

Education Revolution

THE MAGAZINE OF EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES



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Many Paths to Educational Liberation



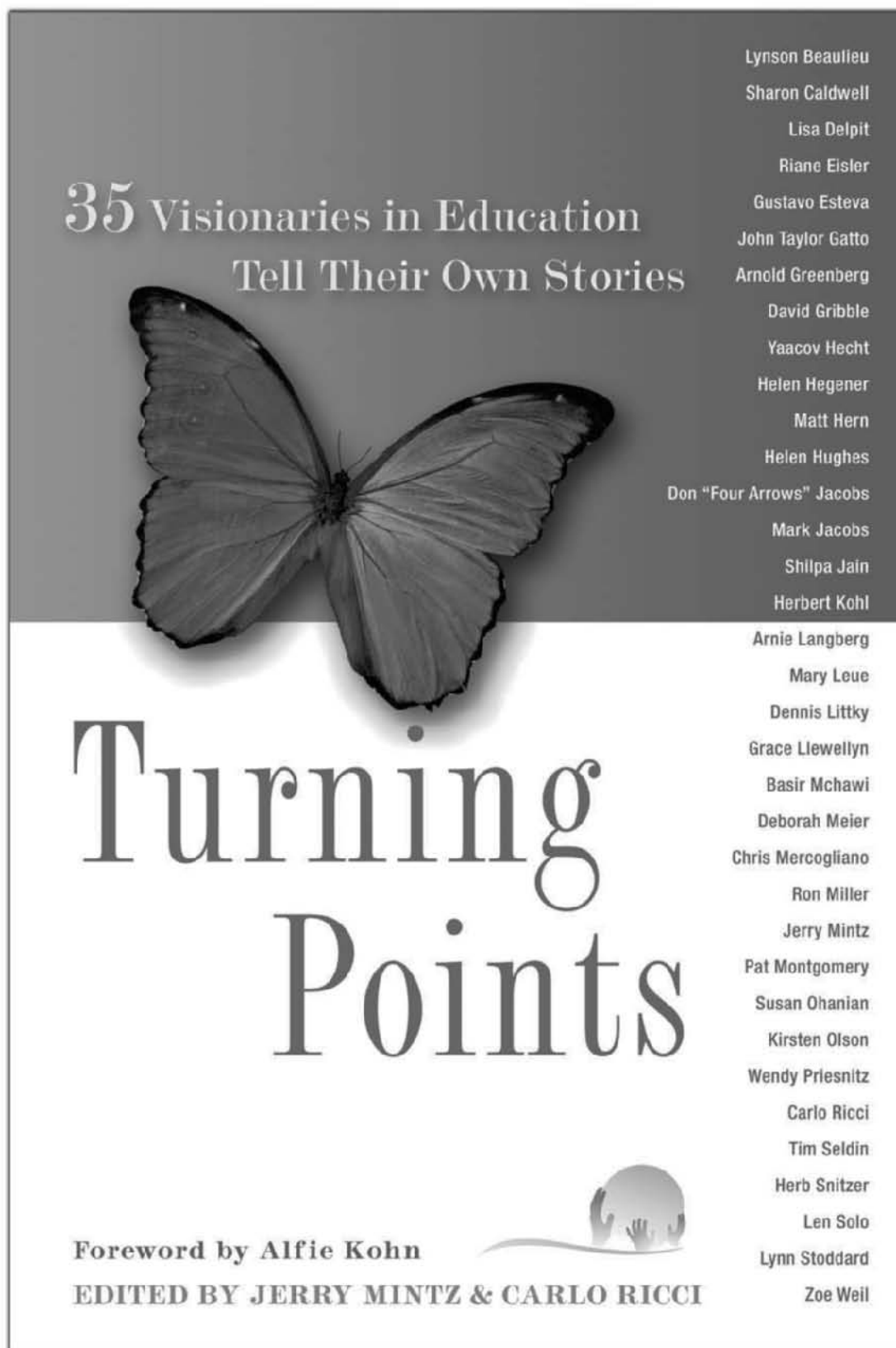
INSIDE:

Gaia University, John Dewey & Homer Lane,
and a dialogue about movement strategy



“From Alfie Kohn’s stirring introduction to the heartfelt, intimate stories of some of the most influential progressive educators of our times, this volume is a revelation.”

Dr. Rick Posner, author of *Lives of Passion, School of Hope*



35 Visionaries in Education
Tell Their Own Stories

Turning
Points

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Education Revolution

THE MAGAZINE OF EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES



The **Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO)** was founded in 1989 by Jerry Mintz. AERO is a branch of the School of Living, a non-profit organization founded in 1934 by Ralph Borsodi. AERO's goal is to advance student-driven, learner-centered approaches to education. AERO is considered by many to be the primary hub of communications and support for educational alternatives around the world. Education Alternatives include, but are not limited to, Montessori, Waldorf (Steiner), Public Choice and At-Risk, Democratic, Homeschool, Open, Charter, Free, Sudbury, Holistic, Virtual, Magnet, Early Childhood, Reggio Emilia, Indigo, Krishnamurti, Quaker, Libertarian, Independent, Progressive, Community, Cooperative, and Unschooling. One of AERO's areas of expertise is democratic process and democratic education, but equally important is the networking of all forms of educational alternatives. It is through our work and mission that we hope to create an education revolution.

AERO's mission is to help create an education revolution to make student-centered alternatives available to everyone.

Towards this end, AERO provides information, resources and guidance to families, schools and organizations regarding their educational choices. AERO disseminates information internationally on topics such as: homeschooling, public and private alternative schools, and charter schools. AERO's long-term goal is to become a more effective catalyst for educational change by providing books, magazines, conferences, online courses, consultations, support groups, and organizational information and seminars in the field of alternative education.

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Being There

BY JERRY MINTZ

AERO 2009 REPORT

AERO has had a remarkably successful year. We have endured many financial challenges that had the potential to affect our work and services, but we pulled through and accomplished more than we had ever expected! We were able to raise enough funds through a direct appeal to individual supporters and through increased online bookstore sales to cover AERO's core operating expenses. It was a humbling experience to see so much support from hundreds of people, many of which were hurting financially. Some schools sent money that was raised by their students and staff. It was very strengthening to us to see the amount of support we have, and to have people express their appreciation for our work. These accomplishments enabled us to still achieve many of our goals. We believe this turn of events clearly demonstrated AERO's resiliency and strength as an organization. We want to build on these successes and keep this momentum going.

The following is a summary of some of AERO's accomplishments during the last year:

School Starting

The general interest in starting new alternatives has increased significantly. This year AERO had nearly thirty people in our online courses. They were from such diverse places as California, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Utah, New Mexico, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Texas, and New York, to name a few. Also we continue to hear from our alumni about the schools and programs they have started, from Colorado to Kenya. You can see the list of schools we have helped on our website.

AERO Website www.educationrevolution.org

Our website continues to be our primary networking tool and its reach has grown greatly in the past six months. We have received a 20% increase in visitors and are on pace to receive over 500,000 total page views for the year. AERO has explored a variety of new media technologies to support our outreach efforts. In 2009 we successfully added our entire

catalog of videos to our blog and website. This includes such videos as *Democratic Meetings*, *Homeschool Resource Centers*, and every filmed talk and workshop from previous AERO conferences. After a few months of exploring the possible uses and effectiveness of the blog, we officially launched the blog in August, 2009, and immediately began using it as one of our primary online networking tools. If you visit our main website, our blog feed now serves as our primary news tool. In the six months since our launch, we have averaged one post per business day and ninety hits per day. One of the most exciting features of our new blog is the ability to host and distribute our archive of videos online.

Facebook

The further development of our Facebook group has been one of our most effective uses of new media technologies. We have over 1,300 followers, and the list continues to grow daily. Facebook has attracted many new people to the organization. We post news links, articles, services, and special "Facebook-only" sales. This combined with viral videos continues to be the most effective way to reach a younger and newer audience.

Education Revolution Magazine

Our paid subscriber base (primarily through PDF sales) has doubled in the past six months. Additionally, we continue to offer free subscriptions from time to time to draw in new individuals and organizations looking to find out more. AERO also successfully recruited over 50 new member schools.

AERO Database

AERO's database of 13,000 alternative schools and programs has officially launched at www.educationfinder.net. Hundreds of people have been accessing the site, adding and editing their school's information, but we feel its potential is far greater.

Turning Points Book

In June, 2009 we released a pre-publication edition of our new anthology, *Turning Points: 27 Visionaries in Education Tell Their Own Stories* in time to be released at our 6th annual conference. We have taken the past eight months to diligently review the book before our official launch. We decided to invite additional contributors including our country's leading multi-cultural educator and author, Lisa Delpit. AERO will launch the final version the book, now featuring thirty-five contributors, on July 1st. One of the primary elements of this launch will be contacting and forging relationships with

major teacher-education departments. Through promotion of the book, we plan to inform the public about our work and mission.

Brooklyn Free School

AERO helped start Brooklyn Free School in 2004, which grew out of the International Democratic Education Conference we hosted in 2003. Jerry was asked to serve on its board after it became an independent nonprofit. After five successful years, and with a waiting list of as many as 50, the school has accomplished what many people thought impossible in these challenging financial times: buying a permanent home. The building is five stories and located in the Clinton Hill section of Brooklyn. It cost \$1.75 million. The school moved in on January 11th, and the school community is ecstatic.

Manhattan Free School

One of our major projects last year was to help get Manhattan Free School through its first year. We committed many of our resources to that effort, including assisting them as they struggled through a personnel crisis. Jerry also did a lot of personal consulting and teaching. This proved successful, and the school is now well through its second year, and new student enrollment is picking up.

Conference Involvement & Presentations

AERO has participated in a number of conferences, primarily as presenters, and organized two. These include the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS), the International Democratic Education Conference in South Korea (video conference), School of Living Retreat, Modern School Reunion, Rouge Education Forum, Education Circle of Change, the North American Democratic Education Conference (NADEC), and the 6th annual AERO Conference.

