

DOUBLE ISSUE

# THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

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With special **CHANGING SCHOOLS** section  
The Magazine of the Alternative Education Resource Organization

(Formerly AERO-gramme)

[www.educationrevolution.org](http://www.educationrevolution.org)



*Some of the 1500 students, teachers and administrators at the Albany protest of high states testing and the New York State Regents exam P 3*

**CHANGING SCHOOLS** section: P28  
**High States Testing, Interview with Bob Barr**

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## ***The Education Revolution***

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phone: 516-621-2195 or 800-769-4171 fax: 516-625-3257

e-mail: [jerryaero@aol.com](mailto:jerryaero@aol.com) Web site: <http://www.educationrevolution.org>

Editor: Jerry Mintz

Associate Editor: Albert Lamb

Mail and Communications Editor: Carol Morley

Director of Information and Communications: Steve Rosenthal

Director of Research and Development: Dana Bennis

Printer: Joel Hymowitz, Sir Speedy Printing, New Hyde Park, NY

Webmaster: Peter Christopher

### ADVISORY BOARD

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# The Anti-Testing Movement Broadens

By Albert Lamb



*Students and teachers march at Albany protest against high stakes testing*



The threat of national legislation mandating high-stakes testing has been radicalizing teachers, parents and students all across the United States. A looming disaster in public policy is now making people think again about the standardized testing of children. The challenge will be to use this disaster to get people to rethink the whole subject of what children are doing in schools.

President Clinton's 1997 proposal setting up voluntary national tests in reading and mathematics was created to do something on the national stage that was already happening in many states around the country. These new tests were called 'high-stakes' because they can supposedly be used to track both the students and the schools, deciding whether individual pupils can move up a grade or even graduate, and determining the future funding for the schools.

The testing of adults, in the workplace and the army, has been increasingly accepted in America over the last century or so.

People respect tests for seeming scientific and fair. More recently, over the last 25 years, mandated testing in schools has been growing exponentially. Beginning in the seventies, with the minimal competency testing movement, many states have looked to formal testing as a way of turning up the heat under teachers, pupils and schools. Both lawmakers and the education establishment have grown to love mandated tests because they let them exercise control without getting their hands dirty. Testing has proved to be a low-cost way of seeming to show that those who are responsible have acted with responsibility. And on the whole the idea of the enforced testing of children has been popular with the general public.

Unfortunately for everybody, these tests don't work. Teachers start to teach to the test instead of to the curriculum and soon nothing gets learned. Students skim the material to memorize a subject quickly and then forget the whole thing. In the process they lose any desire to really learn anything. And kids coming from outside of the mainstream don't even have a chance to be judged fairly. All of a sudden Big Brother is in the driver's seat and nobody has any power but the testing companies, the politicians and the education establishment.

As it happens, the scores on high-stakes tests are not accurately representative of anything. As E. Wayne Ross and Kevin D. Vinson have written in their article on High-Stakes Testing in this issue: "Recent studies suggest that state-mandated tests, like those given in Michigan and Ohio, more accurately measure family income than students' educational achievement."

In the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel last January Barbara Miner commented; "it's revealing that standardized tests have their origins in the Eugenics movement earlier in this century, and its belief in the intellectual superiority of northern European whites. In fact, standardized testing in our schools didn't really exist until it was decided that IQ and similar tests were a valid way to identify 'superior' and 'inferior' students." - The thinking being that: "Because socio-economic status plays such a crucial role in test scores, it's easy to predict which students, schools and districts will routinely be condemned as 'below average.'"

The Alliance for Childhood recently issued A Statement of Concern and a Call to Action on the issue of high-stakes testing. They said: "We believe that this massive experiment, intended to raise educational achievement, is based on misconceptions about the nature and value of testing and about how children develop a true love of learning," and they highlighted several key points - (1.) The Technology of Testing is Flawed - (2.) Tests Scores Have Meaning Only in the Context of the Whole Child - (3.) Evidence is Growing of Harm to Children's Health - (4.) More High-Stakes Teaching Means More Dropouts, Fewer Good Teachers - and finally, (5.) Standardization is the Enemy of Effective Public Schools.

Monty Neill, executive director of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest), made a good point on the op-ed page of *USA Today* back in September: "Test-driven education flunks on many grounds. One-size-fits-all standardized exams assume that every child learns in the same way at the same time. Fortunately for society, young people have all kinds of minds. Some excel at academic work. Others have vocational or artistic talents that the tests do not measure."

Since coming to power President Bush has upped the ante. Every child in public school is going to have to take frequent high-

stakes tests. While saying that he wants to return power to the local level Bush has been pushing legislation which will greatly add to the power of the central government. To quote an article entitled "Let Them Eat Tests" in the Winter 2000-2001 FairTest Examiner: "With great fanfare, President George W. Bush focused the first week of his presidency on a plan to radically increase testing and institute vouchers through a new federal education program. While the voucher scheme is given little chance of passage in Congress, the testing proposals — federally mandated test score abuse — constitute a major threat to assessment reform efforts and will particularly harm poor children.

"In the name of 'accountability,' Bush proposes to require every state to test all public school students in grades 3 - 8 every year in language arts and math in exchange for federal funds. Students in low-scoring schools which fail to post test-score gains over three years would be able to use their share of federal funds for private tutoring or to attend other public schools. Other sanctions and rewards could be imposed on those schools. The threat of federal funding sanctions will make state tests high-stakes, even where they now are not."

At least this new high-stakes testing system won't work smoothly or be put in place without some major bumps. In an article entitled "Right Answer, Wrong Score: Test Flaws Take Toll," the Sunday New York Times recently reported that the companies checking the exam scores: "cannot guarantee the kind of error-free, high-speed testing that parents, educators and politicians seem to take for granted." These companies are already working beyond their capacity and recently some major errors have been reported around the country. In California, for instance, where an audit on the state's tests was done - "In 1998, nearly 700 of the state's 8,500 schools got inaccurate test results." Unfortunately, when mistakes show up it is often too late for all those college-bound kids who had originally taken the tests hoping to move up in September.



**Alfie Kohn speaks to protesters in Albany**



**Public alternative school student addresses the crowd**

Photo by John Lawhead



**1500 students and teachers gather in front of Capitol steps in Albany**

Early in May this year protests were held in a dozen states across the country, to launch a month of protests against high-stakes testing. In New York a third of the eighth graders in a Scarsdale public school class boycotted their science test. The New York Times reported: "Scarsdale schools were required to administer the tests, but in several letters to parents, the superintendent and other officials made it clear that they did not support the tests" Around the same time, at a rally in Albany NY that Jerry attended with a group from the Free School (see box) 1,500 students, teachers and administrators from around the state came to protest mandatory testing and grade school achievement tests. These were imposed by the current New York education Commissioner, Richard Mills, who had rescinded a waiver, which enabled public alternatives to use portfolio assessment. At the rally, Alfie Kohn pointed out the obvious hypocrisy of Mills, who he quotes as writing - when he was Vermont Commissioner of Education in 1989 - "Teachers don't want to reduce the richness of a year's work to a single score!

We are undertaking this project (for portfolio assessment - ed) because we are interested in real student work, real performance, not the proxy delivered by standardized tests."

Michael Fried, a junior at New York's East Rockaway High School, has been part of the protest and had this to say: "What I have learned from the endless hours of preparation," he writes, "is that these tests are designed for the sole purpose of nothing. All the exams do is provide an extra burden. The exams lack the essential ingredients of a good education: substance, originality and creativity."

Bill Wetzel, founder of Power to the Youth ([www.youthpower.net](http://www.youthpower.net)), recently wrote to the AERO listserve about his plans to create a network for people against standardized testing, to be called Students Against Testing (SAT). The site will be at [www.nomorettests.com](http://www.nomorettests.com). He will be trying to publicize and research the already existing and growing anti-standardized test movement. Bill got the idea for the SAT after attending the Dewey summit out in Indiana. He wrote to the AERO listserve: "as the standardized testing insanity was brought up again and again, I decided with the group to start a Students Against Testing (SAT) campaign."

