Organization representative. Our superintendent is very open-minded and willing to initiate new programs if they appear appropriate to the needs of the students..."

On their subscription form, John Johnson said, "Irwin High School is a first year continuation school. We opened our doors on Aug. 27, 1990. We are part of the Hilmar Unified School District. Hilmar, CA, is an unorganized dairy community in the San Joaquin Valley. Irwin High School has a present enrollment of 43 students."

Marilyn Catrol Simmons of the Optional Program in Memphis, TN, called us to find out how should could find out about other alternative programs. She was rather surprised to hear about what was out there. She sent a description of their optional programs. We also received a notice about a

job vacancy. It looks like they are looking for an administrator who really understands alternative education. For information: Director, Division of Personnel Services, 2597 Avery Ave., Room 164, Memphis, TN 38112.

Mary Ellen Sweeney, new Editor of Changing Schools, wrote to thank me for the editorial I wrote that she had published. "No one has specifically commented on your editorial except to say that they liked it. Keep working for holistic education for all of us, Jerry. You're doing a great job."

Jody Wyckoff, the Principal of New Lives School, in Fort Worth, TX, wrote "We are a public school for pregnant and parenting teens, 6th grade thru 12th. We are struggling to give these students alternative instruction, though the state of Texas does not have an alternative school system. We have asked our district to allow us to go to a year round schedule.

After the GATE conference, we visited Jefferson County Open School and High School Redirection, in Denver, CO. Both of these schools were founded by Arnie Langberg, who is the current principal of High School Redirection. The Open School is now K-12, with over 600 students. We sat in on their last democratic school governance meeting, then were shown around the school. It is clear that this is a very important model for public alternatives. The students are intensively involved with the structuring and direction of the school. There is much experiential education, traveling, internships, etc. We videotaped this visit, and could make copies for those interested. Afterward, we found Arnie and his students at a park on one of their last days of school. Their student body is clearly different from the Open School. We talked with one inner city student who is half black, half Indian, but whose step-father has discouraged him from exploring his Indian roots. He was reading from his Russian course book, while at the park. I'm told he is also a very talented musician and composer.

I received a letter from Noel Byers and Hollie Rago, students at the Central Islip Alternative High School. They said, "Your time and effort was greatly appreciated by the students and staff...We have implemented many of your ideas. Three (democratic) meetings have been held since you were here...We will keep you posted on our development. Perhaps some time you could come and see our progress." The Islip program meets every day, starting at 4 PM through 7. It was established as a program for "at risk" students. I have a video of our demonstration and establishment of their democratic meeting system. It is interesting to watch the body language change as we go along. This may now be one of the few "at risk" schools to have a democratic meeting system. One other networking note: they were referred by John Kominski, Director of the New York Hall of Science, whom I met by CB radio on my way back from a meeting in Ithaca, NY! He mentioned us to Islip teacher Adele Pecora, who called me.

11 YEAR OLD'S BOOK PUBLISHED

I am putting in a plug for my niece's new book, before it gets lost in the

shuffle. It is called, My Life as a Traveling Homeschooler. It is being published by Solomon Press. To quote the book back: "This is a rare and perhaps unique view of the current world of alternative education and homeschooling as seen through the eyes of a 10-almost-11-year-old girl. Jenifer traveled with her uncle Jerry Mintz, a leading alternative education advocate, on adventurous trips in the United States and Canada." The text, entirely in Jenifer's own words, is accompanied by 70 photographs. Susannah Sheffer of Growing Without Schooling says, "Both parents and children will enjoy reading about her adventures." Helen Hegener, of Home Education Magazine says, "I loved the conclusion to Jenifer's book." We quickly sold 30 at the New England homeschool conference. We're offering it to AERO-GRAMME readers at a pre-publication price of \$7.95. (More under HOMESCHOOL NEWS)

AMERICA 2000

There has been lots of talk back and forth about the new education proposal from President Bush. On the one hand, the idea of an alternative school in every congressional district has a great potential impact, if done right. People at the GATE conference took that opportunity seriously. On the other hand, we sat up until 1 AM with Herb Kohl at the Network of Progressive Educators conference in Minnesota drafting a protest to the national test idea. But when the concept of funding private alternatives was rejected out of hand in a Newsday editorial, I found it necessary to remind people that there were small, innovative independent alternative schools that, if supported, could give parents and students true choice. It will be quite interesting to see where this debate goes. Let me know if you want A: a copy of a George Kaplan article about America 2000 that was in Education Week B: A copy of the Network of Progressive Educators' statement. C: The Newsday editorial and my response, which they printed. (More under PUBLIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL NEWS)

NEW SCHOOLS FESTIVAL IN USSR

Ron Miller, editor of Holistic Education Review, informed us of a very important First International Festival of New Schools, to take place in early August in the Crimean town of Kerch, in the USSR. I have been invited by Shalva Amonashvili, President of the Creative Union of the Soviet Teachers, to attend the Festival. We are trying to raise the funds in order to attend. I have been informed that 200 students and teachers from at least 8 alternative schools in the USSR will attend, as well as others from around eastern and western Europe, and possibly some from Japan and other places.