North American Democratic Education Conference (NADEC)

The 2009 NADEC conference was a great success. Around 150 individuals from over a dozen democratic schools from as far away as Oregon and Puerto Rico participated. It was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany, NY with additional events being held at The Free School and Grand Street Community Arts building. AERO was the primary organizer with assistance from individuals from democratic schools around New York.

AERO Conference 2009

Our 6th annual conference proved yet again to be a remarkable success. This was particularly important considering the financial situation permeating the country and especially low to middle-class families (our primary audience). Opening night, we had 750 in attendance for Patch Adams' keynote. We had 350 full time attendees. Parents, educators, students, and individuals from over 30 states and 10 countries participated in dozens of workshops, events, and keynote talks.

AERO Conference 2010

AERO's 7th annual conference may be our best yet. With a theme of "Learner-Centered Alternatives for Everyone!" we have developed a dynamic program for educators, parents, students, administrators, and individuals interested or involved in public and private learning alternatives. Our keynote speakers and featured presenters include: Matthew Davis, John Taylor Gatto, Shilpa Jain, Herbert Kohl, Four Arrows (Don Trent Jacobs), Elizabeth Baker & Michele Beach, Brent Cameron, Anthony Dallmann-Jones, Melia Dicker, Angela Engel, Mari Luce Fernández & María Payán, Adam Fletcher, Mary Leue, David Marshak, Chris Mercogliano, Ron Miller, Jerry Mintz, Rick Posner, and Khalif Williams.

We anticipate over 400 attendees this year. This includes a significant increase in individuals involved in public education. This increase is due to the more diverse program we have created this year, which features many workshops specifically targeted to public educators. This effort is so we may realize our mission to "...to make student-centered alternatives available to everyone." Our workshop themes this year are Introduction to Alternative Education, School Starting, Practical Skills & Application, Philosophy & Theory, Social Issues & Education, and Beyond Education. We will also be screening four different documentaries including "Schooling the World: The White Man's Last Burden," which focuses on the effects of introducing western schooling into non-western cultures. Another screening will be of the controversial film, "The War on Kids," which will feature a panel of public educators and supporters along with the filmmaker to answer and address reactions and questions that arise after the screening. We plan to open the film screenings along with a selection of talks to the public as a way to positively engage and interact with the local community.

Humanitarian Assistance

We continue to help AERO members with humanitarian assistance. For example, we helped a staff member at the Sri Aurbindo Ashram orphanage in Nepal get urgently needed medical help in the U.S. that she could not get in Nepal. We helped arrange for a young homeschooler from Japan to have extended visits to Brooklyn Free School to help with his English skills and other development. And we helped a new parent-organized school in Spain fight local bureaucracy so they could stay open.

Conclusion

It is always hard to say one time is more important than another, but it seems that this particular moment in AERO's history is one of our most important. Having weathered a huge financial storm, and having emerged with support and strong encouragement to continue our work from all around the world, we are hoping for your continued support. ●

Gaia University

Reinventing Higher Education

BY KAREN STUPSKI

What would a university that truly supports the ecological and social regeneration of the planet look like? This was the question that inspired Gaia University co-founders Liora Adler and Andrew Langford. They saw that the traditional system of western higher education fails to achieve this goal. Graduates of mainstream institutions of higher education have been the main architects of the current socio-economic systems that are destroying the earth's capacity to support life while simultaneously exploiting the majority of the earth's population. What would a system of higher education need to do to truly empower its graduates to heal the earth while promoting social and economic justice?

Their answer is embodied in Gaia University, a new international university offering Bachelors, Masters, and Post Masters Graduate Diplomas in topics pertaining to ecosocial regeneration. Gaia University is unique in many ways. It draws on an innovative educational philosophy called

“transformative action learning” and a cutting edge, interdisciplinary knowledge base. In addition, Gaia University has altered the organizational structure of the university itself, using an entrepreneurial, multi-local business model and an international accreditation system that recognizes project-based learning. The result is that Gaia University has attracted a talented group of students and faculty from around the world who are working on innovative sustainability projects that have already yielded tangible results.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Gaia University currently offers learning pathways in topics such as Integrative EcoSocial Design, Organizing Learning for EcoSocial Regeneration, Green Business, and Sustainable Money Design. The programs begin with an orientation workshop and a content workshop designed to introduce the new students, called associates, to the Gaia University philosophy and build essential skills they will utilize while pursuing their degree. These workshops typically take place at ecovillages and permaculture sites around the world, which adds another level of experiential learning to the process. At the beginning of the program each associate designs their own plan for their learning pathway, and the rest of the time they engage in independent, self-directed study with the support of trained advisors. At the end of the year the associates and advisors gather together to share the fruits of their learning through presentations.

Gaia University uses the “transformative action learning” methodology. This means that associates are encouraged to undertake real projects that actually make a difference in the world. The idea is that the best way to learn about sustainability is to engage in work that makes the world more sustainable. However, action alone is not enough. The associates are required to engage in research to support their projects, consciously apply design methods, and reflect on what they have learned from their experiences. The “transformative” part of the methodology refers to the fact that through this process the associates often come to understand themselves and their world in a new way. The associates are required to document their learning in writing, photography, video, and other forms, which they post in their e-portfolio space on the e-learning website in six “output packets” per year. These are self-reviewed and also reviewed by a peer and their advisor, and at the end of their learning pathway each associate's work is evaluated by an “external reviewer” who provides independent verification that the work meets high academic standards.

The degree programs of Gaia University draw on traditional academic disciplines as well as alternative disciplines



Gaia University associates at work on a project in the Virgin Islands.

and skill sets that have not been widely embraced by mainstream academia. Foremost among these is Permaculture, a design method for creating sustainable human habitats by following nature's patterns. For example, the 72-hour Permaculture Design Course is a requirement for participants in the Integrative EcoSocial Design degree pathway. During the orientation workshop associates are also introduced to theories such as Re-Evaluation Counseling, a method of healing emotional distress, and collaborative group processes such as Zegg Forum, World Café, and Open Space Technology. Gaia University also embraces leading edge thinking such as Spiral Dynamics, Collective Intelligence, and Theory U, and

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Indigenous Knowledge preservation, and is partnering with several organizations of indigenous people from Australia who are developing new action learning pathways based on their traditional ways of knowing.

ACCREDITATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

One of the main challenges of creating an alternative university is accreditation. Most accrediting agencies are oriented strongly towards more conventional, academic, campus-based learning, and this means that truly innovative programs are often excluded. Langford and Adler sought an accreditation system for Gaia University that was international in scope and would recognize project-based action learning as a valid methodology. They achieved these goals through a partnership with the International Management Centres Association (IMCA). IMCA, through its wholly owned Revans University, is authorized by the Education Reform Act of 1988 and its amendments to grant degrees in the UK. Revans University was named for Reg Revans, the originator of the action learning methodology, and it uses the IMCA Socrates system for quality assurance. As a result of this arrangement, Gaia University graduates receive three diplomas at graduation – one from Gaia University, one from Revans University, and one from the IMCA.

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of Gaia University is its organizational structure. Most alternative universities that embrace progressive pedagogy and politics are still trying to

Continued on page 6

FROM THE **Editor's Desk**

BY RON MILLER

For the last few years, the AERO conference has been the only venue where I have given public talks or workshops about educational topics. I've been too busy with other projects and commitments to hit the road, and I'm hoping that a younger generation of scholars and activists will come forward to carry the torch for an educational rights movement. Some are. Some use the electronic tools of their generation to spread these ideas (as illustrated in Jerry's report on AERO's recent activities). Yet there is still a need for human contact, for galvanizing speakers and provocative workshops. I encourage you, readers of *Education Revolution*, to tell your stories to a larger public. Write articles for this magazine, for a start. But also consider setting up talks in your community and visiting other places to let parents and citizens know that standardized schooling is not the only, or the best, way to educate their children.

Recently, I've received a string of invitations I couldn't turn down. So this spring I'll be speaking to groups in my home state of Vermont, in New Jersey, and in Washington state (maybe Oregon too, while I'm out there), as well as visiting a class at Harvard's school of education. I have to remind myself that even if I start to get tired of saying the same things I've been harping on for 25 years, the ideas of holistic and democratic education are as fresh and exciting to many people today as they were to me when I first discovered them. There is an audience for these ideas, if we would go out and find it. The education revolution is inspirational.

Unfortunately, in these strange and disturbing times, when the reactionary "tea party" movement is the only popular uprising against the system, truly important and liberating ideas are largely unknown, confined to remote corners of society. This discouraging fact is the subject of the dialogue that Kirsten Olson and I have written for this issue. We pose two quite different interpretations, and we invite readers to join the conversation.

The message in all this is that we each need to find ways to communicate better with the outside world. Whatever form or forum is most comfortable to you, make an effort to tell your story. The mainstream media won't do it for us. It's up to us to spread the education revolution. ●

operate within a traditional academic organizational structure, and this can result in problems such as large disparities in pay, or members of the academic community feeling disempowered. Gaia University transcends these problems by offering its graduates, faculty and independent contractors the opportunity to be entrepreneurs in higher education. It is structured as a “social franchise,” with Gaia University International (GUI) serving as the central administrative body that supports multiple independent Regional Centers. GUI provides key services such as accreditation, the management of centralized online resources, and the development of operational systems and templates. People who want to start a Regional Center of Gaia University are required to complete a 1-2 year training program to learn the fundamental systems and structures of the organization, and upon successful completion of the training period they are authorized to operate as an independent Regional Center.

This “multi local” structure offers several advantages. Each Regional Center has the freedom to develop its own learning pathways, create its own internal organizational structure, and set its own pricing and pay rates. Since Gaia University is an international organization, the development of regional centers localizes higher education. As Regional Centers develop around the world, they will make higher education more accessible to all people at prices that reflect the local cost of living. The long-term vision is that the Regional Centers will provide educational services while simultaneously promoting local sustainable development.

Graduates of mainstream institutions of higher education have been the main architects of the current socio-economic systems that are destroying the earth's capacity to support life while simultaneously exploiting the majority of the earth's population.