He sees the need for a network because people involved in the growing number of grassroots testing boycotts around the country are not in touch with each other. He also hopes that the movement can feature more students as they are "the most media-friendly within the testing boycotts," and, finally, he hopes that, "the widely-publicized standardized test issue can be used as a powerful bridge between the mainstream education debate and the progressive education debate."

Amen to that.

Alfie Kohn has written well about this issue on his personal website, [www.alfiekohn.org](http://www.alfiekohn.org) :

"A plague has been sweeping through American schools, wiping out the most innovative instruction and beating down some of the best teachers and administrators. Ironically, that plague has been unleashed in the name of improving schools. Invoking such terms as 'tougher standards,' 'accountability,' and 'raising the bar,' people with little understanding of how children learn have imposed a heavy-handed, top-down, test-driven version of school reform that is lowering the quality of education in this country.

"It has taken some educators and parents a while to realize that the rhetoric of 'standards' is turning schools into giant test-prep centers, effectively closing off intellectual inquiry and undermining enthusiasm for learning (and teaching). It has taken even longer to realize that this is not a fact of life, like the weather - that is, a reality to be coped with - but rather a political movement that must be opposed."

## Jerry Reports from the Albany Protest!

I just participated in and documented what may in the future be considered a watershed event. Over 1500 alternative public school students and teachers marched in protest of the testing which has been mandated by Richard Mills, New York's Commissioner of Education. He removed the waiver, which allowed them to use portfolio assessment instead of the New York State Regents Test. This man made his reputation championing portfolio assessment when he was Commissioner of Vermont. Mills was quoted, by Alfie Kohn, as supporting it in 1989. Alfie Kohn was one of many speakers (including several students), who addressed the rally. Mills personifies hypocrisy. One of the battle cries of the marching students was Don't put us through the Mill."

One student, from a school in a district which used to have a 90% dropout rate, said her school had 100% passing rate last year - but now refuses to take this test. Another, a parent from affluent Scarsdale, said 2/3 of the school refused to take the test this year, and she will travel around the state to organize other schools.

A New York City Councilman said if Mills doesn't back off she will sponsor legislation to create a New York City high school diploma. "Please don't make me do this!" she said.

I walked over to the rally with a rag tag bunch of elementary students and staff from Albany's Free School. They are not forced to take the tests yet because the school is private, so they went to support those who are refusing to take them.

There's lots more, but it's late and I wanted to tell you this much. I shot about an hour of video there, including some brief interviews and some of the speeches. It's pretty hot stuff. (Call the AERO office for a copy).



Photo by John Lawhead

*Protestors on the Capitol steps in Albany*

## Alternative Education Action Groups

By Dana Bennis

AERO is announcing a new project that has tremendous potential: the establishment of Alternative Education Action Groups in local areas. People in the United States and around the world have expressed a need for this, and it has been a recent discussion topic on the AERO listserv. Such Action Groups will provide an opportunity for dedicated people to brainstorm ideas and effect real action in their local region. The possibilities for these groups are limitless, and could focus on the lack of democratic schools in their area, the establishment of homeschool resource centers, and opposition to the testing craze, to name a few ideas. On June 21, AERO will host the first meeting of an Alternative Education Action Group for our local area, NYC and Long Island.

AERO will help in the creation of Action Groups throughout the country and the world in any way that we can. Our resources will be available for such groups at a discounted rate, including our videos, audiotapes, books, and magazine subscriptions. We will also provide groups with important contact lists of people who have connected with AERO from your local area. In addition, we are in the process of setting up an online database for the AERO website, to which people interested in local action groups could post their information, making instant networking possible. Visit the website for these future changes.

If you are interested in starting or joining an Alternative Education Action Group in your area, or would like to discuss this idea further, call us at 800 769-4171, or send an email to JerryAERO@aol.com.

## AERO Listserve Members Rescue Stork School



*Students at Stork School Celebration*

The triumphant 10th anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Stork Family School in Vinnitsa, Ukraine was the cover story in the last issue of *The Education Revolution*. But just several weeks after I returned from Ukraine, we received an urgent email from Oleg Belin.

SOS

HI everybody,

The tenth anniversary of Stork School is likely to turn out to be the last one. Now our bank account is arrested because of our old debts for heat. Up to now we were allowed to pay for current consumption plus cover a part of the debt each month. It was understood that gradually the debt would be covered. But all of sudden the right to demand our debt was transferred to the tax administration and they are trying to make us pay all the sum (about \$5000) immediately.

We keep struggling and never lose hope. We still hope to find understanding people in the administration and we believe in our friends' support and in God's help.

Bye,

Oleg

Perhaps it was not coincidental or ironic; perhaps it was a direct result of the publicity about the Stork Family School's radical and nurturing approach to education which caused some jealous bureaucrats to freeze the school's account, over \$5,000 in past heating bills, effectively shutting down the school. According to Ukraine law, any tuition that was paid by parents and any money given to the school had to go to satisfy that debt before it could go to the operations of the school.

The news hit the AERO listserves like a bombshell. In what is possibly an unprecedented action, the members of the AERO listserves during the next several weeks donated enough

money towards saving the Stork School that we covered the debt when those contributions were matched by the Edwards Foundation. We immediately sent the funds to the school and Stork was back in business. In fact, not long after that, the school was inspected by government inspectors for accreditation. The inspectors were so enthusiastic about the school that not only did they approve it, they joked that they hoped the school approved of them! They even participated in an internet chat with the AERO office from the Stork computer room.

Here is Oleg's thank you letter:

We received the money we needed to cover the debt to the company that used to provide heat to our school. Thank you for such a great help to us. Now our bank account has been released and we keep going. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed. We really couldn't expect your help to be so quick and effective. This proves we have genuine and very kind friends in different countries. I'm afraid we just can't thank all of you enough. Love and best wishes from all our staff and students.

Oleg.

Congratulations to the following people, who were some of those who helped us save the Stork School:

John Hiner, Tae Wook Ha, Carol Morley, Koskinen Marko Tapio, Beth Stone, Helen Hughes, Lisa Marie Kennedy, Ken Jacobson, Moishik Lerner, Yacov Hecht, The Institute for Democratic Education, Dana Bennis, Debbie Smith, Kara Willowbrook, Mari-Jean Melissa, Moscow International Film School, Rogers School, The Edwards Foundation, The Free School in Albany, Tamariki School, Angela Sevin, Steven Brown, Pat Edwards, Angela Stafford, The Edwards Foundation

Several people ordered copies of the video we made of the Stork School Celebration documentary. One said, "I loved your Stork video. What an amazing school. You have some of the best footage of happy young faces I've ever seen." Call AERO to order. Each sale will support Stork.

## Sudbury Valley on 60 Minutes

On a Sunday night at the end of April the television news magazine 60 Minutes featured a segment on the Sudbury Valley School. Millions of people around the world had their first sight of free kids at a free school. In the 12 minute segment Morely Safer talked to a panel of parents and the show contrasted an interview with one of the school's founders, Dan Greenberg, with a woman from the Massachusetts Department of Education (I didn't see the show here in England but this must have been quite a contrast! *Albert*). At one point the Dept. of Ed. Official said: "These children are too young to know what their passions will be later in life," which will not have endeared her to many children watching the show. The 60 Minutes team didn't choose to talk to any ex-pupils and they also didn't emphasize the democratic side of the school. But they did talk to current pupils and had some shots of life at the school, including shots of one-

on-one tutorials. They also had the wit to feature a 12-year-old girl, named Amanda, saying: "I don't need someone to grade me to know that I'm doing good," and another girl, a teenager, saying, "I like going to school because it's so relaxing."