Ute Roehl, of Universele Opvoeding, in the Netherlands, is European contact person. In her latest FAX, she said that in Moscow, on the morning of August 5th, "festival participants will have an official meeting with the Minister of Education of Russia, Edward Dneprov, and representatives of

the Commission of Education of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

I am also trying to arrange to go to Summerhill's 70th anniversary in England, and on to the USSR. I have a list, addresses and descriptions of the USSR schools for those interested. I notice that one of them is based on Leo Tolstoy's system. (More under INTERNATIONAL NEWS).

ALTERNATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION

The need has never been greater for a program to help people prepare to be teachers in alternative education, The NCACS says it has a small pilot program going, with three students enrolled. GATE has a group working on setting up such a program.

As you may remember from previous AERO-GRAMME's, we have made a proposal for such a program to Antioch University. They have shown great interest, and in May I had a meeting with Lois Leshel at Antioch. Because their external masters' program is making the transition to a new dean, Antioch would not be able to sponsor the proposed program for as much as a year. However, Lois encouraged me to initiate such a program, with the knowledge that at first it would not be able to award credit (although their masters' program could award credit retroactively).

In this program, we will set up internships at several alternative schools which we consider to be good models. They will be designed to meet the specific experiential needs of each student, with mentors provided at each site. We will start with an orientation week, which will give the student a good general background to start with. There will be evaluations by the student and mentors, and a final summary week. Cost of the program will be kept to a minimum. People interested in participating in this program should write or call AERO as soon as possible.

COMMUNITY OF SELF GOVERNING SCHOOLS

That's one of the names that has been suggested for the group of schools mentioned in AERO #5, schools that are self-governing and have non-compulsory classes. There are about ten, with several others interested. The schools committed to the idea are Sudbury Valley, in Framingham, MA, The Free School, in Albany, NY, Highland School, in Highland, WV, Stonesoup, in Crescent City, FL, Grassroots Free School, in Tallahassee, FL, Second Foundation School, in Minneapolis, MN, Summerhill, in Leiston, England, and the Democratic Open School of Hadera, in Israel. I have visited all of these but the Israeli School, and have videos of them. A Japanese intern at Grassroots suggested that the Nonami Children's Village, in Japan, would also qualify.

In the brochure of Nonami they say that they were founded in 1987, have seventeen children and three staff members. "We believe in the children's right to an education without authoritarian compulsion, control and evaluation. We hope children will enjoy learning itself, learning to look after themselves, and learning to recognize their worth and to love themselves." They said they based a lot of their school on the work of A.S. Neill of Summerhill.

Dan Greenberg of Sudbury Valley School went to speak to a group in

Portland, OR that was interested in starting a similar school. Gene Lehman reports on this in his newsletter, LUNO (Learning Unlimited Network of OR). He said that Miriam Rose was "struck by an article in Holistic Education Review about Sudbury Valley School, and decided to do something...Miriam and friends have formed the Portland Democratic School Community to 'establish an internally directed, person-oriented, community-based school in Portland.' They plan to open in September, 1991 with at least 70 students 14-19."

Greenberg also wrote to us about the school in Hadera, Israel, and translated from Hebrew a description that Yakov Hecht made about his school. Here are some excerpts:"The school was founded in 1987 by a group of educators and parents, and is supported by the Municipality of Hadera and the department of Education of the State of Israel. It is located on a hill covered with Eucalyptus trees...About 250 students attend the school, from ages 4-19...Purpose: 1.To create an environment in which all people are respected equally, regardless of age 2. To assist students in acquiring the means that will enable them to realize their personal goals in life...We believe in the desirability of living in a democratic society. For this reason, the school has established and maintained a democratic environment...The students a free to choose the subjects they wish to study. ..There are no compulsory courses." Last year some Sudbury Valley an exchange visit to Hadera. Some Sudbury Valley student also exchanged with Highland School, in WV. Highland School also again hosted a group from Autre Chose, in France.

Director Tim Rogers says that Stonesoup School is struggling to survive as they "return to our roots, i.e. optional, unforced class attendance, democratic meetings." They are a boarding school and own almost an entire lake in Florida. They are looking for more students, and perhaps in families that would like to live at the school. Star Route 1 Box 127, Crescent City, FL 32012.

Bob Vincent of Second Foundation School wrote "Everyone here is interested in having some sort of group of non-coercive schools formed. We are going to have a meeting of students and staff to generate some suggestions....Thanks for suggesting this! Sometimes good ideas float around for a long time before someone actually does something and gets the ball rolling."

Jackie Werner-Gavrin of the Red Cedar School in Bristol, Vt. tells us of her new school: " Thanks for AERO-GRAMME. The information you provide about alternative education doings is wonderful! Our school is located in the Village of Bristol. We have 8 kids now and home for about 18 next year. Our age range will be 4-8 year olds. We plan to increase an age each year....You mentioned in your latest newsletter that Dan Greenburg and some others had suggested the idea of a small support group of alternative schools that are democratic and have non-compulsary class attendance..Can you tell me more about this? In our school we fully respect each child's freedom to choose what they'll be learning, and how and when they'll do it.

We are grappling with how much is appropriate for us to offer, and how much should be left to the initiative of the kids. At what point do our interests and good ideas for their activities overshadow their need to find out what's important for themselves? We are very interested in moving toward a democratic school community."