GAIA UNIVERSITY IN ACTION

Gaia University has a big vision, but how does it work in reality? Since the first class enrolled in 2005 it has produced 38 graduates and two fully operational regional centers – one in Germany and one in Tennessee. Three more regional centers are scheduled to launch programs in the U.S. in 2010, and several more are in development in Chile, Venezuela, the US, and Israel. Gaia University International is also developing a new doctoral program which will begin in 2011. Associates and graduates are undertaking many sustainability projects worldwide, including leading a campaign to protect the Amazon forest, promoting peace by supporting joint

Israeli-Palestinian green business partnerships, developing a sustainable farming education center, developing a Permaculture consulting business, and working with indigenous people to preserve and promote indigenous knowledge. These projects are already having a positive impact on the earth and its people.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite these successes, Gaia University still faces many challenges. For example, its accreditation is not recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education, so its associates are not able to access federal financial aid. As a new and relatively small organization, it is trying to do a lot with relatively few resources and it is not able to pay its contractors at a rate that is competitive with salaries in mainstream academia. In addition, the members of the support team of Gaia University are constantly engaged in “action learning” as they work to establish and improve the university’s operational systems and policies, which are constantly evolving. The agreements between GUI, its contractors, and its regional centers and still being codified, and processes for resolving conflicts among members of the university community need further development.

Perhaps the greatest success of Gaia University is the spirit of innovation that it brings to addressing these challenges. This attitude is exemplified by one of Liora Adler’s favorite quotes by Buckminster Fuller: “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” For every challenge, Gaia University seeks original solutions. For example, it is addressing the lack of availability of financial aid by creating its own alternative exchange system and developing partnerships with other organizations that choose to “sponsor” associates to work on projects. To address the challenge of accreditation it envisions creating a new international action learning accrediting body composed of alternative education organizations that would accredit programs that don’t fit into the parameters of traditional accreditation organizations. In its own operations and decision making processes, Gaia University strives to embody the same commitment to ingenuity that it fosters in its associates. This kind of resourcefulness is essential for creating a more sustainable world.

To find out more about Gaia University, see www.gaiauniversity.org. You can sign up for Gaia University’s newsletter on the home page of the website.

Karen Stupski currently works as the Registrar for Gaia University, as an advisor for Goddard College, and as Development Director of the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy, a watershed organization and land trust. She holds a Ph.D. in the history of science, medicine, and technology from Johns Hopkins University and a post masters graduate diploma in Organizing Learning for EcoSocial Regeneration from Gaia University. Karen lives at Heathcote Community in Freeland, MD, where she runs sustainability education programs in partnership with the School of Living. ●

John Dewey and Homer Lane

The “Odd Couple” Among Educational Theorists

BY RONALD SWARTZ

Only those unfamiliar with Dewey’s work can believe that he rejects the active role of the teacher in planning the classroom experience by properly organized subject matters. The teacher must have, he writes, “a positive and leading share in the direction of the activities of the classroom community.”¹

SIDNEY HOOK

Homer Tyrell Lane . . . was, as he phrased it, “on the side of the child.” It meant . . . trusting children to grow in their own way without any pressure from outside, save that of communal self-government. It meant putting learning in its place – below living.²

A. S. NEILL

John Dewey and Homer Lane are indeed an odd pair of educational theorists. Whereas both of these American educational reformers developed some of their more important ideas during the first two decades of the twentieth century, Lane and his work have not been noticed by most professional historians and philosophers of education.³ On the other hand, it would indeed be a very strange contemporary educational scholar who did not know about Dewey and his efforts related to schooling in democratic societies. And yet, during the same decade in which Dewey wrote his now famous *Democracy and Education*, Homer Lane was developing his peculiar educational views while he was the superintendent of a reform school in England.

Although A.S. Neill and some of Lane’s other devoted disciples consider Lane’s work at the Little Commonwealth reform school to be extremely important for understanding Lane’s educational philosophy, little has been written about Lane’s thoughts on schooling.⁴ Unfortunately, Lane was not a scholar and during his short life of nearly fifty years he spent a small amount of his time as a writer; the only book which bears Lane’s name was published posthumously by a few of his students.

Lane’s only book is called *Talks to Parents and Teachers*; this book appeared in print in 1928 after Lane had been

dead for about three years. Moreover, Lane’s book, which is a collection of some of his lecture notes, can in no way be compared to Dewey’s monumental work *Democracy and Education*. Lane was not a good writer and his one book lacks organization, a clearly defined theme, and any sense of the historical roots of the problems which are discussed. But Dewey’s writings most always had superb organization and a sense of the historical underpinnings of a problem situation. Thus, it is wrong to assume that Lane and Dewey are intellectual equals, but they both were educational theorists who wished to create new ideas about how to organize schools.

At best, Lane’s work gives hints about his thoughts on schooling and the educational process. But in spite of the tremendous ambiguity associated with Lane’s educational thinking, it appears that his ideas are significantly different from Dewey’s educational theories. Specifically, Lane and Dewey seem to disagree about how to answer a question such as, “Should students be allowed to be personally responsible for deciding their own school curriculum?” This question, which I will refer to as the educational problem of student responsibility, was answered in the affirmative by Lane. In regard to student responsibilities in a school Lane once said:

The relationship between teacher and child should be pure democracy – the child should not be on the defensive, but should be free to ask all questions ... self-government must be given, both in the team play of games and still more in team play made possible for work ... We must give responsibility for, say, history and get the class to discuss the syllabus and the allotment of time to the parts of it, and to assume responsibility for getting through it.⁵

This quote, and others like it, have led me to conclude that Lane would offer an affirmative answer to the educational problem of student responsibility. In addition, Lane’s answer to this problem led him to endorse an educational policy such as the following: All school members, students included, are fallible authorities who should be personally responsible for deciding their own school activities and many of the policies that govern a school. This statement, which I will label the policy of personal responsibility, was never clearly argued for or stated in the scattered writings of Homer Lane. Nevertheless, this policy can be inferred from Lane’s ideas on schooling. Also, I will label an educational program that endorses the policy of personal responsibility a self-governing school.⁶ Moreover, the endorsement of the policy of personal responsibility makes the learning of

academic subjects optional; at a self-governing school such as Summerhill students decide if they wish to attend classes and teachers are not responsible for determining what students learn during the school day.

Despite Dewey's desire to give students some responsibility for deciding what goes on in a school, it seems that he wanted teachers to have a primary role in the determination of the school curriculum. In regard to how Dewey viewed the responsibilities of teachers, it is worthwhile to note that he once said the following:

Unless a given experience leads out into a field previously unfamiliar no problems arise, while problems are the stimulus to thinking . . . it is part of the educator's responsibility to see equally to two things: First, that the problem grows out of the conditions of the experience being had in the present, and that it is within the range of the capacity of students; and secondly, that it is such that it arouses in the learner an active quest for information and for production of new ideas.⁷

Dewey wrote the above remarks in his well-known book *Experience and Education* which was first published in 1938. By this time Dewey had been writing about educational problems for over four decades; although his ideas developed through the years, it seems that Dewey always maintained that professional educators should be the ones who were primarily responsible for determining what is learned in school. For Dewey, the teacher was a behind-the-scenes authority who should help students learn those ideas and values which society considered to be important. As early as 1902, in his essay "The Child and the Curriculum," Dewey was arguing for the notion that teachers should be responsible for determining school activities when he said:

the value of the formulated wealth of knowledge that makes up the course of study is that it may enable the educator to determine the environment of the child, and thus, by indirection, to direct. Its primary value, its primary indication, is for the teacher, not for the child. It says to the teacher; Such and such are the capacities, the fulfillments, in truth and beauty and behavior, open to these children. Now see to it that day by day the conditions are such that their own activities move inevitably in this direction, toward such culmination of themselves.⁸

Since Dewey was such a prolific writer during his long life of ninety-three years, it is difficult to use two small quotes as an indication about how he might answer a complex question such as, "Should students be allowed to be personally responsible for deciding their own curriculum?" However, it does seem that throughout his educational works Dewey consistently thought that the question of student responsibility should be answered negatively. Moreover, unlike Lane, Dewey probably would not wish to endorse the policy of personal responsibility.

Thus, it should be obvious that there are significant differences between Lane's educational views and those of Dewey. In a sense, both Dewey and Lane are the founding

fathers of two distinct twentieth century educational reform movements. Dewey, of course, is the founder of the progressive educational reform movement which includes people such as William H. Kilpatrick, Sidney Hook, and Jerome Bruner. On the other hand, Lane is the father of the reform movement that includes A. S. Neill, Paul Goodman, and a number of lesser known individuals.

"The relationship between teacher and child should be pure democracy—the child should not be on the defensive, but should be free to ask all questions. . ."
— Homer Lane

No doubt, there are many significant differences between the educational views of Dewey's and Lane's followers. But at this time so little is known about Lane's work that it is both foolish and intellectually irresponsible to claim that Lane's solution to the educational problem of student responsibility should be preferred to Dewey's solution to this problem. What is now needed is a beginning understanding of the debate that Dewey and Lane might have had if Lane had been an educational philosopher who understood the value of intellectual confrontations. If I have done nothing more than to arouse interest in contrasting Lane's views on schooling with those of Dewey's, then this essay has indeed been successful.

Notes

1. Sidney Hook, "John Dewey and His Betrayers," in *Radical School Reform*, ed. by Cornelius J. Troost. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 64.

2. A. S. Neill, "Homer Lane: A Personal Assessment," in Homer Lane, *Talks to Parents and Teachers*. New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 5.

3. See Homer Lane, *Talks to Parents and Teachers*. For a beginning list of educational writers who have recorded facts about Lane and his work see the following: W. David Wills, *Homer Lane: A Biography* (London, England: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964); E.T. Bazeley, *Homer Lane and the Little Commonwealth* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969); A.S. Neill, "Neill! Neill! Orange Peel!" (New York City: Hart Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 183-196; A.S. Neill, *The Dominic Books of A. S. Neill* (New York City: Hart Publishing Co., 1975), pp. 325-328; Ray Hemmings, *Children's Freedom: A. S. Neill and the Evolution of the Summerhill Idea* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), pp. 23-32.