Some people on the Sudbury Listserve group felt that the segment concentrated too much on the smokers in the smoking area and on kids playing video games, but teenagers across the country will probably have been impressed. They will at least have seen proof that Sudbury Valley kids have powers over their lives that are not just some fake, put-up job. As Stephanie Smith said on the SVS listserv: "Thank you for showing the school as it is. Not perfect, but very, very real."

## AERO Matching Fund up to \$8008 of \$10,000 Needed

AERO has been facing a financial crisis which does threaten our existence this, our 11th year. We did not get the grant funded from the foundation which usually supports us and can not reapply until next year. They gave us \$35,000 in grants last year. Our operating expenses last year were \$122,000. \$35,000 of that was given to alternative schools in third world countries, from the Edwards Foundation. Total salary was \$40,000, including \$29,000 to AERO full and part time staff, and \$9600 to Jerry Mintz as director. AERO has been offered a \$10,000 matching grant, as you probably know, because we did a mailing to all current AERO subscribers, the first such solicitation we have done in five years. The condition was that the grant be matched by other than our usual funding sources. At this point we have raised \$8008 of the \$10,000. This has come from 67 different donors.

Four of the donations were for \$1000, from Fred Bay, Corinne Steele, Mary Leue, and Nick and Andrea Stanton. Peter Christopher, AERO's webmaster, donated \$500. Carol Morely donated her pay for working on this issue of the magazine. And we received this note from a reader of our new e newsletter:

**"I found your website last summer when I was searching the internet for information for a graduate class. I was looking for resources on and for students at-risk. I enjoyed the free magazine you sent and the one I recently downloaded. You have kept in touch with me ever since I initially contacted you. You even gave me a call soon after that. Impressive. I have an interest in reaching students at risk (as I was one myself). I enjoy learning about ways to reach these students and learning about all types of alternatives helps the creativity to flow. I want to donate to the match program." \$65 was sent through the website.**

I think we need to create some momentum, not only to quickly meet this \$10,000 matching fund, but to go beyond it, if AERO is to continue functioning as a vital force in the educator revolution. To me, simple survival for its own sake is no longer

acceptable. With the current uproar about testing protests, violence in schools, and having Sudbury Valley on 60 Minutes, this is a time when we all need to act. Sometimes I think our work is counterproductive, because people who know us take it for granted that we'll always, somehow find a way to keep going. The point is not to just keep going, but to "keep our eye on the prize," which is to make respectful, empowered, learner-centered education a reality for all children.

We'd like to thank the following donors, and hope that you, our readers, the backbone of the movement for educational alternatives, will complete the matching fund and continue your wonderful support of us.

Fred Bay, Thomas Baker, Sam Blum, Mary Byrd, Robert Burkhardt, Peter Christopher, Kathleen Clinesmith, Jeff Davis, James Dick, Pat Edwards, Jay Feldman, First Data Corp, Les Garber, Linda Garrett, Don Glines, Audrey Goodfriend, Greg Goodman, Dan Greenberg, Elizabeth Grimmond, Lee Havis, Julie Hill, Regan Houlotte, Sandra Hurst, Helen Hughes, Joe Jackson, Debra Johnston, Bob Knipe, Arnold Langberg, Nikki Lardas, Grace Lefever, Mary Leue, Robin Martin, Robert Mc Kinnon, Roland Meighan, Jim Murphy, Ellen Pall, Emanuel Pariser, Jan Paulseen, Ann Peery, Andy Pelche, Mary Ann Raywid, Dale Reed, Sharon Rose, Stephanie Sarantos, Schwartz-Gralla Family, Michelle Senzon, Kamiar Shakidi, Elina Shapel, Jennifer Shea, Peter Shier, Helena Singer, Spring Smith, David Solmitz, Nick and Andrea Stanton, Corinne Steele, Rose Anne Steenhoek, Marge Thornton, Dave Van Manen, Robert Van Nood, Pat Wagner, Erin Wellman, Elizabeth Wertheim, Melanie Whitham, Sara Woodall.



*Corinne Steele and Fred Bay, AERO Advisory Board Members*

## Report on the Israeli Democratic Education Conference

I heard from Moishik that at this year's IDEC there were about 500 participants, from Israel as well as Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Germany. There were about 150 Arab Israelis who attended the opening, and about half of them participated in the

whole conference. One day the conference was held in an Arab village, with about 250 from the conference going there in busses. The overall tone was great. About a third of the people stayed together in tents erected on the lawn. Jerry.

From David:

For the opening, the children of Kfar Kara School, an Israeli-Palestinian village arrived, sung with their choir and danced "depka" (an Arab folk-dance). The German team also sang "Heveinu Shalom" in Hebrew. The opening was really nice. The Stork couple is here, and Alexander Tubelsky from the School of Self-Determination. Also some Polish people came to participate. And a lot of Israelis. Today is the third day of the congress and tomorrow will be the closure. I will try sending you some more impressions afterwards.

From Moishik:

I am still resting from last week. For me it was a huge effort that didn't give me much satisfaction. It was too much work; I was working especially with the problems that naturally came from everywhere, so I saw mostly this side. But on the weekend people called and told me that they enjoyed it very much. I hope to have many photos in the coming days so I will be able to send them in the Internet. The fact that most of the people that attend the IDEC every year didn't come made it really not international. Next year the IDEC will have the same problem because New Zealand is so far.

## Summerhill's 80<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Festival of New Schools, Russia

On August 3-5, **Summerhill School** will have its **80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** for students, parents, alumni and old friends who will come from all over the world to participate. Two AERO staff and at least one former Summerhill student will be going in our group.

After the Summerhill reunion, we will go to **Tenth Anniversary of the First Festival of New Schools**, in Moscow, Russia from August 6-16, the. This celebration will take place on a ship going down the Volga River. I went to the First New Schools Festival with Noah Shankin, a student from Virginia, in August on 1991, We left the Soviet Union on the day of the coup, after which there was no Soviet Union! Where we had been standing the day before, in front of Yeltzin's White House, Yeltzin stood the next day, atop a tank, daring them to attack. They didn't.

At that Festival we made our first contact with the Stork Family School, the Eureka Free University, the School of Self-Determination, Alexander Adamsky, Elaine Shapel, Alexander Tubelsky, Oleg Belin, and many other organizations and individuals. This has led to wonderful communication and



exchanges between Eastern European and Western alternatives. We subsequently participated in several Eureka Avant Garde seminars, and have hosted many groups, in the USA and at IDECs.

For more information: Ute Roehl, Frans Halslaan 13, 1412 HS Naarden, The Netherlands Tel. +31-35-6944583 fax +31-35-6950368. [ute.roehl@hetnet.nl](mailto:ute.roehl@hetnet.nl) or contact the AERO office.

## Ouida Mintz Recovers from Broken Hip

As you may have noticed in previous issues, my mother (and long time AERO staffer) **Ouida Mintz**, has written a book about her life in music and growing up with Leonard Bernstein. It is called *My Friend Lenny*. Her life was going along fine at 80 years plus. She had been with her friend Ray Sandeford, who helped typeset the book, for ten years. She was teaching piano, driving to her student's houses, promoting her book and answering the phone for AERO. All that changed in just one moment on March 8<sup>th</sup>, when she walked out of the bakery at our local shopping center, carrying two loaves of bread.

As she headed across the parking lot she stepped into a pothole, which was covered with water, and tripped - falling on her hip and fracturing it. The ambulance brought her to the hospital. She had surgery the next day, with screws being put into the bone to hold it in place.

That would all seem to be traumatic and straightforward enough, but that was just the beginning. When elderly people have hip surgery or many other procedures, they are not able to metabolize the various anesthetics and antibiotics the way young people do, and there are complications in over 50 percent of the cases. Thus began a nightmarish odyssey of 5 weeks in the hospital during which time she contracted various infections, became comatose and hallucinatory, and we wondered if we would ever bring her back from that state. In addition, one of the antibiotics they gave her caused her kidneys to stop and they informed me that she had a lung disease which would require her to be on oxygen for the rest of her life. After a hundred trips to the hospital, it is clear to me that without intervention on the part of relatives and other interested people, it is quite likely that a person in that state will not survive their stay in the hospital.