MAIL and COMMUNICATIONS

Wayne Jennings (449 Desnoyer Ave, St Paul, MN 55104) writes: "Great service you are providing with AERO-GRAMME. #5 chock full of good networking info...I continue to publish Brain Based Education Networker as a labor of love (like you). Interest in how the brain processes information, and therefore how we learn, is growing rapidly. It's probably no surprise to many of us how brain based learning solidly confirms experiential education, whole language approaches, service learning, and other good practices of progressive and alternative educators and parents...In working with dozens of schools on reform, I notice the climate for change has never been more favorable and open to new practices. We must make the most of these times!" Here is an excerpt from Wayne's latest newsletter, from an article by Leslie Hart: "Watch some outfielders. As the ball is hit, they estimate where it will come down, and run to that spot or stand still, as called for. They position themselves with astonishing accuracy. No two balls follow the same path, and the curve is complex; yet the skilled player knows in an instant where it will fall. Somehow the brain effortlessly makes the calculations! If students learned outfielding in school, they would be taught to estimate the velocity in MPH, the angle of elevation in degrees, and the heading as a compass point, and then logically calculate the catching point. By the time any outfielder did this, of course, the game would be over!"

Bill Kautz of the Center for Applied Intuition has organized a major conference called "Opening the Intuitive Gate", to be held in San Francisco from August 15-18. "In this conference we will explore and celebrate intuition and 'deep knowing' abilities as an essential component of the learning process." Featured Keynoters will include Joseph Chilton Pearce, Thomas Armstrong, and GATE's new director, Phil Gang, plus five others. For more information: PO box 218, Fairfax, CA 94978. PH: 415 453-2130.

Laird of Sandhill Farm informs us that they have nearly sold out their initial printing of 7000 Intentional Communities Directories. "We are gearing up for a reprint now. When we do this, the price will go up." The Directory is still available through AERO at \$15.

Norma Willingham of the Neighborhood Schoolhouse, PO Box 119, Brattleboro,

VT 05302 writes that the need a teacher "for 91-2 school year for a group of 8-11 year olds...We believe that education must be about encouraging children to care: to care about themselves and others, and about their own ability to effect positive change." Phone: 802 257-5544.

I'm sure many of you have read John Gatto's speech, given when he was named New York City Teacher of the Year. I've seen it printed in many places, including the New Age Journal. It is a powerful statement about the current state of public education. To quote a small part: "The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders. This is really a great mystery to me because thousands of humane, caring people work in schools....Although teachers do care and do work very, vary hard, the institution is psychopathic, it has no conscience. It rings a bell and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell...." I've had several long conversations with Gatto, and he has ordered many AERO materials. He writes: "AERO is grand...I'm in a mad-zone right now, giving speeches all over and teaching...Meanwhile, I'll spread the word that you exist." Gatto asked for and received information on several alternative schools for an article he was writing for Across the Board, which goes to Fortune 500 board members. He also gave me the name of a homeschooling family in Toledo, the Nishikawas, that I stayed with after the Education Activists Conference there.

Ken Lebensold of Oakland, CA (7575 Sunkist Dr., 94605) writes: I'm now working as a learning skills specialist at Sonoma State University. This work provides a real opportunity to promote holistic education and to give student a positive educational experience...Tell your readers that I'm about 95% done with my book, "What's Possible in Education", which discusses holistic philosophy as it applies to education and reviews existing alternatives to traditional education. I welcome any inquiries..Thanks for maintaining your networking service in a way no one else could."

Linda Morgan of Rochester, NY writes: I enjoyed your large newsletter, and what a good idea to have a subscription service... I have been "pursuing" a Ph.D thru Columbia Pacific for 8 years--most of the time we were homeschooling. I am all done except for the dissertation. Meanwhile I took 2 years and earned a Ph.D in Ed. Administration from U.T. Austin. But I'm really interested in finishing the Columbia Pacific degree and so glad to hear you are doing the same. My research was on homeschooling, a national survey of John Holt's families in 1985 and a recent collection of testing information on homeschoolers from all the states which collect such statistics." Contact AERO for more information on Columbia Pacific.

Emanuel Pariser of the Community School in Camden, ME writes: "You are

undoubtedly the most peripatetic alternative educator on the Eastern Seaboard and I think your penchant for networking will pay off..I really liked your article on the fighting which goes on in alternative movements. I would refer you to Jules Henry's Culture Against Man 'The function of education in all cultures is to bind the student to the culture, not to create original, creative students who would be independent of the culture." ..I think it's really sad that our organizations get so hung up on labels and dogmas that we went up treating each-other like shit."

Fred Bay, President and Executive Director of the Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation wrote this to Jubal Stucki, President of the School of Living, which sponsors AERO: "I am happy to announce that at their meeting of May 18 the Trustees of the Foundation awarded a grant of \$5000 for support of your AERO project's global networking." Joshua Mailman, who established the matching grant in support of AERO, has informed us that his foundation will match that amount by this Fall, thus completing the \$20,000 matching fund which he established a year ago.