4. Neill's educational views are found in A.S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (New York City: Hart Publishing Company, 1960) and *Freedom - Not License* (Hart Publishing Company, 1960).

5. Homer Lane, *Talks to Parents and Teachers*, p. 109-110.

6. I explain why the policy of personal responsibility is important for understanding self-governing schools in "Toward a Liberal View of Educational Authorities," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (May, 1977), pp. 431-434 and in "Authority, Responsibility and Democratic Schooling" in Ronald Swartz, Henry Perkinson, and Stephenie Edgerton, *Knowledge and Fallibilism: Essays on Improving Education* (New York: New York University Press (1980), pp. 131-148.

7. John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1970), p. 79.

8. John Dewey, "The Child and the Curriculum" and "The School and Society" (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 31.

At this time I would like to thank Joseph Agassi, F.J. Clatworthy, Susan Swartz, and C.L. Steffens for the help they have given in relationship to my ideas about Homer Lane's views on schooling. Although these individuals do not necessarily endorse any of the arguments in this essay, I am grateful for the time they have spent discussing and criticizing the ideas I develop throughout this paper.

This article is adapted from a longer work published in *The Journal of Educational Thought*, Vol. 16, No. 3, December 1982. The entire text, along with many other writings by Ron Swartz, can be found at <https://sites.google.com/a/oakland.edu/swartz/articles-1>

Ronald Swartz received a Ph.D. from New York University in 1971. He is now a Professor of Education and Philosophy at Oakland University in Michigan, where he is a member of the Department of Human Development and Child Studies. Dr. Swartz is a co-author of *Knowledge and Fallibilism: Essays on Improving Education* and has published articles in a variety of academic journals. He is the producer and moderator for the video series *Education in Multi-Cultural Societies*. In his writings, Swartz has developed a liberal, democratic, self-governing educational philosophy which draws on the works of John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Karl Popper, Homer Lane, A.S. Neill and Paul Goodman. ●

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Talking Too Much Amongst Ourselves?

Two Perspectives on Educational Change

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN KIRSTEN OLSON AND RON MILLER

This article began as an invitation from Ron to Kirsten: Write about something you've learned from the recent publication of your book *Wounded By School*. Kirsten, an educational activist and teacher who is a longtime student of deschooling and 1960s "radical" critics, ended up reflecting on the "state of the movement," as seen through the lens of attending the AERO Conference in Albany in June 2009. That AERO meeting was Kirsten's first. Ron Miller, as *Ed Rev* readers know, has been an activist and scholar in this movement since the 1980s. Ron and Kirsten share a deep interest in the movement's roots, and now are friends thinking about how to work together. Thus the article became a dialog, an opportunity to go deeper. The conversation is really about: what is your theory of change for creating real transformation in education right now?

Ron and Kirsten invite readers to go online to comment about this piece. We'd like to keep the conversation visible and open to all as we think through some of these issues. Join us at <http://www.aeroeducation.org/2010/03/18/olson-miller/>

KIRSTEN

For me, attending the AERO conference for the first time had a deep personal meaning and importance that is hard to describe. Having read, talked and thought about the radical transformation of schooling for so long, and been deeply in the words of John Holt, Ivan Illich, and George Dennison for decades, I was, in a sense, looking back as I looked forward. What had the movement become? Who were we? And how were we fashioning ourselves in relation to our stormy and important philosophical past?

With my 16-year-old son Sam along as a co-adventurer and co-participant, we were eager and unanxiously expectant (as the late Ted Sizer used to say) as headed off to Albany. Coming off a long spring of book talks, I hoped this gathering would be unlike many I attend; less hairspray and fewer powerpoints, at a minimum.

I was not disappointed. NO hairspray! Powerpoints be damned! The first night we catapulted to Patch Adams, and met Mary Leue. We ran into more folks from free schools than we thought would have the budget to be there. Sam signed up for the talent show (why hadn't he brought his mandolin?), we met great folks for every meal with no planning at all, and saw how children formed their own culture on site, at the pool, and did a lot of important playing while their parents attended sessions. From these wonderfully shaggy-headed kids, to the folks in their 70s, 80s and 90s, who had lived the movement and who were greeting (what were in effect) members of their families, I felt and heard your [Ron's] quiet reflection, "This is my tribe." The sense of educational adventurers, critics of mainstream education, often much too alone, coming together in a place where *they didn't have to explain anything to anyone*, was palpable. People were coming home. Let the mandolins pluck our joy!

Yet at a deeper level, my time at AERO also troubled me. Not because I wasn't stimulated and refreshed, welcomed and intrigued—but because from my point of view, the homey intimacy of the meeting—the sense that everyone knew everyone else, and even more important perhaps, *what everyone else was going to say*, left me uneasy. The very clannishness of the meeting—the sense that we gather together but once a year—left me wondering: what is the right balance between the beloved professional family reunion, and the galvanizing-ourselves-to-be-activists-in-the-work, we've got to kick this thing up to the next level? How do we know, and who is going to tell us?

RON

This is an important question, Kirsten. You are asking us to reflect more carefully on the character, and ultimate goals, of an educational alternatives movement. Are we even a "movement" at all, or an isolated tribe or clan? I think you're right to seek a balance between camaraderie and critical inquiry. Since we are outside the mainstream, working in our various ways to significantly change how society thinks about education, we do need this comfortable place among allies and friends to recharge our enthusiasm, to reassure ourselves that we're not completely off the deep end. However, if all we do is congratulate each other for belonging to our exclusive club, we're not going to build a very effective movement.

Even so, I do think there is more diversity at the AERO gatherings than you're acknowledging here. We don't always know what a workshop presenter or a colleague with whom we're chatting is going to say, and it is not uncommon to disagree, to challenge, to raise hard questions. My experience of these conferences is that the collegial atmosphere enables us to engage in intense, probing conversations without falling into the sort of rancorous, ideologically purist disputes that plague too many progressive movements. Surely there's great value in that; indeed, I'd say we have something to teach these others about process. I agree with you, though, that we could be more deliberate, more explicit, about galvanizing the movement by exploring potentially prickly issues.

KIRSTEN

Good point about many progressivist movements Ron. I agree that collegiality and respectfulness leads us all to be able to consider deeper questions--and intimacy is important, too. On this note, I was also really struck by how empowered most attendees were in their learning. As one session I attended veered dangerously into teacher-centeredness and academic talk, members of the audience took charge and insisted, "Let us ask questions about what you are saying." "Slow down." If only all the audiences I work with were that activist and sure of themselves. It was good to see what belongingness, a sense of being home, and lots of practice with managing your own learning engenders.

**What important questions—
like about the nature of authority,
who has traditionally been served
by alternative education, and the
purposes of education—were being
discussed? How was the future
of the movement being framed
and galvanized?**

But in spite of this activist stance towards learning, what ideas were actually in play intellectually? What important questions--like about the nature of authority, who has traditionally been served by alternative education, and the purposes of education--were being discussed? How was the future of the movement being framed and galvanized? In spite of Ira Shor, and Debbie Meier, and many good old time free school founders, I attended only *one* session (I couldn't attend them all) and one lecture where really new questions about the political stance of the alternative school movement came up, and these discordant ideas seemed to be greeted with some sense of dis-ease. (Uncomfortable shifting in chairs, a casting about for "who is authorized" to speak in the audience.)



Photo by Richard Elmore.

In many sessions, everyone appeared comfortable, perhaps too comfortable, too practiced in confirming the rightness of each other's opinions and outlooks for this to actually be a lively exchange of ideas. (Many of the stories had been told before—many times before—session presenters' ideas were frequently familiar to audiences, and there were few probing questions.) Someone mentioned to me at a lunch one day that "the same people speak every year," and I was shocked. How could this be, when there are so many swirling, shifting opinions out in the educational reform world—when there is so much to talk about? How could the organization be forming so few alliances and failing to learn from the world out there, even from folks with whom it does not agree?

RON

I agree that the "political stance" (or better, stances) of the educational alternatives movement is not explicitly defined. The discomfort you observed may have reflected the deliberately non-political orientation of many in this movement. Before we can decide what our political stance is, we need to ask whether an educational movement does, or should, contain a political element at all. If "politics" means challenging the practices of powerful social institutions, activists can do so directly, through lobbying, organizing, demonstrating, and voting—or indirectly, by going around the institutions and cultivating new ideas and new practices. The "A" in AERO, after all, stands for *alternative*; most of us are not trying to reform existing systems but to bypass them, gain a fresh start, build something new. We are not interested, as a movement, in conventional politics. We tend to see such organizing and struggling as the *less* direct approach—as being remotely removed from the lives of children (to borrow Dennison's phrase) or the lives of families and communities.

Some of those swirling opinions about educational reform, then, are not especially relevant to the work that many of us are doing. I'm glad that courageous educators are challenging the system from within, putting political and moral pressure on society to change its schools. They are our allies and some of them participate in AERO conferences; they

bring good ideas and fresh energy, and I think many of them are inspired by what they encounter among us. Yet I think the predominant strategy among folks in this network is counter-cultural activism. As Paul Goodman and Dennison said about the free school movement in the 1960s, the value of radical alternatives is that we are building the world we want, now; we are not interested in struggling with the entrenched system, accepting compromise and defeat in the (usually dashed) hope that the system will change someday.

To whatever extent it is true that the same people speak every year (and I don't think it's a fair judgment), we need to remember that this is still a marginal movement; there really is not a large pool of potential speakers who understand its core principles and would inspire this group. Still, I accept your point that maybe we should look less for inspiration and more for a "lively exchange of ideas."

KIRSTEN

Ron, I find myself thinking what the great Paulo Freire said frequently: "All education is political." All attempts to educate are about engendering a view about what is important, what is morally valuable, what is admirable, what makes life meaningful—what we'd fight for. So I'm confused about how any orientation towards education would not, at some level, involve a political stance. And what is indirect activism? Does that mean no confrontation with the mainstream? I'm worried about how marginalizing that stance is. And in my own work I think a lot about the millions of kids who are actually in school right now, who don't really have an alternative to being in conventional public school because, for most kids, alternatives aren't abundant. How do we square their lives with an indirect stance towards the institution that coerces them around their thoughts, behavior and learning choices, and criminalizes them if they do not attend?