Most of what I did involved getting them to take her off various drugs and therapies. I also got advice and even equipment from my naturopath. One example: she was given Atenylol for high blood pressure, but when I checked the records on her blood pressure it seemed perfectly fine. When it seemed to be getting too low, I convinced them to cut the dose in half and eventually to suspend it altogether. Her blood pressure has remained low and the side effects from that medication have disappeared. In fact, my mother walked out of the hospital with no medications, she does not use oxygen (they never explained how that lung disease disappeared), she is back teaching, driving, and promoting her book. She just did a talk at a local community center. She would really like it if you bought her book!

Several famous contemporary pianists as well as Mike Wallace from *60 Minutes* and Alexander Bernstein, Leonard's son, have endorsed it. We're in the process of arranging her to do a

book signing at Tanglewood (the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra) this summer.

All of this does put life into perspective, doesn't it?



*Ouida Mintz and Ray Sandiford at recent talk*

## AERO 31 Feedback

From **Vera Miller**:

Welcome back! Thank you so much for putting time and energy writing about your experience in Ukraine, with the Stork family. I think I have mentioned this to you before, but I envy your ability to be around these amazing people, entrepreneurs of a new education, a new society; and I admire your crusade. It is always inspiring to witness vicariously the sprouting and growth of ideas and dreams. Thank you.

From Oleg:

I've just gotten the stunning issue of *The Education Revolution*. First I got a telephone call from the mail woman, who told me to be sure to take out the mail from my box, as there's a picture of me. And when I got it I was just amazed. So was everybody at school. The article and the pictures are superb. Thanks and love from everybody.

From **Kriszta Derda** at the **Rogers School** [roginf@freemail.hu](mailto:roginf@freemail.hu) (Hungary)

Thank you so much for the magazine you sent us. It was really a great experience for me to read about the Stork Anniversary again. It was a great week which we spent there. We could meet wonderful people / teachers parents, students / there, and it was important for me to see that we have so much similarities in our history, in our problems and in our way of thinking. We are deeply grateful to you for your financial support. It was just essential for us to get home, because we had to pay extra "black" money for the conductor if we didn't want to get off at the border: It was the money you gave us that help us. I hope we can meet in May at Rogers days (May. 30. 31. June 1.) and at IDEC.

# Feedback From AERO e-Newsletter

From Brian Covert in Osaka, Japan:

Thanks very much for the new issue of The Education Revolution, #31. A few moments after receiving your notice today on the AERO list that the latest issue was out, I happened to check the mail and there was the new ER right there in the mailbox. Talk about quick service! (How did you DO that?!

You were asking about feedback on issue #31....

The coverage of the Stork Family School in the Ukraine looks fantastic; thanks for sharing that special celebration with us.

I noticed a lot of great photos of children in this issue of ER, but it struck me as I was leafing through the pages: "Where are the kids' words?" And not just kids in Ukraine, but in many of the other countries covered so well in ER.

How about reserving a permanent space in each issue of ER for students of alternative schools and learning centers around the globe to write in and share their experiences in their particular country? I'm sure alternative-school students around the globe would be thrilled to see what their peers are doing in other countries.

I am always impressed by the dedication of the many teachers, mentors and parents who fill the pages of ER, but I would love to see more words from the young people themselves. Perhaps ER could start by soliciting an essay or two from a couple alternative schools in some region of the world?

In that same vein, please continue doing a great job on the "international" emphasis of The Education Revolution. Many people assume that just because a publication is based in North America, it is automatically "international." Not necessarily so, as you have no doubt found out firsthand in your travels in many nations. The US and Canada have much to learn — and share — with those of us homelearners and alternative educators around this small world.

Living in Japan, we enjoy the coverage of Asia in ER. We will try to keep you posted regularly as to what is happening here in Japan and neighboring Asian countries. Japan is just now coming around to public acceptance of home-based and alternative education, and while Japan may admittedly not be one of the "pioneers" in this field, it certainly has something to offer to the international dialogue.

Lastly — and most importantly — please continue to banish paid-advertising from the pages of The Education Revolution. After all, a revolution's gotta start somewhere!

AERO is now publishing a weekly e-newsletter which has over 2500 subscribers, all people who have directly contacted AERO. Let us know if you'd like to be on it. We may not have had your e-mail address. In a recent issue we asked for letters of support from people who have been helped by AERO, to be used in our grants and fundraising (we can use more!). Here are some responses:

## **From a teacher:**

Thanks to AERO I learned of hundreds to thousand of schools across the world that have EXCEPTIONAL learning going on. I contacted and visited some schools in order to learn about different teaching methods. I now teach with some understanding and learn with an even broader opening in my mind and heart. I appreciate AERO!!!

## **From a prospective teacher:**

AERO has recently helped/inspired me on my job hunt for alternative schools in the Twin Cities . . . and, after a talk with Jerry, to better understand the spectrum of progressive educational options in relation to my past and current teaching experiences. This has been of great help to me in my search to find the setting in which I can be my best teacher self.

## **From a university student:**

Although I am not a teacher, you help me by giving me hope that there is some sanity in the world in the midst of the obsession with grading and testing and putting pressure on people, which all is ultimately driven by a deeper obsession with owning things and making money.

## **From Yugoslavia:**

There are many ways in which AERO has helped me. Here are only few:

\*AERO has been sending the Education Revolution to me closely a year now. It has proven to be a valuable source of inspiration and information for me. It has also extended me the opportunity to share my experiences and views with an understanding community. It has helped me not to feel as if I am giving my energy into a black hole.

\*AERO has sponsored my visit to alternative school Stork in Ukraine in January 2001 as to offer me the opportunity to explore operating models of alternative schools in East Europe. That offered me the opportunity to meet people with similar visions and to build a small network of friends.

\*AERO listserv has provided constant source of information and means to connect people that are otherwise dispersed and immersed into unsympathetic environments. This has created an oasis of creative thinking, inspiration and support for me.

## **From a college student:**

Your magazine and other published books have been of enormous

help for me. It has given me a sense of strength and encouragement when having discussions about alternative education. Some people need an explanation of it because they do not know it even exists.

I recently took a course in Early Childhood Education and chose my research topic to be Alternative Choices in Education and why many choose this route for their children. It was wonderful to have your info as well as the ability to educate and inspire so many others in my class! Everyone wanted me to continue talking. Thanks! I am now an official spokesperson.**From grandparents:** As parents and grandparents, faced with making a daily living to provide and survive, not knowing where to turn for positive action has caused heartache, emotional pressure and illness as well as made each school year a living hell for us to battle. This has resulted in family hardship, battling the school system, and caused our children to dread each day. Alternative schooling is almost a hush shush word. Too late to help many, it is just starting to gain strength, get the word out and let people know how to go about achieving schooling they want! It's imperative that parent's have the right to choose what they want for their children in education.

**From a high school student:**

I got my first issue of the magazine in the mail yesterday and it is wonderful!! It has a ton of great information. I told my mother the subscription was a bad idea because I am finding even more books that I want as I read through it! I would love to be able to get more involved in the organization somehow, even from this

far away. Thanks so much!

**From a new homeschooler:**

Thanks! My parental unit checked out the homeschool program you suggested, and I'll start next semester. My insane life just got A little easier because of you. Thanks

**From an unschooler:**

I feel very much a part of this movement and consider it to be one of the "greatest human enterprises" to be happening today. I love AERO's work and the huge contribution it has made to the movement through exhaustive research, networking, etc., as well as their publication, *The Education Revolution* (a powerful title). I also think its really cool that AERO provides a web forum for alternative education advocates to share information, insights, ideas, feelings, etc. We need to continue to strengthen our voice in order to effect transformation in the mass-consciousness around "education". Homeschool is not THE answer—it's an answer that's very viable for millions of people. Everyone I know (myself included) who has done or is doing homeschooling has struggled with the decision. It's a always big decision to go against the mainstream, just for starters. A final note would be that I yearn for solidarity among fellow alternative education folk. We really need to find our common ground and respect one another's individuality. We're all in this together.