Elizabeth Wertheim sent us information about her school, Huikamahi Kinderhouse, in Haiku, Hawaii. They have raised enough funds to hire another teacher who is familiar with Steiner principles, and continue to be a very innovative school, using "now proven methods of what used to be called alternative education and now is gaining much weight in forward-looking public schools." I hope that some day I get to visit them! Maybe I will (see International News).

Weston Hopkins, a 13 year old public school student in Wichita Falls, TX, has been trying to make changes in his school system. "The state of our school has gone to a level so low that I have difficulty perceiving a reason for it to exist. I can feel it literally killing my essence like a black cloud obstructing the sun....I am still trying to establish a protest but am not knowledgeable as to how to wake the would-be protesters into a sensible condition. Alas, the people that have the power to change it wouldn't listen to us inferior humans, for we are young and discrimination is high."

Anne Barar of Cascade Canyon School, in Fairfax, CA: "I love AERO-GRAMME. Do you know the dates of the Summerhill conference?(ed note: We provided info, and Ann said by phone that she will attend the conference) CCS is strong and growing- 3 classes now, and 30 for 91-2-we are wait listed in one class and full in the other! Galapagos tour had to cancel owing to war and cholera. This summer Rana and I plan to visit alternatives in Europe."

Dave Norton, a professor at the University of Delaware, is very involved with alternative education. I met him through Dale Bethel, (see International). He wrote: "Deep thanks for the copy of the abstract of the

8 Year Study, It's very illuminating. We're now editing a book out of the Japan (alternative education) conference last summer, and working on a Hawaii conference for Fall '92...I hope I can arrange a visit for you here, perhaps with a consortium of alternative schools." Dave attended the GATE conference in CO, along with Dale Bethel.

Tom Trigg, a lawyer whom I met when I was in Missoula, MT, helping them start a new school, has sent me several articles, and other information about developments in Missoula. A couple of other schools split off from the original Shining Mountain School, including one called Avalon, and one organized by Liz Rantz. "Your visit last spring made a big contribution to the educational climate in Missoula. I know it was widely appreciated."

The School of Living has printed a special issue of their newsletter, Green Revolution, dedicated to alternative education. We have arranged to have a sample copy sent to all AERO-GRAMME readers who were on our mailing list as of the last issue. We would like to encourage you to become a member of the School of Living and continue to receive the Green Revolution. The School of Living is a very important 57 year old organization, "dedicated to learning and teaching personal responsibility and right-living. It aims to foster self-governing communities which are democratic, humane, globally conscious and ecologically sound." The SOL was instrumental in starting the environmental, consumer-protection, organic farming, health food, and community land trust movements, among others. You can fill out the membership form on the back of the GR and send it directly to them, or may still become a member for half price (\$10) through AERO-GRAMME. This offer may not be repeated. Let us know if you would like a free copy of the Alternative Education issue, if you did not receive one.

Cat Eldridge of Action Linkage asked us to remind people that "Action Linkage is a decentralized social change network whose purpose is to link geographically dispersed individuals, bringing them together to work out and inspire forward-thinking solutions to global concerns." They have organized a variety of M2Ms, or correspondence groups, in various areas of mutual interest to their members. For more information: PO Box 684, Bangor, ME 04402.

Julie Young, who has been teaching for four years at a public magnet school, is interested in teaching at a school that has a "low student/teacher ratio, a strong sense of community, and promotes an integrated, wholistic approach to education." 2308 Fremont Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55405/ 612 377-9284.

Michael LaBrosse, a GATE member, writes, "Keep up the great work! I know it's not easy...Lets hope your best efforts result in a truly coordinated alternative education network...My company produces personalized audio

learning programs for kids with physical or emotional pain and distress, low self esteem and performance anxiety and stress." Innercare, 322 First Ave No #320, Minneapolis, MN / 800 227-7794.

Harris Sussman, of Workways, in Cambridge, MA, sent us a reprint of a funny and insightful article he wrote about the difficulty people are having in coping with the coming of the year 2000. I've known Harris since we were students at Antioch-New England eons ago. He uses insights he has gathered through involvement with alternative education and business to "help organizations deal with the challenges of change." He is also organizing "Diversity University." 57 Henry St, Cambridge, MA 02139

Heather Lawton, a student at Sonoma State University in CA, and a graduate of Shaker Mountain School, is interested in teaching at an alternative school. In one of her classes she "did a project about alternative education which consisted of a twenty minue speech and an annotated bibliography 21 items long. I really liked doing the research. Your AERO-GRAMMES were a big help to me." 1106 Albion Pl, Santa Rosa, CA 95401. (Attention alternative schools: Better get draft rights on her now!)

Carol of Little Piney School (Rt 1 Box 20) Newburg, Missouri 65550) writes: "Thanks for all your efforts to publish AERO. I understand the energy involved. I'm enjoying reading it and would like to subscribe. Sorry I haven't already. Some of the smaller schools are operating on a string and some things take a while...If by chance you're ever traveling through Missouri, we live in an old stage coach stop by the Little Piney River...We've been doing this since 1979...Glad to see AERO evolving; it gives the feeling of more joint efforts instead of "my school's better than yours is." I feel we're all in it together."