We are not interested, as a movement, in conventional politics. We tend to see such organizing and struggling as the less direct approach—as being remotely removed from the lives of children (to borrow Dennison's phrase) or the lives of families and communities.

So I think it's important for us, as a movement, to talk openly about these things. These topics should be on the table. Because as important as confirming belongingness is (and from my own biography I understand how important that is, when we feel misunderstood, marginalized and misrepresented in a mainstream discourse), shouldn't challenging each other towards political and social action, and the further honing of one's ideas, positions and thinking, also be a part of

the agenda? And more to the point, from my vantage—what political actions and alliances was the conference helping members to form? Whose voices are NOT being heard? And isn't there a new, younger generation of alternative schoolers who should be at the center, blogging and networking and challenging? They need to claim authorization to speak.

A close colleague, a professor of education and a long-time observer of the politics of educational reform, recently called the alternative school movement politically "invisible." In spite of its protestations of growth and far greater impact, in comparison to the charter school movement (which also seeks to disrupt and challenge the monopoly of public school education), alternative education is a very, very quiet sister—hardly a voice at the table. If the movement, which has much to say about the nature of learning, authority and consent, and about conceptions of the student, is to become intellectually and politically influential, how is it engaging in broader, more mainstream conversations about how school and learning should look in the future? If the alternative school movement is to become more than "isolated counter-cultural enclaves with little influence on mainstream educational thinking and policy," as you wrote in "*A Brief History of Alternative Education*," (<http://www.educationrevolution.org/history.html>), how will this happen?

RON

I spent about twenty years trying to give this movement a voice at the table. I finally concluded that what I (and most of my colleagues in this movement) most deeply believe actually represents *an altogether different table*. It now feels rather pointless and futile to me to engage the vast interlocked establishment of public school systems, state and federal politicians, corporate elites, teacher training colleges, large foundations, textbook publishers, and mass media. We are, in fact, building a counterculture, and we're just going to have to be patient while the monstrous system of educational imperialism collapses, along with the economic and political imperialism within which it is embedded.

Going back to Freire's point, I think it is political—radically so—to abandon the system and start a new culture. We aren't playing the system's game and accepting whatever modest, sporadic, and tentative reforms it allows us. We are insisting on living our lives and educating our children in opposition to the dominant culture. Isn't that political? It's true that we are not thereby immediately liberating the millions of children stuck within the system, but why is that the measure of political authenticity? Jonathan Kozol raised the same concerns about the free school movement, and John Holt responded by saying that whatever pockets of liberation we could achieve represented progress toward change, that none of us can be held responsible for altering the entire system. Yes, there are very difficult questions about the limited race and class identity of this movement, which we do worry about and try to address as best we can. Unfortunately, these limitations are caused by complex social and economic forces far beyond our control. I don't see public school reformers having all that much success dealing with these forces either; Kozol

Good Discussions Happening! Allies Unite!

These excerpts are from a November 2009 online book club discussion of *Wounded by School* <http://www.edweek.org/go/forums/wounded>, sponsored and organized by *Teacher Magazine*. The book club was one of the top ten visited places on the Education Week/Teacher Magazine site during the week it ran, with an average of 1400 page views per day. The book is profoundly critical of mainstream education.

Many posters wrote about the problems of “rethinking” and “reimagining” school (see first two posts), although not everyone agreed about the nature of the problem (see last post).

POST 1

“I can easily find lots of colleagues who could articulate a very clear case (using the scientific literature on cognition) for the ways that increased standardization and testing have wounded children, sometimes crippling them. And I know plenty of people whose teaching lives have been dedicated to increasing educational opportunities for children living in poverty.

But it would be very hard to find many practicing P-12 teachers who have the vision to imagine more than tiny tweaks in The System, a genuinely transformative, wide-open approach to schooling. Look at the vicious arguments against the Partnership for 21st Century Education’s ideas—things like collaboration, analysis & synthesis, investigation, rather than direct instruction and memorization, are seen as weak and unproven. Most of the innovative ideas that have bubbled up in this [online book club] discussion (a senior year based on project work synthesizing prior learnings—gutting or getting rid of high school as we know it) or even questioning grade levels, marking periods, class sizes, curriculum requirements and so on are perceived as crazy talk. Unless, of course, you enjoy the kind of privilege that allows you to make these choices.

If I were a critical theorist, I’d point out that the underlying purpose of schooling is keeping people in their place. But most classroom teachers aren’t critical theorists. They believe the system works—they’re part of the system. My own contribution comes from teaching secondary music in ways that aren’t competitive, but

nurture creation, cultural exploration and (gasp) pleasure. And believe me, getting rid of the contests and trophies was a hard sell initially.”

—TEACHER NANCY FLANAGAN, 11.21.09

POST 2

“I believe we, as a culture, teach creative mathematizing (making sense of our world in mathematical ways) out of our students. We don’t let them make sense of mathematical situations, teaching them instead to not value their own ideas and to not trust their own mathematical intuition; that it is not good (i.e. bad) to think for themselves. Rather, students are taught that only another person’s thinking is good (the teacher’s). Students are routinely taught that they can’t start with the tens, that they must start with the ones and they are marked wrong if they do anything else. The truth is that their thinking is valuable, but that it takes a masterful teacher to integrate students’ own sense-making into a complex map of this (or any) mathematics topic. (We are unwilling and often unable to devote the time and money it takes to allow teachers to learn this important sense-making in mathematics.) What does it do to a person, when they are told day after day, year after year, that the way they think things out in ways that make sense in their lived worlds, is wrong and/or bad?”


—TEACHER GLYNNIS FLEMING, 11.22.09

himself has observed that the “savage inequalities” within the system have only worsened over the years.

I find inspiration in social critics and visionaries who are entirely absent, if not completely unknown, in the school reform literature. I’m thinking, for example, of David Korten’s analysis (in *The Great Turning*) of the imminent collapse of currently dominant systems, and Paul Hawken’s account (in *Blessed Unrest*) of the growing global movement for a new culture. I’m inspired by people like Joanna Macy, Riane Eisler, Wendell Berry, Derrick Jensen, and Vandana Shiva, who explain how the very foundation, the underlying worldview, of our civilization is no longer viable. If school reformers think they can tweak the system without raising these fundamental questions, they are not interesting to me, or relevant to the work we need to do. Our task is to build a new world—one community, one small school, or one unschooling family at a time if need be. That’s the message of my book *The Self-Organizing Revolution*. That’s what we talk about, and celebrate, at AERO gatherings.

KIRSTEN

But how do we build that new world? Can we really do this on our own? I wonder how we move out, beyond the pool, to be in conversation and form alliances with those who may not have the same points of view yet with whom it might form strategic networks and partnerships? Who are potential friends and allies? Do we know?



We will never remake the world by talking quietly among ourselves, with those of us who agree with us and tend to look and think like us.

A recent online discussion of my book, *Wounded By School* <http://www.edweek.org/go/forums/wounded/>, and my last months of traveling talking to a range of people about the state of education in this country, suggests a vast number of administrators, public school officials, teachers, parents and students who would make wonderful allies in the work of making alternative schooling more visible. How can conversations with these folks be strengthened? Where and how can this happen, in every readers’ life? Shouldn’t everyone be getting out just a bit more?

So in spite of all the wonderful and lively connections and sources of energy I sensed at AERO and in the movement(s) itself, I was not at all satisfied by the savviness or outward-reachingness of this movement, this revolution.

We will never remake the world by talking quietly among ourselves, with those of us who agree with us and tend to look and think like us. We radically disempower ourselves by withdrawing from mainstream talk—that stuff going on in mainstream educational publications, blogs, statehouses, and over at the Department of Education in Washington. It is our job, I believe, to make ourselves heard and understood. We must be flexible and outreaching and innovative—and be open to new ideas. (I love this quote: “I am not willing to trust you until you are willing to be as changed by my experience as I am daily by yours.” -Victor, in the movie *The Color of Fear*.)

As a student of John Holt, and of the strategic marginalization of the radical critics of the 1960s within the political discourse, the dangers of withdrawal and turning inward, of failing to insist that one’s voice be heard, or on giving up on the mainstream discourse, is politically perilous. It does not serve children well.

A recent email from my friend Parker Palmer, another potential ally, observes, “I agree with you about the nature of institutions which, almost by definition, have some element of coercion built into them. The problem, of course, is that most of society’s work is and always will be done in institutional contexts. *The alternative education movement must always be an option for people, one that becomes more widely known and accessible than it is.* But my hope is not that it will someday be our dominant mode of education, which is not going to happen, but that it can see itself in part as a ‘lab school’ for things that can and should be done in public education, and act accordingly.”

Is the movement earnestly working to become as widely known and accessible as it can possibly be? Are every one of us, as educators, contributing powerfully to the discourse on school reform in your community? If not, why not?

Shouldn’t this be a part of how the mission is defined?

RON

I’ve always loved Parker Palmer’s work. He is a wise and inspiring teacher. But I am troubled by his claim that society’s work “always will be done in institutional contexts,” and I respectfully dissent. It is a reasonable and pragmatic conclusion; ultimately he may be absolutely right. But I and my colleagues in this movement envision a culture that does *not* build coercion into its social forms. Maybe we’re a lost tribe of dreamers, after all, but when I see where humanity is heading, I have no confidence in centralized, managed, coercive institutions. Everything is too big and distant, beyond any reasonable human scale—governments, corporations, health care systems, and school systems. I think our sanity, if not our survival, depends on a radical downsizing and relocalizing of modern culture. I don’t trust systems, and I think they are headed for collapse. It is time to secede from them.