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# MAIL AND COMMUNICATIONS

Edited by Carol Morley

**F**rom review by Richard House of *Without Boundaries: Consent-based, Non-coercive Parenting and Autonomous Learning* by Jan Fortune-Wood, *Education Now: Without Boundaries* outlines the theory and practice of learning based on the radical Taking Children Seriously (TCS) philosophy, which views any form of coercion as destructive of individual autonomy and antithetical to healthy learning.... TCS philosophy is truly revolutionary in its challenge to the logic of fixed curricula, enforced teaching and adult-led subjects of learning. A key contention is that healthy thinking is necessarily damaged by coercion – damaged in terms of 'irrationality, poor theories, and a decrease in problem-solving capacity,' leading to a kind of pathologically inflexible, 'entrenched' thinking.... This is a veritable gem of a book, overflowing with profound, counterintuitive wisdom that presents a potentially devastating challenge to conventional, culturally fashionable approaches to modern(ist) education. Not least is the book's contribution to showing how our 'control-freak' educational culture, with its relentlessly imposed adult-centric agendas must be trenchantly challenged and urgently reversed if current 'modernizing' educational practices are not to perpetrate untold damage on a generation of children. And

for this contribution alone, *Without Boundaries* could hardly be of greater contemporary educational relevance. Spring 2001.



*Roland Meighan, founder of Education Now in England*

**O**ver the last 23 years, Roland Meighan has collected a large number of stories from the experiences of homeschooling families. In **Learning Unlimited: The Home-Based Education Case Files**, he presents 15 of these case files. Among these stories

are: "The Court Case," "The Home-Education Truant," "The Researcher," "The Cliff-Top Picnic," and "The Public Speaking Contest." All of the case files are based on true incidents. For more about the book, contact Educational Heretics Press, 113 Arundel Dr., Bramcote Hills, NottinghamNG9 3FQ.

**F**rom **Montessori Portended Recent Early Brain Research** by Mary Ellen Maunz, *Public School Montessorian*: Dr. Michael Phelps, leading authority on brain growth and co-inventor of the brain-imaging PET Scan, says: "The developmental years are not just a chance to educate, they're actually your obligation to form a brain and if you miss these opportunities, then you've missed them forever." Montessori practitioners have been utilizing this very concept, which we call the sensitive periods, for nearly 100 years.... At birth a child has between one and two hundred billion [neurons], which grow at the staggering rate of 2,000 per second during early pregnancy. Each neuron can connect to thousands of other neurons in the brain, making an incredibly large number of possible connections. It is these connections that are the stuff of human intelligence.... After birth, new connections are formed primarily through sensory input. If a child has an enriched environment of loving personal interactions...more connections will be formed. If these experiences continue and new dimensions to them are added, the child's neural structure will be enhanced for a lifetime of more successful learning. Those children, on the other hand, raised in an abusive or neglectful environment form the wrong kinds of connections. They suffer long-term damage, often ending in defensive, violent behavior. Science is beginning to understand the cause-effect relationship between multiple factors of neglect, abuse and violence.... And is also beginning to understand that severe early deprivation may be irreversible. Intervention programs beginning at ages four and five are too late. Winter 2001.

**E**very March, June, and September, groups of up to 14 interns join 10 staff members for an intensive ten-week learning experience at the **Aprovecho Research Center** in their sustainable living skills internship program featuring sustainable forestry, organic gardening, appropriate technology & ecological living. The Center is a 40-acre land trust operating to provide a basis for scientific research on appropriate technologies and techniques for simple and cooperative living, and to serve an educational role in disseminating information on such technologies and techniques. Classes combine lecture and discussion formats with practical, hands-on activities. 80574 Hazelton Road, Cottage Grove, OR 97424-9747. Tel: (541) 942-8198. Web: [www.efn.org/~apro](http://www.efn.org/~apro).

**F**rom **Class Action Suit Alleges Fraud in Use of Ritalin**, *Natural Life Magazine*: A class action lawsuit has been filed in Texas alleging that the manufacturer of the drug Ritalin, the American Psychiatric Association and an association of people with so-called attention deficit problems have "planned, conspired, and colluded to create, develop and promote the diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in a highly successful effort to increase the market for [the drug] Ritalin".... The suit states allegations based on fraud and conspiracy... and further asserts that in addition to its actions and involvement with the creation of the ADD and ADHD diagnosis, [manufacturer] Ciba/Novartis took steps to promote and dramatically increase the sales of Ritalin by way of: 1. Actively promoting and supporting the concept that a

significant percentage of children suffer from a "disease" which required narcotic treatment/therapy. 2. Actively promoting Ritalin as the drug of choice to treat children diagnosed with ADD and ADHD. 3. Actively supporting parent support groups... so that such organizations would promote and support (as a supposed neutral party) the ever-increasing implementation of ADD/ADHD diagnoses as well as directly increasing Ritalin sales. 4. Distributing misleading sales and promotional literature to parents, schools and other interested persons in a successful effort to further increase the number of diagnoses and the number of persons prescribed Ritalin. For more information visit [www.ritalinfraud.com](http://www.ritalinfraud.com) or email [information@ritalinfraud.com](mailto:information@ritalinfraud.com). Issue #76.

**O**n March 28, **Newsday** published letters about bullying written by young people on the *Student Briefing Page*. The following are some excerpts: "I have always tried to stick up for the kids who have been bullied. I am now afraid that a kid who has been picked on all the time could turn around and cause harm." MM, Grade 9. "I see a lot of bullying at school. I see it everywhere – in the bathroom, at recess, in hallways and on the buses." KJ, Grade 9. "I have been bullied in school every day." AK, Grade 5. "I see a lot of bullying at my school. I see bigger kids hurting the smaller kids. Also, girls talking, pointing and laughing at another person's expense. I have been bullied by the so-called popular group." MS, Grade 6. "I've seen bullying at school. If the bully was a bit weaker I would have done something. I could have told him to stop, but I was too scared. I was nervous about getting beat up. I was very scared." HK, Grade 6. "I have been a victim of bullying, and it didn't feel too good. It made me want revenge. I think that this can get a person too aggravated and this can result in violence or death." AR, Grade 6.

**F**rom **Education Reform, Dropouts**: Anti-dropout programs a decade ago often focused on students whose behavior signaled that they were "at risk." Those signs include truancy, tardiness, low grades or test scores, failure to concentrate or do homework, misbehavior, and a lack of close ties to teachers or peers. "Leaving school before graduation is seen as a bad decision that individual students make, often based on a pattern of low commitment to school and behaviors that lead to school failure," says Valerie Lee of the University of Michigan. More than 100 anti-dropout programs that relied on that theory were funded by the federal government in the early 1990s. Their strategies included tutoring, alternative schools for dropouts or potential dropouts and classes in leadership and self-esteem. Only 30 collected the kind of data that allowed their impact to be measured. Evaluating 16 of them, including alternative schools and special programs within existing schools, only one reduced dropout rates.... After this disastrous experiment with anti-dropout programs, more reformers concentrated on making existing schools work better for all students.... Lee found that, all other things being equal, dropout rates are lower in high schools that serve no more than 1,500 students and offer more challenging courses and fewer remedial or non-academic courses. "Except in schools with more than 1,500 students, dropout rates are also lower in schools where most students say that the teachers respect them," she says.... Some alternative programs for dropouts or potential dropouts increase high school completion rates at some of their sites. These are not to be confused with the "alternative schools" in many districts that simply warehouse burned-out teachers waiting to retire and violence-prone or failing students waiting to become old enough

to drop out legally. March 2001.