You may not have heard of it, but there is a Folk Education Association of America, and it is involved with connecting people with the Scandinavian idea of Folk Schools. When I was at Goddard College, I remember the Scandinavian Seminars that were mentioned in their latest newsletter. Students that I knew would go to Scandinavian countries, and sometimes they'd never come back! They loved it so much, they just moved there permanently. They sponsor a variety of study tours. More information: Chris Spicer, 4112 38th St., NW, Washington, DC 20016.

Eric Norland is a recent college graduate looking for a position at an alternative school. His address is 543 Baintree, Davis, IL 61019. Ph: 815 248-4122.

I went into New York City one day to hear a talk by astronaut Edgar Mitchell, Founder of the Institute of Noetic Sciences. It was quite inspiring. Mitchel, when he was on the moon, looking back at the earth, had

a profound experience that has caused him to work toward relating the physical and metaphysical worlds, rather than continuing in our schizophrenic approach. I had a very interesting discussion with him after the talk. More information: 475 Gate Five Rd, Suite 300, Sausalito, CA 94965.

Some of my consulting work lately has been in the form of helping schools and homeschool groups create democratic decision-making processes. Democratic meetings are more rare in "at risk" programs, but at one "at risk" public alternative on Long Island, they liked the demonstration so much, they've been having democratic meetings ever since. The same is true with a local homeschool resource center. Recently, I rediscovered an article describing the democratic decision-making process at Shaker Mountain School, the school which I founded in Vermont. Greg Packan, a lawyer and former staff member, once described the system as "common law with amnesia"! We also called it the Shaker Mountain Rules of Disorder. Let me know if you would like a reprint.

In the last AERO-GRAMME, you may recall that there had been a falling out between Mary Leue, editor of SKOLE, which had been the NCACS journal, and the board of the NCACS. At the NCACS conference in Texas, the board decided to send a note of apology to Mary, for having made the decision without consulting her. They did not rescind their earlier decision, but told Mary that the "door was open". SKOLE continues as an independent journal of practitioners of alternative education. SKOLE, 20 Elm St., Albany, NY 12202.

The latest issue (Summer '91) of Holistic Education Review has an article called "Empowerment and Conflict in Alternative Organizations." It is based on the article in the last AERO-GRAMME entitled "Why do Alternative Education Groups Fight Against Themselves?" Versions of the article have also appeared in New Options Newsletter and Changing Schools. It seems that the ideas presented struck a nerve with some people. The problem is very basic. We who try to provide students with freedom in education are generally not products of the systems we espouse. When we get together, we often behave shamefully. One student suggested that if students were given more power in the alternative education organizations, many of these problems could be avoided. What do you think?

Josh Amundson, graduate of the Farm School, wrote when he started going to Antioch University, looking for an alternative school in which to intern. I arranged for him to work at Highland School, in West Virginia. According to Josh, and the Landvoigts at the school, it was a very successful experience. When he was first at Highland he wrote: "It seems strange for me to be saying this, but I am going through changes dealing with a truly "free" environment, just like students do when they're first exposed...I've

always intuitively known that it's right for me, as is evidenced by the creative explosions that inevitably occurred during and after "open" experiences.,.,We always tend to be astounded by a few miracles and hold them on a pedistal without realizing we can do that and more ourselves.."

The National Consortium on Alternatives for Youth at Risk periodically sends us reprints of articles on a wide variety of themes having to do with problems faced by children at risk. It was founded by a wonderful man named Ken Lingle, whom I met in Florida, and who passed away a couple of years ago. For more information: 5250 17th St, Suite 107, Sarasota, FL 34235.

John Rogers located us through TRANET. He has a farm for sale "below market price for qualified non profits", in NH, that has a ten room restored farmhouse, barn, animal sheds, pond, 300 semi-dwarf apple trees, cider mill and business, 18kw hydro electric generator (excess sold to power company), and 38 acres of land. He's "hoping to locate an organization or family interested in working with troubled youth or community supported agriculture.": RFD 2 Box 104, Lancaster, NH 03584. 603 788-3122
MODERN SCHOOL

Most AERO-GRAMME readers are now familiar with the Modern School Movement. For those who are not, you should know that the Modern School was one of the historical forerunners to what we know call alternative education. It was based on the ideas and work of Francisco Ferrer, an anarchist who started alternative schools in Europe around the turn of the century. After he was shot by the Spanish government in 1909, Ferrer Schools, or Modern Schools sprung up in his memory all around the world. One was started in New York City in 1911. Will Durant was one of its first teachers (see AERO #3). It subsequently moved to Stelton, NJ, where is continued as a school-community for decades.

Nellie Dick and her husband, James, were two of the earliest teachers there. They came from England in 1917. Nellie was born in the Ukraine in 1893, and started "anarchist" schools in England as early as 1908. I have had the great pleasure of meeting Nellie, who is now 98 years old. I have made two video tapes of her recollections about the Modern School Movement. The first has over a hundred photographs of the Modern Schools from her collection and that of her son, James, who attended the Modern Schools. He is a pediatrician living in Oyster Bay, NY, where Nellie also now lives. The second tape I made at the 1990 Modern School reunion, with Nellie, and with Paul Avrich as featured speakers. Avrich is a professor at Queens College, whose book, The Modern School Movement, is the definitive work on the subject.