So where does that leave us, in this conversation? We are revisiting themes that were apparent during the heyday of this movement, forty years ago, and that show up in many radical movements, such as the Greens. Do we want to be marginal visionaries or frustrated reformers? Are we ideologi-

cally or psychologically drawn to purity or to pragmatism? What happens when we try to combine the two sides? I agree with you that we should find allies and talk with them, learn from them, and encourage each other. Ultimately, though, I don't think either strategy has a proven, effective solution to the troubles of our age. Perhaps the best we can do is each struggle in our own ways to plant the seeds of a more democratic, compassionate and life-affirming culture.

KIRSTEN

Readers, we invite you to join in. What do you have to say? Go to <http://www.aeroeducation.org/2010/03/18/olson-miller/> to comment online...

Kirsten Olson is a writer and educational activist. She is the author of *Wounded By School: Recapturing the Joy in Learning and Standing Up To Old School Culture* (Teachers College Press 2009) and *Schools As Colonizers* (Verlag 2008). Contact Kirsten at <http://www.kirstenolson.org/>. She is friends with Ron.

Ron Miller, the editor of *Education Revolution*, has been writing about educational alternatives for nearly thirty years. The most recent of his nine books is *The Self-Organizing Revolution*. He has helped establish two alternative schools in Vermont and is currently working on a third. ●



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National

Homeschooling Family Granted Political Asylum. From Home School Legal Defense Association. In a case with international ramifications, Immigration Judge Lawrence O. Burman granted the political asylum application of a German homeschooling family. The Romeikes are Christians from Bissingen, Germany, who fled persecution in August 2008 to seek political asylum in the United States. The request was granted January 26 after a hearing was held in Memphis, Tennessee, on January 21. “We can’t expect every country to follow our constitution,” said Judge Burman. “The world might be a better place if it did. However, the rights being violated here are basic human rights that no country has a right to violate.” Burman added, “Homeschoolers are a particular social group that the German government is trying to suppress. This family has a well-founded fear of persecution...therefore, they are eligible for asylum...and the court will grant asylum.” In his ruling, Burman said that the scariest thing about this case was the motivation of the government. He noted it appeared that rather than being concerned about the welfare of the children, the government was trying to stamp out parallel societies—something the judge called “odd” and just plain “silly.” In his order the judge expressed concern that while Germany is a democratic country and is an ally, he noted that this particular policy of persecuting homeschoolers is “repellent to everything we believe as Americans.” “This decision finally recognizes that German homeschoolers are a specific social group that is being persecuted by a Western democracy,” said Mike Donnelly, staff attorney and director of international relations for Home School Legal Defense Association. “It is embarrassing for Germany, since a Western nation should uphold basic human rights, which include allowing parents to raise and educate their own children. This judge understood the case perfectly, and he called Germany out. We hope this decision will cause Germany to stop persecuting homeschoolers,” he added.

The persecution of homeschoolers in Germany has been intensifying over the past several years. They are regularly fined thousands of dollars, threatened with imprisonment, or have the custody of their children taken away simply because they choose to home educate.

From High Schools to Offer Plan to Graduate 2 Years Early, by Sam Dillon, *New York Times*: Dozens of public high schools in eight states will introduce a program next year allowing 10th graders who pass a battery of tests to get a diploma two years early and immediately enroll in community college. Students who pass but aspire to attend a selective college may continue with college preparatory courses in their junior and senior years, organizers of the new effort said. Students who fail the 10th-grade tests, known as board exams, can try again at the end of their 11th and 12th grades. The new system of high school coursework with the accompanying board examinations is modeled largely on systems in high-performing nations including Denmark, England, Finland, France and Singapore. The program is being organized by the National Center on Education and the Economy, and its goals include insuring that students have mastered a set of basic requirements and reducing the numbers of high school graduates who need remedial courses when they enroll in college. More than a million college freshmen across America must take remedial courses each year, and many drop out before getting a degree. High school students will begin the new coursework in the fall of 2011 in Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont. The education commissioners of those states have pledged to sign up 10 to 20 schools each for the pilot project, and have begun to reach out to district superintendents. Kentucky’s commissioner of education, Terry Holliday, said high school graduation requirements there had long been based on having students accumulate enough course credits to graduate. “This would reform that,” Dr. Holliday said. “We’ve been tied to seat time for 100 years. This would allow an approach based on subject mastery — a system based around move-on-when-ready.”

Internet Rewiring Youngsters’ Brains, by Martin Evans, *Telegraph.co.uk*: Experts believe the internet encourages users to dart from page to page, rather than concentrating on one source such as a book. Described as “associative” thinking, researchers believe it is reducing youngsters’ capacity to read and write at length because their minds are being remolded to function differently. A survey designed to examine the internet’s impact on the brain examined how 100 12 to 18-year-olds responded to a series of questions requiring some form of

National

research. They discovered that most of the respondents gave their answers after looking at just half the number of web pages older people examined. They also found that younger people took far less time to research their answers and were therefore less thorough. Professor David Nicholas of the University College London, who conducted the research, said it supported the growing theory that the web's hyperlinked network of information was helping to rewire youngsters' minds. He revealed that 40 per cent of those taking part in the study viewed no more than three pages from the thousands available online, when researching a topic. In contrast, people who grew up before the age of the internet repeatedly returned to the same source instead of flitting between sites.

Since Hearing, States Take Little Action on Restraints in Schools, by Greg Toppo, *USA Today*: A handful of states have moved to restrict or regulate school staff members who restrain or seclude hard-to-handle children against their will in the wake of abuses exposed by congressional investigators seven months ago. But many more states have done little or nothing, advocates say. "There has been a lot of attention, a lot of advocacy, a lot of family members involved, but it's slow going," says Jane Hudson, an attorney for the National Disability Rights Network, based in Washington, D.C. Many states still have no rules in place to address how and when school staff can restrain and seclude children, says Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. So he and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., also on the committee, are pushing legislation to set federal rules. "Without a federal standard to set the bar, it's the Wild West," Miller says. "We believe the right approach is a balanced one that provides federal guidance to states but still allows states the flexibility to tailor their regulations to their specific needs." In May, the Government Accountability Office, Congress' investigative arm, told the committee that only seven states require training for educators before they're allowed to restrict children — and only five states ban "prone restraint," in which an adult lies atop a face-down child. That type of restraint caused the death of a Texas middle-schooler in 2002. Unlike in hospitals or residential treatment centers, there's no federal system to regulate such practices in schools, the GAO said. The findings stopped short of attaching a hard number to how many children are subjected to the practices, but investigators said they found "hundreds of allegations" of abuse at schools since 1990. Nancy Reder, deputy executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, says seclusion and restraint "should be used only in emergency situations," though she adds there have been times when it was needed. The bills before Congress require more data, "which will help us get a better handle on how widespread this is." State reporting varies: In several states, parents and state officials must be notified if a child is restrained or shut off from classmates; in others, only parents need to be notified

From **Scholar's School Reform U-Turn Shakes Up Debate** by Sam Dillon, *New York Times*. Diane Ravitch, the education historian who built her intellectual reputation battling progressive educators and served in the first Bush administration's Education Department, is in the final stages of an astonishing, slow-motion about-face on almost every stand she once took on American schooling. Once outspoken about the power of standardized testing, charter schools and free markets to improve schools, Dr. Ravitch is now caustically critical. She underwent an intellectual crisis, she says, discovering that these strategies, which she now calls faddish trends, were undermining public education. She resigned last year from the boards of two conservative research groups. "School reform today is like a freight train, and I'm out on the tracks saying, 'You're going the wrong way!'" Dr. Ravitch said in an interview. Among the topics on which Dr. Ravitch has reversed her views is the main federal law on public schools, No Child Left Behind, which is up for a rewrite in coming weeks in Congress. She once supported it, but now says its requirements for testing in math and reading have squeezed vital subjects like history and art out of classrooms.

Admirers say she is returning to her roots as an advocate for public education. She rose to prominence in the 1970s with books defending the civic value of public schools from attacks by left-wing detractors, who were calling them capitalist tools to indoctrinate working-class children. "First she angered the Marxist historians, and later the fans of progressive education and the multiculturalists," said Jeffrey E. Mirel, a professor of education and history at the University of Michigan. "But she's always defended public schools and a robust traditional curriculum, because she believes they've been a ladder of social mobility." In 2005, she said, a study she undertook of Pakistan's weak and inequitable education system, dominated by private and religious institutions, convinced her that protecting the United States' public schools was important to democracy.

She remembers another date, Nov. 30, 2006, when at a Washington conference she heard a dozen experts conclude that the No Child law was not raising student achievement. These and other experiences left her increasingly disaffected from the choice and accountability movements. Charter schools, she concluded, were proving to be no better on average than regular schools, but in many cities were bleeding resources from the public system. Testing had become not just a way to measure student learning, but an end in itself. "Accountability, as written into federal law, was not raising standards but dumbing down the schools," she writes. "The effort to upend American public education and replace it with something that was market-based began to feel too radical for me."

National

From **Schools Called Prison Pipeline**, by Diane Knich, *PostandCourier.com*: Juvenile crime is down, but the number of young people entering the judicial system in South Carolina has increased in recent years, according to a panel at a Charleston School of Law symposium. A law that makes “disturbing schools” a crime was intended to keep students safe, but instead it’s pushing more students into the criminal justice system, said William Byars, director of the state’s Department of Juvenile Justice. Disturbing-schools laws were well-intentioned, Byars said, but they have “morphed and morphed until now it’s a crime to be an obnoxious teenager in school.” It’s important, when possible, to keep children out of the judicial system, Byars said, “because the deeper you get into it, the harder it is to get out.” Byars said another factor pushing more students into the criminal justice system is the misuse by school administrators of on-site police officers known as school resource officers. Some administrators are turning over routine discipline matters to the officers, who have no choice but to deal with them in a legal way. Kimbrough-Melton said students are coming into school with more difficult problems that can’t be resolved through legal means. Some have severe academic problems or learning disabilities, while others have parents who are in jail or have mental health or drug problems. Some students fall behind as early as third or fourth grade, she said, and many of them are “headed for the juvenile justice system.” Byars said incarcerating young people can cost \$100,000 per year. And there are many less restrictive alternatives that are also less expensive, including intensive supervision and mental health services. Kimbrough-Melton said many students who are incarcerated are eligible for special education services, but they don’t always get them. “We know a lot about what works in juvenile justice,” she said, “but we don’t do a lot of what works in juvenile justice.”