#### MEMORIAL FOR ERNEST MORGAN:

A memorial was held at the **Arthur Morgan School** on October 29, 2000 for Ernest Morgan, educator, author, storyteller, and adored friend. The son of Arthur Morgan died at the age of 95, and is remembered as "a man of integrity and vision." Over 200 friends, family, students, staff and alumni of the Arthur Morgan School attended the memorial and shared stories about Ernest. During his active life he had published the weekly Yellow Springs News, was an UN administrator for Arab relief in the Gaza Strip of Palestine, partners at Camp Celso with his wife **Elizabeth Morey Morgan** and assisted her in founding the Arthur Morgan School, an active advisor to the Community Services Inc. of Yellow Springs, OH, and Chairman of the Board Emeritus of The Antioch Company. He regularly updated his "Manual of Simple Burial," and wrote an autobiography, *Dealing Creatively With Life*, in 2000. From the *Celso Education Notes* of the Arthur Morgan School, "We will miss his daily presence and his wonderful stories."

**The International Montessori Council's** goal is to foster fellowship, educational excellence, collaboration, and innovation throughout the Montessori community worldwide. The IMC was formed to build bridges of peace, understanding, and cooperation among all members of the Montessori community. Individuals, schools, and organizations are invited to join the Council. Membership includes the quarterly journal, *Montessori Leadership*, access to Montessori Online, school assessment and accreditation, and more. For further information, contact IMC at 17808 October Court, Rockville, MD 20855. Tel: (800) 655-5843.

**The Cobscook Gathering: A Unique Blend of Arts and People's Education Courses** offers two weeks of enriching five-day courses designed to inspire, challenge and unite people from the Cobscook area and beyond. Courses will include Timber Frame Construction, Raku Pottery, Revitalizing Indigenous Languages, and Living with the Bay, among others. The gathering will take place the weeks of June 18 and June 25. For more information, contact Cobscook Community Learning Center & Institute for People's Education, Goddard College, 123 Pitkin Rd., Plainfield, VT 05667. Web: [www.thecccl.org](http://www.thecccl.org).

**Communities Where You Can Learn** is a listing of 44 communities compiled by Daniel Greenberg. Each community entry includes address, telephone number, brief description, web information if available, and notations regarding open houses, family/children programs, rentals available, etc. For more information contact Communities Journal of Cooperative Living, Rt. 1 Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563.

Issue #109 of the **Communities Journal of Cooperative Living** is focused on the topic of "Decision Making in Community." Articles include: Decision Making and Power; How to Make a Decision Without Making a Decision; Hand Signals in Group Process; Building Creative Agreements; Twelve Myths of Consensus; Consensus as a Spiritual Practice. The magazine is published quarterly by the Fellowship for Intentional Community, Route 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563.

**Don Glines** is compiling a comprehensive bibliography of educational alternatives including public school, education

reform, open education, magnets, classroom style, curriculum partners, and more. It will also list organizations, journals, websites, and potential future alternatives. To find out more, contact Don at the Educational Futures Projects, PO Box 2977, Sacramento, CA 95812. Tel: (916) 393-8701.

An international comparative study on alternative education is being conducted by **The National Institute for Educational Research** (NIER) of Japan. The study commenced in April 2000 and will conclude in April 2002. The objective of the project is to find key factors that may suggest solutions to the problem of children who do not attend school and the alternative schools that are emerging to serve these children. The study will observe and compare alternative schools and communities in fifteen countries, including Australia, US, Israel, Denmark, France, and Germany. NIER, 6-5-22 Shimomeguro, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-8681, Japan.

With its many overcrowded public high schools and a population boom underway, **Western Connecticut desperately needs more alternative**, small, democratic secondary schools. While the Waldorf and Montessori options are well-represented for the elementary and middle grades, teenagers in Fairfield and Litchfield counties are left with either the depersonalized "factory" style high schools or the overpriced, traditional "prep" schools. My dream is a small (100 students max), open, democratic high school on some beautiful property: baking, photography, book circles, gardening, traveling, internships, juggling, geology, medieval feasts, theater, painting, applied algebra, rocket launches, and whatever else we can cook up. Contact **Laura Webber** at [wwebby@aol.com](mailto:wwebby@aol.com).

**Public and Private Schools and Homeschooling** (PPSP-H) is a nation-wide email list created for the discussion of issues relating to public and private school programs which are directed at and marketed to homeschooling families. This is an open list, welcoming participants from all sides of the issue. Please respect differences of opinion. To subscribe, send a blank email message to [PPSP-H-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:PPSP-H-subscribe@egroups.com) or visit the PPSP-H website: <http://www.egroups.com/group/PPSP-H>. Helen Hegener, Listowner, [HEM-Editor@home-ed-magazine.com](mailto:HEM-Editor@home-ed-magazine.com).

**Vermont College** has recently started a new BA program called New College. This is a program designed more specifically for traditional age students. They come to campus for three one week residencies throughout the year and then return to their homes and lives to study. The main way they communicate with the other students and their faculty mentors is through the Internet. It is an exciting alternative to the traditional college experience and gives students the opportunity to study what they feel passionate about, play a lead role in designing their education, and at the same time continue their lives and possible jobs in the communities that they belong to. Contact Jasmine Lamb, Admissions Counselor, Vermont College of Norwich University, 36 College Street, Montpelier, VT 05602. Tel: (800) 336-6794 or (802) 828-8505. Fax: (802) 828-8855.

#### **Liberty School gets \$150,000 endowment!**

**Liberty School** recently had an all-school meeting called a student summit or vision quest, in which we explored student concerns and their visions for the future. Out of that discussion, the faculty and the school's curriculum committee, made up of

mostly students, are exploring courses and activities for next year. We are also offering a classical music program for music students who want to concentrate on their music and be prepared for music conservatories or music colleges. We also organized two travel experiences that gave students great perspective on our culture. One group of 9 students and a teacher spent the winter term in a small village in the south of France. Another group of 10 students, a teacher and parent went to Kenya for 3 weeks. And finally, we recently received an anonymous gift of \$150,000 to start an endowment fund. Though most of our students have their tuition paid by their town, there are students in towns that have their own high school and do not pay the tuition. The endowment fund will be for scholarships to those students. Receiving such a generous gift was not only a complete surprise but also an honor. It feels good that someone is recognizing our efforts to offer a learning experience that is liberating and moral. **Arnold Greenberg**

**Puget Sound Community School** has received a donation for the express purpose of renting a site by the fall of 2001. As you may know, adding the attributes of a home base has long been a dream of mine but we had been unable to get the funding in place until now. If we can parlay this donation into further enthusiasm for additional funding, we could purchase a place. As it stands, we can't afford both a down payment and a monthly mortgage payment. So, I'm writing to ask if you might have any ideas on how we could pursue additional funds. If you do, please let me know ASAP. Things need to move fast as it is a different ballgame to be looking at renting a space vs. buying one. If you yourself are interested in making a donation to assist with our site acquisition project, make checks payable to PSCS, note in the memo that these funds are for site acquisition, and send to: Andy Smallman, Puget Sound Community School, Attn: Site Committee, PO Box 51026, Seattle, WA 98115.