Many of the former Modern School students are now in their 70's and 80's, yet their commitment to each other and the educational ideals of the movement are such that they continue to have a reunion every year. This year's meeting will be from noon to 4:30. on September 21st, at New Brunswick Scientific, in New Jersey. David and Zigmund Freedman, founders

of the company, are also former modern school students. The featured speaker this year will be Edgar Tafel, an architect who was a Modern School student in the 20's, and who worked with Frank Lloyd Wright and wrote the book, *Years with Frank Lloyd Wright: Apprentice to Genius*. Mary Leue, founder of Albany's Free School, John Froebel-Parker (a descendant of Froebel), and Susan Spayth Riley, an alternative school teacher, and I will also participate in the program. We strongly encourage those interested in the history of alternative education to attend. For more information, contact AERO or Jon Scott, RD 1 Westfall Rd, Box 309B, Altamont, NY 12009. Phone: 518 861-5544. Don't miss this. Who knows how many more there will be? The cost is \$8. \$4 for children.

Because of a mailing we did to former Modern School students to inform them about our videotapes, we received a great many responses and orders of tapes. Here are some examples:

From Edgar Tafel: "Many thanks for sending the "Nelly Dick" tape so quickly. I played it twice already and find it most charming and delightful-as well as serious, and a fine background to realize what importance the Ferrer School had upon so many."

From Jon Scott's notes: "I visited the Albany Free School and met many of the teachers, some of who had read Paul Avrich's book which was suggested to them by Jerry Mintz. It is a marvelous school full of the same happy spirit I remember in Stelton. I later met Mary Leue who organized the school in 1969. She is a delightful person, reminds me of Auntie Fern, a bit more vivacious, and an outspoken promoter of principles of freedom in education..."

From Jennifer Yane: "Our father, Boris Yane, was an alumnus of the Modern School, along with his best friends, and his sister Eva Yanpolsky. Our mother, Margaret Bernstein Yane, moved to Stelton when she was a teenager...Boris died in January of 1990 and Margaret died in 1978. We are proud of the heritage they gave us. Thank you for keeping the spirit of the Modern School alive and for your contributions to alternative education." (Ed note: In unrelated business, we discovered that a Yane granddaughter, Lisa Yane, is Editor of the *New Age Journal*. The tradition continues.)

Patti Stanko: "I'm glad to know that people got Nellie Dick on tape! What an amazing woman!"

Sally Brown: "As a product of the Modern School in Stelton and as a retired elementary classroom teacher, I am cognizant of the need for educational reform. Each of us (at the Modern School), teachers and students, has been affected by the school and the colony in a way that has enriched our lives and enabled us to share that enrichment with others, in a deep and lasting way. After viewing the videos I shall share them with people still in the field. It's reassuring to know that advocates of real education are still active. I salute you."

Robert Meeropol wrote to tell us of the establishment of the Rosenberg

Fund for Children, which "raises money to provide for the educational and emotional needs of children whose parents have suffered because of their progressive activities and who are unable to adequately care for their children. The RFC is developing a granting fund so that progressive professional and institutions, like the alternative schools and providers your newsletter addresses, can be awarded grants to provide needed services to the children at reduced or no cost." For more information: 1145 Main St, Suite 304, Springfield, MA 01103. (Ed. note: Why is this item in the Modern School section? The Meeropol children lived for a time with Nellie Dick during the tumultuous McCarthy era, in which their parents were executed.

Other Modern School people who wrote were Celia Shuman, Gladys Reiser, Sue Riley, Julius Heller, Sophie Mozenter, Frances Browning, Louis Bogart, Leonard Scheer (also an architect), and Bea Markowitz (who sent us an article called "Death of a Wobbly", about the life of Sam Dolgoff). NYU and Rutgers ordered tapes for their libraries.

It probably makes sense to let Nellie Dick have the last word. Earlier this year she broke her leg, but has been recovering with therapy, and is walking again. At the New Year she wrote to my family and me: "You are doing a wonderful job and I am interested in how the Indian School progresses--just finishing reading an interesting book on the tribes and their very good an intimate history. Best wishes, both in your work and in your life, which I assume is one and the same!"

HOMESCHOOL NEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS

HOMESCHOOL GROUP WINS PUBLIC SCHOOL AWARD

AERO has been doing demonstration homeschool resource centers for homeschool groups. We have demonstrated democratic decision-making and "organic curriculum", operating from the same meeting place three days in a row. We have done this twice with one group, called LIGHT (Long Islanders Growing at Home Together), and a third has been scheduled (coordinated by a 12 year old homeschooler).

At our last session, a parent pointed out that the Islip School District was having a video-making contest on the theme of "Say no to drugs." We decided to enter. The homeschool students quickly decided on the theme of the problem of drugs that are part of an addictive society, like cigarettes, alcohol, and pills. We worked on it for that day, and submitted it the next day, which was the deadline. We just heard that of the 50 entries, ours was one of this six winners, the winner in the elementary category. Apparently there was a slight hold-up in the process while the Islip school administrators tried to understand the name that the students had given the group, "The Cool Unschool!" The award will be presented to the group at the Islip Town Hall. The video will be aired on cable and in the school district.