States to Government: Hands Off Education, by Lisa Lambert, *Reuters*: As the U.S. government discusses reauthorizing a sweeping education law and prepares to distribute billions of stimulus dollars for school reform, state legislatures are sending it a strong message: hands off. Education policy has always been the territory of state and local governments, but in the last decade the U.S. government has interjected itself into curriculum and school reforms, the National Conference of State Legislatures said. The group, which represents state legislatures, suggested using a federal model to fund education akin to that used to build the interstate highway system, whereby money is given to states, which then pass it on to local governments. It would also like federal funds concentrated in areas where students are the most disadvantaged and not handed out equally to every congressional district. The education law passed under former President George W. Bush and known as No Child Left Behind created a system of standards by which schools and school districts would be judged and federal funding awarded.

The law has been criticized for having lengthy and impossible standards and for inadvertently punishing poor performing schools by withholding money. Last week Education Secretary Arne Duncan said the administration will change the standards when the law is renewed and increase requirements for how schools report on achieving those standards. It will also dedicate “unprecedented resources” to rewarding schools that attain those standards while focusing on improving the “bottom 1 percent” of schools, he said. But for the legislatures’ group, “neither federal top-down mandates nor categorical and competitive grant resources have significantly affected student achievement.” The group contends that local school districts and states are closer to students’ lives and understand their needs better, while the U.S. government is too removed. “If we continue on our current policy path, federal resources, which now account for slightly more than 7 percent of the enterprise, will drag the entire system into the rabbit-hole world where compliance with federal dictums masquerades as reforms,” the group said.

From **The Misguided Race to Federalize Education**, *EducationNews.org*: President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan call their \$4 billion program of education reform grants the Race to the Top. A more accurate title would be the Race to Washington, because their program culminates a stunning decade in which school policy decisions have been wrested from local and state control to become matters of federal oversight. With the possible exception of Texas – where Gov. Rick Perry is resisting federal education grants with all their strings – no state has been left behind in the race to federalize education. It started when two former “education governors,” Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, took some of their education ideas to the White House and now, in the name of spending stimulus money and curing the ailing economy, we spend billions in federal grants on schools, all with policy strings attached. To make matters worse, these federal grants are permitted to go directly to school districts, further eroding the role of states. But beyond the constitutional question, why would we object to shifting educational control from local and state governments to Washington? For one thing, most of the promising experiments in K-12 educational reform – charter schools, parent councils or the creation of regional sub districts – shift power down toward local principals and parents, not up toward a more distant bureaucracy. For another, needing to win over local and state leaders one at a time slows the embrace of policy fads.


International

UNITED KINGDOM

Boys Aged Three 'Must Work More', by Sarah Cassidy, *Independent.co.uk*: New boy-friendly guidance is to be sent to all nurseries and childminders advising them to get the youngest boys to take more interest in writing, scribbling and drawing – basically just putting pencil to paper. After a year of school, more than one in six boys cannot write his own name or simple words such as “mum”, “dad” or “cat” – double the number of girls – official figures show. Early-years experts condemned the move, arguing that having more targets to get children writing by the age of five would be “developmentally inappropriate” and potentially damaging, particularly for boys. The guidance, which will be sent to nurseries from January, will include advice to set up role-play activities tailored to boys’ interests, such as builders taking phone messages and writing up orders, post office employees writing on forms, and waiters taking orders from customers. Official figures released earlier this year showed that boys were lagging further behind girls by the age of five since the introduction of Labour’s “nappy curriculum.” Boys are also less likely to know the alphabet, or how to count to 10, sing simple nursery rhymes from memory, dress themselves and work well with classmates at the end of the reception year, before they start Year One. The figures were the first results from the Early Years Foundation Stage – a compulsory program introduced in September last year for all schools, nurseries and childminders. Overall, just over half of children reached government targets for all areas of early development, including personal and social skills, literacy, problem-solving and numeracy, physical development, and creativity. Child-development specialists have opposed the writing targets for five-year-olds since they were first proposed, arguing that many children, particularly boys, do not develop the fine motor skills needed for writing until they are six or seven. Dr Richard House, a senior lecturer at Roehampton University and a founder of the Open Eye campaign against the early-years curriculum, warned that many of the targets for five-year-olds were inappropriate for the age group. He added: “Many of the much-criticized ‘teaching to test’, assessment-driven characteristics of the primary school are now invading our nursery settings.”

More Studying on Home Computers, by Sean Coughlan, *BBC News*: A study carried out in the UK for technology company Microsoft showed 37% of secondary pupils used computers for study every day at home. This is a more intensive use than at school – where 30% of pupils were using computers each day. The survey considered the computer use of 512 families with children. The study reveals the increasingly pervasive use of technology for homework by pupils in their own homes. Among these secondary level pupils, aged between 11 and 18, more than 90% used a home computer for schoolwork at least once a week. And more than a third were using their family’s computer for homework or revision every single day. There have been concerns about the “digital divide” – in which children from better-off families get an advantage in school from better computer equipment at home. The government says there are about a million children without the internet at home – leaving them at the other end of the scale from the two in five pupils who are using computers at home every day for schoolwork. There is also a strong belief among parents that having a computer at home is valuable to their children’s education. Microsoft’s Ray Fleming suggests that the higher levels of computer use at home for schoolwork by pupils is a reflection of the limitations on computer use in school. “School use of information technology can be very scheduled – it’s often structured around particular lessons,” he says. At home children look for information on the computer in a more informal way, he says. The widespread availability of computers at home also raises questions about handling this information. “There are so many sources of information, that the challenge now is not about finding information but finding the most useful questions,” he says. Children’s Secretary Ed Balls said that being without the internet at home leaves pupils “at a disadvantage to their peers.” Computers are no longer a luxury for the few, but are as essential a part of education as books, pens and paper.” ●

Announcements



Educating for Human Greatness, Lynn Stoddard's groundbreaking vision of educational transformation first published in 2004, has been reissued. The book is a guide for parents and teachers to use in drawing forth the unique potentials that lie within themselves and each amazing child. The phrase and concept, "educating for human greatness," was coined by Lynn Stoddard over twenty-five years ago. As principal of a public school, Lynn and his staff wondered what would happen if they ignored the deficiencies in students and concentrated on their strengths. Wonderful things happened! Lynn has been writing and speaking about his findings ever since.

The big difference between educating for greatness and conventional education is that student achievement in curriculum is NOT the main goal and purpose of educating for human greatness. "Curriculum" or subject matter content is used as a TOOL to help students grow in seven dimensions of greatness: Identity, Inquiry, Interaction, Initiative, Imagination, Intuition and Integrity.

Educating for Human Greatness is available at www.efhg.org. Or call 920-251-2052.




VOYAGERS

We are hosting our second annual Education Conference on May 20th and 21st, 2010. Our topic is Teaching and Learning in Community With Early Childhood and Elementary Age Children. Our keynote speaker is Lella Gandini:

A few things to know before attending:

- Lella Gandini is the United States liaison for the dissemination of the early-childhood education known as the Reggio Emilia approach. A native of Italy, she was connected early on with the Reggio Emilia approach, which focuses on fostering relationships and learning among children, teachers, parents and community. She later became the point person for the approach in the United States.
- Gandini's description of the Reggio Emilia approach: "The starting point is to be convinced that children have tremendous potential already when they are born, so that rather than thinking 'What can I teach these children?' teachers observe and listen to children and construct learning with them."

For more information, visit www.voyagerskids.com or contact Karen Giuffre at kgiuffre@optonline.net



Readers can find the web link of the *e-journal of alternative education* at www.dergi.alternatifegitimdernegi.org.tr

We have designated the second issue topic as "**democratic education**" and we look forward to receiving your articles related to this topic.

— Eylem Korkmaz, on behalf of
Alternative Education Association (Turkey)



Book Review

Out of the Fire: Where schooling worked in times of crisis: All Saints College, South Africa, 1986 – 1997.

Edited by Gavin Stewart with Angela Church and Butch Coetzee.

Reviewed by Sharon Caldwell

Out of the Fire is a book about extraordinary people at an extraordinary school in extraordinary times. Using the archives of All Saints College and the oral and written testimonies of students, parents, staff, board members and many others connected directly or indirectly to the school, Stewart and his co-writers have compiled a valuable resource that sheds light on a little-known and under-appreciated aspect of South African history.

There is one thing that can be said without qualification about All Saints College: it was unique, both in South Africa and in the world. Its contribution to the lives of the people it touched is recorded in the book, and the role of the school in the politics of the country in those turbulent times is described and captured graphically in the many photographs which illustrate its pages. The internal struggles of the school are also captured with frankness and honesty.

South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s was a country in the grip of civil war. The apartheid regime's declaration of a state of emergency and the pursuit and a "total strategy" against what it perceived as the "total onslaught"; conflict between the ANC and IFP; operations of the apartheid death squads; the increased activities of the liberation movements and popular uprisings in the townships had rendered large parts of the country ungovernable. By some estimates between 20,000 and 25,000 people died in politically-motivated killings. In the midst of this turmoil and conflict, All Saints College produced a succession of successful examination results. How was this possible?

My interest in All Saints College was rekindled some years ago, through my involvement in an international movement which promotes student democracy. Democratic schools are schools where students control, to a greater or lesser extent, the decision-making processes of the institution. This is one of the aspects that made All Saints unique in South Africa. The development of student democracy was an evolutionary process. Issues of student concern debated at the school in its early years—such as whether or not school uniforms should be worn—seem trivial compared to later de-

isions to take part in protests such as the one that culminated in the infamous Bisho massacre of 1992. More than anything, this book is a testament to the courage and conviction of the staff, to their integrity and sheer determination that they could face gunfire linked arm in arm with their young charges and then return to class with the certain knowledge that they had to help these students pass their examinations in a few short weeks.