## PUBLIC ALTERNATIVES

The presidents of several teacher union locals in Massachusetts have joined with New Democracy in calling for **Mass Refusal** by teachers and teacher unions to administer the MCAS test in 2002. We invite other teacher union locals, parent organizations, faith-based groups, trade unions, civil rights and civic organizations—indeed, all organizations whose members have a stake in public education and the future of our children—to join in the call for Mass Refusal. We particularly encourage CARE and local CARE organizations to join us. Mass Refusal represents determination on the part of teachers to rely on their own collective strength to put an end to MCAS. Our focus will be not on talking to the legislature but on reaching out to the community with information about the destructive effects of MCAS, about who is behind it and why it is happening. Our immediate goal is to end this destructive test entirely, not only as a graduation requirement. But defeating MCAS is not enough. We must put an end as well to other destructive, corporate-led reforms and transform the schools in a positive direction. To do this we must expose and challenge the corporate forces behind MCAS and behind the attack on public education. If you want further information or would like to be involved, please get in touch with Dave Stratman at the above email address or call (617) 524-4073 or (508) 822-5837. Dave Stratman, Editor, New Democracy, 5 Burr Street, Boston, MA 02130. Web: [newdemocracyworld.org](http://newdemocracyworld.org).

Genius **Gregory Smith** (college sophomore at age 11), on the Oprah Show: "If a course is just review or too simplistic and offers no challenge or new material then an "A" means nothing to me. Although, if I attempt a course that is completely new material and everyone else in the class has had background courses and way ahead of me — then ah, I will learn! I think education should stress – *learning – not grades*. Too much emphasis is placed on grades and not enough on challenge! I want to encourage the youth to step out of the lines and grow! If I had limited my goals to grades then I would have been content to be in the 5th grade this year instead of my freshman year of college. My quest is for knowledge and wisdom, and that can only be accomplished by learning new concepts and discovering new ideas! *I am out of the box!*

address the needs of the highly gifted student. I have always worked independently, respectfully, and humbly; therefore, I spent my first two years of public school sitting in the hall, closets, back of the room, and storage rooms isolated from my age-peers. I was punished because I was smart. I was moved from class to class, grade to grade, in an attempt by the system to find an appropriate venue for my abilities. Obviously, my parents intervened and diligently worked to guarantee that I would no longer be emotionally abused by an academic environment that was supposed to support and facilitate higher learning.

"I believe that learning is fun; unfortunately, the labeling of studying, reviewing, and practicing, as "homework" sends the wrong message to students and is a disservice to the learning process. It is human nature not to enjoy "work" so we have set up intellectual roadblocks through our semantics. If we are successful in making the classroom interesting and the material intriguing then the impetus will be there to pursue the topics further outside of the classroom. Our goal should be *to inspire excitement for learning!*" Web: <http://www.gregorysmith.com/Questions&answers.html>.

### Survey of student opinion

This **survey of student opinion** was done with a representative sample of over 2000 students and I would guess, given the level of excellence in the standardization of education in the public system, that this kind of survey result is more or less accurate across North America. Agreements to the following statements were requested of over 2200 students in even 4 to 12 grades. The percent who agree per grade per question are listed below.

	Gr 4	Gr 6	Gr 8	Gr 10	Gr 12
What I'm learning in school is useful.	62%	47%	28%	19%	12%
I feel involved in my class.	41%	28%	17%	12%	6%
I feel cared about at school.	27%	17%	6%	9%	4%

Leaving the vast majority of the children feeling that school is irrelevant, uninvolved and uncaring. Brent Cameron M.A., Wondertree

Foundation for Natural Learning, Box 38083 Vancouver, BC V0B 2C0 Canada. Tel: (604) 224-3663. Email: brentcameron@telus.net. Web: [www.wondertree.org](http://www.wondertree.org).

According to the **Fair Test Examiner**, parent opposition to standardized testing is growing. In Arizona, parents and teachers in three major cities have taken measures to stop the Arizona Instrument to Measure Students (AIMS). Their concerns are with the exam's poor design, test anxiety in children, improper use for high-stakes decisions, and unfairness to special needs and limited English students. In Ohio, protests and forums organized by the Ohio Teachers Association drew hundreds of people to 33 sites. Parents and teachers protested the Ohio Proficiency Tests (OPT), in particular the planned use of 4<sup>th</sup> grade exams for promotion decisions. In Louisiana, a group of parents have filed a complaint with the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights charging that the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) discriminates against poor and minority children. Fall 2000.

From **Alternative Education in New York City** by Richard Organisciak, Superintendent of Alternative, Adult and Continuing Education at NYC Board of Education, *Education Update*: Within the Alternative High Schools and Programs Superintendency, there now exist 70 distinct schools and programs serving approximately 45,000 students in more than 400 citywide locations, 50,000 adult learners, 60,000 evening students and 110,000 summer students.... Alternative schools and programs offer instructional and support services at every level of student development.... With the onset of the new Regents learning standards, some skeptics in the political and educational arena are poised to predict the demise of alternative education. Regrettably, these negative pundits associate alternative education with meeting lower standards and outcomes, a stereotypical carryover from the early days of alternative schools and programs.... Each and every alternative school is cognizant of the new requirements and has met the challenge of higher expectations through its commitment to highly rigorous, demanding coursework, which need not always be subjected to standardized testing results to prove its value.... Remaining optimistic in a climate of sustained economic prosperity, it is safe to conclude that alternative education is a growth industry which will play an ever-increasing role in the future of New York City students of all ages for years to come. January 2001.



**Jim Wilde, President of the NYS Alternative Education Association. Speaks to participants at conference of International Network of Productive Schools in New York City in May**

**The Massachusetts Charter School Association** was formed last fall; it seeks to assist charter schools in disseminating their best practices and innovations to district schools, facilitate group purchasing of goods and services, and advocate on behalf of charter schools. For more information, please contact Dr. Marc Kenen at (413) 253-8970 or email [kenen@rcn.com](mailto:kenen@rcn.com).

**Facts about Charter School Performance**, from the Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center: Top 3 non-exam middle schools in Boston are charter schools; number two non-exam middle schools in math and English are charter schools; number three non-exam middle schools in math and English are charter schools; more than half of the 35 charter schools that administered the MCAS had school-wide averages on the mathematics or English portion of the exam that were in the proficient performance level; Eight charter schools had a zero percent failure rate on the English portion of the MCAS.

**The Institute for Democracy in Education** publishes a magazine titled **Democracy & Education**. The latest issue focused on living democracy in the Classroom. Included were such articles as "Thinking like Darwin: Struggle & Survival in Democratic Classrooms" by Steven Wolk, "We Teach on Wednesday – A Parody on School Reform" by Nelson Goud; "Free Student Press – because 12 years is too long to be silenced" by Damon Krane; and "The Classroom as a Holding Environment" by Susan Handler. The magazine is published quarterly by IDE, McCracken Hall, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701-2979. Web: <http://www.ohiou.edu/ide>. Tel: (740) 593-4531.

In our latest yearly battle with the school board, they canceled **The Renaissance Progressive School's** charter & a judge gave us an injunction. We thought this year we were getting through without a confrontation, but while we were in PA for the NCACS conference, they came onto our campus, had letters given to children that their school was closed and to report to their zoned school. It was pandemonium. The legislation doesn't give them this right, but supposedly they thought they could. They didn't expect our community to be so strong and our attorneys to be so fast. Being a public school for four years, the results have been phenomenal in everyway. From anecdotal stories of stressed children with migraines becoming whole and healthy again to our quantifiable test scores to exemplary external compliance audits. We have an incredible staff, but with growing every year and high school starting next year, it is always an effort to keep extraordinary teachers in the classroom. We need one experienced teacher for the teen-agers. Email: [jlm@strato.net](mailto:jlm@strato.net).

**Virginia** has an organization for alternative educators. Elizabeth Tompkins is the current President. For further info, she can be reached at: Chesapeake Alternative School, 920 Minuteman Drive, Chesapeake, VA 23323. Tel: (757) 494-7620.