ORGANIC CURRICULUM

Maria Sperditi of the Educational Resource Center of Rhode Island wrote in their newsletter about the demonstration of "Organic Curriculum"

we did there: "Using organic curriculum with students begins with simply asking them what it is that THEY would like to know. A brief brainstorming session usually results in a most interesting and lengthy list of questions. These questions could then be used to establish a curriculum that is experiential in nature and fully individualized.

"With only ten minutes between classes, Jerry Mintz involved a group of ERCRI's 5-8 year olds in an organic curriculum brainstorming session. Their list of questions is impressive and is indicative of the depth of our children's curiosity about the world around them. The session took place the morning after the United States initiated its assault on Iran. The following questions are in the order in which the children asked them. The children then voted on which questions they were most interested in: Why are kittens cute? What is air made of? What is the sky made of? What is the blue stuff in the sky? How does your body work? How does the body get made? How can you whistle? How did the earth get made? How come people lie? How were words invented? How come they invented guns? How come they invented bullets? Why did Iraq invade Kuwait? Why is the world surrounded by weapons?"

"The important thing is that with organic curriculum you have a direct line of what learning experiences will be most meaningful to your students."

TEACHING PARENTS HOW TO HOMESCHOOL

Ann Walch and her son, Connor, of the ERCRI, went with us on our trip to the southeast in February. We were joined by Josh Copus and Kamal Chantal, of Floyd, Virginia. In Pensacola, FL we visited the Learning Skills Center. It was a tutorial center, founded by Hetty Krucke. But area homeschoolers convinced her to open the center to them during the day. Then other parents, who were having problems with their children in school, wanted to put their kids in the Center. But since it wasn't a school, it became necessary for the Center to show the parents how to become homeschoolers, in order for them to use the Center as a resource. Their program was impressive, and could set a precedent for thousands of such centers around the country. (We have videotape of the LCS). 5000 W. Mobile Hwy. Suite 1, Pensacola, FL 32506.

Other places we visited on the SE trip: Community School, in Roanoke, VA, Blue Mountain School, Floyd, VA, the Swarthouts, a homeschool family in Charlotte, NC, CNN and Horizons School, in Atlanta, GA, Grassroots Free School in Tallahassee, FL., Jordan Glen School, in Archer, FL, New Orleans Free School, LA, and Children's Grammar School, NC, which is trying to reopen after losing their building. The kids' favorite place: King Henry's Feast, in Orlando, which donated tickets to our group.

HOMESCHOOL CONFERENCES

In April, Jenifer and I attended the 2nd Annual Home Schooling Conference and Curriculum Fair, sponsored by Nancy Plent and the New Jersey Unschoolers. There were many workshops for children and adults, and about 200 attended. We gave a workshop on homeschool resource centers. We

videotaped highlights of the conference, which we can copy for those interested.

In early June we went to the New England Homeschool Conference in Nashua, NH, organized by Steve Moitozo and Shirley Minster. There were over 750 in attendance, at the Sheraton Tara Castle. David and Micki Colfax were keynote speakers. They are goat-farmers and homeschoolers whose oldest three sons have gone to Harvard University. They've written a book called Homeschooling for Excellence. One of the points that they made was that their children had real and difficult responsibilities on their farm. "It was almost a relief to come in and do schoolwork!" David also pointed out that they were "committed to educational excellence, not homeschooling." In fact, he is President of his local school board. David is reviewing Jenifer's book for us. Also featured were Jane Hoffman, the Backyard Scientist, and Pat Farenga, of Growing Without Schooling. GWS will be carrying Jenifer's book in their next catalog.

HOME EDUCATION MAGAZINE

Home Education Magazine, published by Mark and Helen Hegener out of Tonasket, WA, gave us a nice plug in their March/April edition. We subsequently received several subscriptions from their readers. For example, Darlene Greybill wrote: "Thanks for sending your AERO-GRAMME so quickly to me. I really enjoy having so many (I didn't know there were so many) resources at my fingertips. I am the mother of two homeschooled boys..Thank you for all your hard work."

Helen Hegener wrote that "we would like to join your sample issue subscription program. We can offer a sample issue for \$3.50 (reg \$4.50), or a one year subscription for \$20 (reg. \$24). Readers can send a check to us, or send directly to Home Education Magazine, mentioning that you read about it in AERO-GRAMME: PO Box 1083, 1814 HWY 20 East, Tonasket, WA 98855.

OTHER HOMESCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Pat Montgomery of Clonlara Home Based Education (1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104) wrote to tell us that "we do provide a curriculum for each student and we assist the parents and students to modify it according to their needs. We don't do that work for them since that would be impossible." We saw Pat at the GATE conference, and gave her a copy of Jenifer's book to bring to her conference, which started just after the GATE conference ended. We also just heard that Pat will be the keynoter at a conference, "Families and Learning," to be sponsored by ALPIE on October 4-5 at Russell Sage College, in Albany, NY. PO Box 59, East Chatham, NY 12060-0059.

Snakefoot Educational Association a homeschool resource center which operates at Common Ground Community in Lexington, VA, has published the first issue of its Gazette. It has articles about tracker Tom Brown, visits by the Pecos River Learning Center, student poetry, history of Snakefoot. When we first visited Snakefoot they were meeting once a week. We encouraged them to meet three times a week, which they now do, and they have also hired resource people. They have about 15 homeschool students,

and we have heard that they expect to double next year.