This is an important book, appearing at a time when education in South Africa faces yet another crisis. *Out of the Fire* suggests that the anger, the hopes, the dreams, the frustrations, the energy and volatility of young people, when supported and directed by empathetic, respectful and above all, courageous, adults have the potential to bring about change that cannot be imagined, let alone predicted. The experience of All Saints College should be used as a starting point to inform school reform in post-apartheid South Africa.

If there are criticisms of the book, one is that whilst it is strong on details and documenting the narrative history of the school, *Out of the Fire* does little to explore the broader educational implications of the All Saints experience. Another is that there is insufficient attempt to understand the educational influences, motivations and thinking of those who contributed in so many ways to the development of All Saints. This is particularly so when it comes to Mike Burton, principal from 1986. The book delineates the pivotal role he played in a rather understated manner. The reader is left wondering what enabled him to respond so progressively and dynamically to the challenges he faced, and what educational influences underpinned his decision-making.

These criticisms aside, for the future of our children who are languishing in "under performing schools," it is imperative that *Out of the Fire* is read as widely as possible. The book provokes many questions. Aside from the All Saints experience, the 1980s was a time of great educational ferment in the country. Organizations like the Education Crisis Committee developed alternative models to apartheid education and "Education for liberation" was more than just a slogan. One cannot help wondering what happened to all the educationists who, prior to the democratic dispensation in 1994, and inspired by the ideas of Paulo Freire and other pedagogies of social reconstruction, were so active in developing education alternatives. How did South Africa end up with what is, by all accounts, a dysfunctional education system 15 short years after democracy? More pertinently, how did a democratic government, committed to overhauling the apartheid education

Continued on page 24

Farewell to two of our heroes

Rachael Faye Kessler, 63, passed away peacefully on January 27, 2010 surrounded by family and friends. Rachael was an inspiration to all who knew her—her warm heart, radiant smile, feisty spirit, wonderful sense of humor, and sharp intellect were a gift to all who crossed her path.

An educator, consultant, international speaker, author, and founder of the PassageWorks Institute (2001), Rachael developed a groundbreaking approach to welcoming the inner lives of young people and teachers into schools. A pioneer in the field of social and emotional learning, her groundbreaking book *The Soul of Education* (2000) will remain a landmark in the field.

Over the last two and a half decades, Rachael developed a framework to address the spiritual yearnings in young people, bridging the interests of educators, parents, and policy-makers across the spectrum of religious and political belief. Rachael also recognized the potency, opportunity, and challenge of the critical transition years in young people's lives and created accessible and meaningful school-based rites of passage programs to support students in these times of rapid growth and change.

A prolific and thoughtful writer, Rachael published over 40 articles in the fields of social and emotional learning, transformative learning, teacher education, spirituality in education and holistic education, and co-authored five curricula for the transition years of childhood. Daniel Goleman described Rachael as a "leader in a new movement for emotional literacy," and Howard Gardner wrote that her "examination of the quest for meaning among today's adolescents is both daring and needed." Rachael committed her life to creating caring learning environments where all students can thrive and experience deep connection to self, other, and community.

Rachael lectured and presented throughout her professional life, delivering more than 150 presentations including keynotes and seminars across the country from Harvard University's School of Education, to the National Education Association Conference, to state conferences of school counselors, to international conferences of educators in Mexico, Canada, China and Korea. Rachael has also worked with her husband, Mark Gerzon, conducting trainings on community building and constructive dialogue in highly polarized settings including the U.S. Congress and institutes for school principals and superintendents.

Born on December 11, 1946 in Detroit, Michigan, Rachael completed her undergraduate work at the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, and Columbia University and received her M.A. in American Studies from Yale University. Rachael was mother to three sons, Mikael, Ari, and Shane, grandmother to five grandchildren, and husband to Mark Gerzon. Rachael is also survived by her two brothers Arnold and Leonard Kessler.

In recent years, Rachael re-discovered her Jewish faith and found great joy and comfort in Boulder's Nevei Kodesh



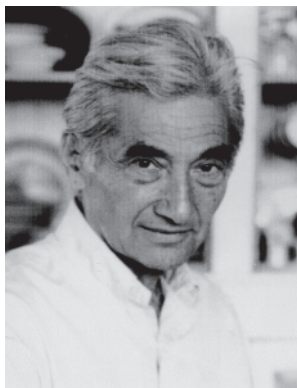
"If all of us would embrace the principles of soulful teaching and learning that Rachael Kessler advocates so convincingly, we would neither tolerate nor promote an education that ignores the inner life. The PassageWorks Model gives us the courage to create new forms of authentic education that can contribute to the healing of souls – our children's, our own and the world's."

— Parker J. Palmer, author & teacher

community. Rachael celebrated her bat-mitzvah just a year ago this week, and in her teaching of the torah portion she explored the crossing of the Red Sea as a metaphor for the trust needed to embark on the many rites of passage we encounter in life.

Rachael engaged her cancer journey with courage, honesty, humor, grace, and tenderness—and was a teacher in her death as well as her life. Rachael was an avid gardener, a lover of long walks, a gracious friend, a wise mentor, a devoted mother and partner, a fierce advocate, and a soulful woman who continues to share her light, love and wisdom with all of us.

Donations in Rachael's memory may be made to:
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HOWARD ZINN

Dear *Rethinking Schools* friends,

As many of you know, Howard Zinn died of a heart attack on Wednesday [January 27] in California. His passing is an enormous loss for everyone who cares about justice and equality. Historian, professor, lecturer, playwright, and most recently a filmmaker, Howard Zinn was many things. But above all, he was an activist—a socialist, a pacifist, an antiracist, who never strayed from his conviction that humanity was capable of making this a much better world.

Throughout his long life, Howard Zinn had seen enough of the world's horrors that it would have been understandable had he become a cynic. But if there is one word that should be forever associated with him, it's hope.

When George Bush launched his endless war on terror after 9/11, *Rethinking Schools* looked for a quote that could sum up our belief that it was not ridiculous to still be hopeful. We turned to the final paragraphs of Howard Zinn's autobiography, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*:

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

Howard Zinn lived a politically engaged life of joy and solidarity. His life was indeed a marvelous victory.

BILL BIGELOW
for the *Rethinking Schools* staff and editors



Letters

I'm curious on two grounds about why you'd cite studies based on standardized test scores in *Education Revolution*. (Editor's note: this is referring to an excerpt reprinted in *News Reports* in ED REV #59.)

1) If the test obsession is harmful to children and teens, why is raising test scores a good thing?

2) Citing Caroline Hoxby on testing and charter schools is like citing Dick Cheney on the war in Iraq. Hoxby is the latest in a line of right-wing economists who has won herself a job at Stanford and a sinecure at the Hoover Institution (and a job at Stanford for her husband) by publishing a series of studies that always have the same findings: charter schools are always better.

Eric Hanushek did the same thing by publishing a series of studies in which he conflated "class size" and "with teacher/student ratio" and lied about the impacts.

As for Winters' claims, two-hundredths of a standard deviation is a joke.

I wish there were more real conservatives with integrity who did research and wrote about education, but given who controls the money and the perks in what passes for the conservative world, there's enormous pressure to go along with the political Right's agenda if you want to get ahead.

In any case, I wonder why you'd include this excerpt in *Ed Rev*.

Best,

David Marshak

Editor's response: Good catch, David. This one just slipped by me. It is ironic, perhaps, that many educators with progressive, even radical views are politically aligned with the Right when it comes to government-dictated schooling. We welcome studies that show how ineffective or harmful this approach is. However, while we share a mistrust of top-down systems, it is important to be aware of significant differences in our perspectives, and I dropped the ball on this one.

Book Review

Continued from page 21

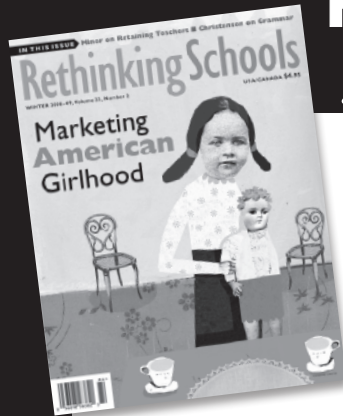
machinery, allow a model like All Saints to wither and die?

If the lessons of All Saints College are properly understood—the fundamental message is that young people can be trusted to make the important decisions that will direct their lives—then we may find a way out of the morass in which we currently find ourselves. *Out of the Fire* celebrates vision and hope and the role of teachers as nurturers of human potential rather than as mere custodians of dry curriculum.

Out of the Fire is available through the website <http://www.allsaintseducation.co.za/allsaintscollege.htm>.

Sharon Caldwell is Editor of *Montessori Leadership*, the journal of the International Montessori Council. She is the founder of a democratic Montessori school in South Africa and is mother to two self-directed home-educated teenage sons. ●

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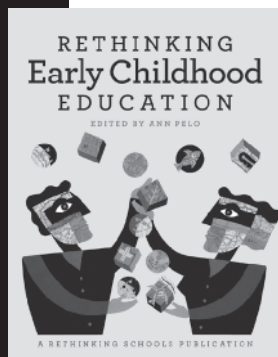
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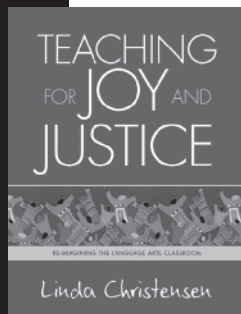


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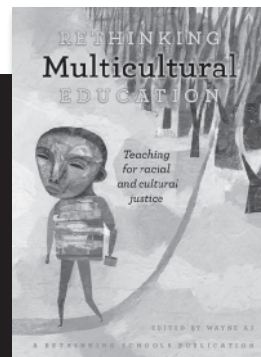


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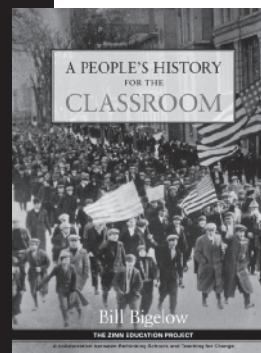
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