We first met Georgeanne Suthers on the Prodigy computer network. She was being harassed by her school system when she tried to homeschool. We put her in touch with homeschool experts such as Dorothy Werner in Chicago. She recently wrote: I am writing to thank you for the help you gave me. I contacted the people you told me to and they were so helpful. I did take my son out of public school and I am so happy that I did. It is working out even better than I thought it would. Each of us got out from under the pressure that the school was giving us and we both are learning. The school did give me some problems, but thanks to you I knew the right people to call the quote the law to them. At first I was getting calls every day telling me they were going to contact the county about my son being truant. Now they have accepted he is being taught at home and we are within the law. I really feel that taking him out of school has saved his future. I will always be grateful to you and the others that helped and gave me the courage to do it.

Trish Severin tells us that "Families Learning Together is a new statewide network of homeschooling families in NC open to all homeschoolers. The group just had a family gathering at Camp Merriwood in Winston-Salem. It was a wonderful weekend with a very diverse group of adults and many, many children. Theo Geissy of Virginia let several discussion groups. Swimming, canoeing, poetry, violin playing, etc. were enjoyed by all. The next gathering is planned in the mountains of Western Carolina at Camp Gwynn Valley in Early September. 704 369-6491.

We heard about several homeschool resource centers around the country on the Prodigy Network, including one in Alabama with over 170 families in it. Connie Atchison is the administrator. They bought all the equipment from a local Christian school that closed, including, chemistry, biology, overheads, filmstrip equipment, books, photo lab, etc, and have added much more. "Our families can check out any resource material. We do 2 or 3 workshops a month for our families on specific subjects. Some of our families have started their own resource centers and are sharing with other families."

We've received several copies of the Moore Report, with much valuable information on research that has been done on homeschooling and other educational alternatives. For example, they reported on research that showed that the 13,000 students in MN who used choice programs had very positive results. They said that MN, IA, AR, NE, OH, UT, and ID now have laws offering choice plans in which students are permitted to transfer to any school in any district in the state outside their home district. Box 1, Camus, WA 98607.

The Robinsons, of Floyd, VA subscribed and wrote to tell us that they have been homeschooling for seven years. "Since we moved to Floyd a year ago we have connected with Blue Mountain School and continue to homeschool." They have four girls in Robins Nest Academy.

We have received several homeschool newsletters, including Tennessee

Homeschool Families, sent by Jacki Willard, from Nashville, TN, and the Vermont Homeschool Association Newsletter, that is looking for a name. We at Shaker Mountain hosted a meeting of homeschoolers and alternative schools in Vermont back in 1983, with John Holt as featured speaker.

Colorado, to further refine and develop the process which they started a year ago, near Chicago. The first conference, organized partially by Ron Miller, Editor of the Holistic Education Review, was possibly the first attempt to unite all forms of educational alternatives.

At this year's conference there were several "strands", including ones on teacher training, earth education, critical philosophy, self esteem, a "blueprint" for transforming education, and networking. I was the strand leader for the latter one.

Early in the conference I let one exercise in which all participant made a large circle, and people stepped into the center if they were in a named category, so they could be aware of each other. These included public alternative schools, independent alternative schools, Waldorf Schools, Montessori Schools, homeschoolers, university level alternatives, mainstream public school teachers, administrators, global education, environmental education, spiritual education, early childhood education, at risk populations, gifted, and multi-cultural. After this process, Lynn Stoddard, an educational developer from Utah said to me, "It's just incredible how much power is in this room."

Through the networking strand, I got involved with Berl Waits of the Foundation to Promote Positive Learning Processes, in Sacramento, CA. Through his impetus, we set up a group to explore "partnering with business", and we are studying the management ideas of people like W. Edwards Deming, whose ideas revolutionized business in Japan by empowering workers on all levels. Paul Messier, Director of Research and Evaluation of 1 to 1 (a mentoring program) in DC, and Charles Jakiela, of the Holistic Education Press, were also key people in setting up this group, which has now grown to 24 people. In our discussions, we mentioned TQM--Total Quality Management, which is a key Deming concept. I suggested we create TQE--Total Quality Education, and that is the tentative name of the task force.

Before the conference was over, the strands reported out to the group, and GATE regions were created, some of which will have their own conferences. I am the coordinator of the mid-Atlantic region, from VA to NY. We are planning a regional conference in the NY area in December.

The GATE steering committee voted to name Phil Gang as the new Executive Director of GATE. Funds for his salary and for a new office have been made available by a foundation grant. eform. Mostly, there articles doculpublicaccessibilityprogramseitorialent/teacher ratio, a strong

sentspedestalnts are now in their 70's and 80 the Rosenbergs, were charged with epionage and executedalcoholApparentlysent to the group at the Islipcuriosity, whicattendancerelief

BULLETIN: Bob Ferriso called me on July 1st from California, where he is teaching a summer course for the Teacher Corps. He said that the New Orleans Free School had been given a reprieve by the school board. He thanked me for the contacts that I had made with the AP and National Public Radio. He said that the totality of the response from around the country had helped save the school from the chopping block for at least another year.