In March, a group of fifteen students and adults from the **Youth Initiative High School** of Viroqua, Wisconsin boarded a bus for the first leg of a three-week trip to Guatemala and Mexico. The group first spent three days in the community of San Lucas

Toliman. While in San Lucas, the group from assisted the community in forestry and building projects as well as being briefed on the current situation in Guatemala. From there, the group traveled into the highlands of northern Guatemala to the village of Nueva Esperanza (Chacula). While in the village, the Youth Initiative group helped to expand a community gardening project using donated seeds, in addition to meeting with local organizations about the progress of the community. Then they visited the old colonial capital of San Cristobal de las Casas and met with local groups to discuss the current situation in Chiapas, especially the ongoing negotiations in Mexico City between the Mexican government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army to end the rebellion which began 1994. Finally, after a visit to the famous Mayan ruins at Palenque, the Youth Initiative group flew home,

arriving in Chicago on April 11. Youth Initiative High School is a private, democratically governed Waldorf initiative located in Viroqua, in rural southwestern Wisconsin. For more information, please see the YIHS website at [www.mwt.net/~yihs](http://www.mwt.net/~yihs).

**T**he **Wisconsin Charter Schools Association** was launched on January 13, 2001 at a meeting of the WCSA's 12 member founding board of directors at Oshkosh. The WCSA will work to advance the effectiveness of charter schools and the charter school movement in Wisconsin. They plan to create a clearinghouse of best practices for current and new charter schools, provide technical assistance to charter school operators, and advocate for strong charter school laws. WCSA, P.O. Box 628243, Middleton, WI 53562-8243. Tel: (608) 238-7491. Email: [sennb@chorus.net](mailto:sennb@chorus.net).

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# INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS

## AUSTRALIA

**An Australian Kid's Revolutionary Plan:** Are you sick of being forced to do subjects you don't like? If you are, then this plan may help. If we can get enough responses to this handout, this plan can go ahead. Plan: Instead of just going into the classroom and doing what the teacher asks, we allow the teacher 10 minutes to persuade us to attend the rest of the class. These 10 minutes will be without interruption or disruption. If we decide against attending, we can go to the library, the playground or to a specially equipped Learning Centre. Do you like this idea? How would you change this plan? Web: <http://www.schoolplan.au2.com>.

I have just set up a mailing list for Sudbury-like schools operating in Australia and New Zealand. The list will not be restricted to Sudbury Valley model schools, but rather to any school that shares a similar, child-centric philosophy (or any other interested party). The discussion group also has its own web page, where archives of all the messages are kept. You can find it at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ausschools>. Mark Virtue, 8 Isles Rd., Indooroopilly, QLD, 4068, Australia. Email: [mvirtue@zip.com.au](mailto:mvirtue@zip.com.au).

## BOLIVIA

I am back from Bolivia, after having visited a free school near Cochabamba. The school used to be called 'La Floresta' but they now have a new name, **Ajayu**, that is 'Spirit' in Quechua language. It was a great school with lots of 'alternative spirits'! My impression is that they are rather in an isolated situation in the country. So, I hope your international network will be of help and encourage them. Thank you. Yoshi Nagata. Email: [y.nagata@nier.go.jp](mailto:y.nagata@nier.go.jp).

## BRAZIL

Last December, an Attorney and an Administrator asked for the National Council of Education permission to home school their four children. The Council denied and the Minister of Education

supported the decision. The former General Attorney decided to defend the couple, initiating a case against the Minister and they also received support from the American Home School Legal Defense Association. Since then, home schooling became known in Brazil and another two couples declared that they have home schooled their children. The irony is that there are thousands of children out of school in Brazil – poor children that have to work to help their families! Helena Singer.

## ENGLAND

**FEEDBACK FROM HESFES:** The **Home Educators Seaside Festival**. See **Home Education Section**

## GERMANY

I am the Webmaster of our school homepage. We are called **Freie Schule Regenbogen Erfurt**, and our school is the only free school in Thuringia.

Web: [www.freieschule-regenbogen.de](http://www.freieschule-regenbogen.de) or [www.freieschule-regenbogen.org](http://www.freieschule-regenbogen.org). Marita. Email: [Brieftaube@gmx.de](mailto:Brieftaube@gmx.de)

## GUATAMALA

The Minister of Education in Guatemala has been having conversations with my mom. He visited the **Naleb School**, and he was so impressed that he asked her to be the counsel in the creation of a law that installs school governments in every school of the country. The law was passed on Dec. 12, but unfortunately is really poor — they didn't attend to our background suggestions (the important ones involving dialogue, meetings, and the organization of a democratic system, etc.) Anyway, it's a significant advance for the country. We will be on alert to help and advise the schools on the importance of having democratic school governments. My parents want to ask you for the international support of IDEC, with letters for the Minister of Education, for



the experiences of each school involved on IDEC to be the example and advisors for the experience of school governments in Guatemala. We also want to propose Guatemala as IDEC home for 2002. We hope to have more experiences as a country. **Lucrecia.**

I was just in Guatemala for a couple of weeks. I visited and worked with the **Nalebians, Rita** and **Roberto**, and spent time at the school. I was very impressed with how the school has developed and matured. The classes have open doors. The most impressive thing to me was that there is a definite sense of respect all around. I could sense that the kids and the adults all shared a deep respect for the learning process. (This is not something that I have witnessed often.) There was also a pulling in and involvement with the community. The Nalebians are being invited to share their experiences with other schools. Rita was recently asked by someone in the upper echelons of government to offer a seminar on dialogue for a few members of Congress. After he saw the program, he brought about 35 congressmen up to the school to attend. **Margarita.**

## INDIA

The **Sholai School** takes children from 3 to 18 and has a ratio of less than 7 children to one teacher. The first and foremost interest of the school is that children should grow up to be sensitive, thoughtful and responsible human beings. The school encourages an environment where serious study, dialogue and affectionate questioning can take place. It is located within the Centre for Learning, Organic Agriculture and Appropriate Technology (CLOAAT), in India. The Centre has established a well-researched sustainable farm which provides fresh, quality health foods for the students, staff, and local citizens. Most of the farm is polycultural agroforested. The address is: CLOAAT, PO Box 57, Kodaikanal 624101, Tamilnadu, India. Web: [www.sholaischool.org](http://www.sholaischool.org).

In 1994, K. Vijaya Kumar co-founded the **Deeper Yet Welfare and Educational Society**, which is dedicated to teaching English to untouchable children in the district of Andhra Pradesh. It currently has 125 children enrolled from mixed castes, primarily untouchable. They encourage children of all castes to mingle to create equality for the future. All the children learn English. The school has four teachers and is funded by Deeper Yet through fundraising efforts. Deeper Yet Welfare and Educational Society, Diwancheruvu – 533 103, Rajangaram Mandal, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, India.

**Butterflies** is an organization for street and working children in Delhi, and it works in the markets, the stations and the parks where the children live. The street educators have first to befriend the children, and then offer them the chance to organize themselves to protect their own rights, to learn to read and write and to save a little money out of the 30 or 40 rupees they may earn in a day, picking rags, helping at market stalls, carrying bags or whatever. There are weekly meetings in the various localities, and a monthly meeting to which everyone can come. The children are helped to cope with the hostility of the police, the perpetual sexual harassment to which they are exposed and the frequent bullying by their employers. The confidence, generosity, honesty and openness of many of the children who come to Butterflies is overwhelming. Lynette and David Gribble

## JAPAN

While many in the United States are pushing to INCREASE the school-day and school year, believing the result will be more learning (aka higher test scores) and less youth crime, Japan's ministry of education has decided to DECREASE the hours students must be in school. Apparently, many in Japan believe the long hours and rigorous educational practices of the past have led to economic difficulties in the country and limited creativity on the part of the students. The ministry also plans to increase subject options. Perhaps the education leaders in the US should take some advice from those in Japan.

## KOREA

**Gandhi School** was established in 1995 and became one of the most famous alternative schools in Korea. It has a middle school and high school in the official term, but they organize it as one comprehensive course. Its high school was one of the few schools which gained its legal status as a regular school. The conflict between the school and its Local Educational Authority came from here. The reason is that they have been illegally running the middle school, and if they don't dismiss the middle school, LEA will cut off all the state support for the high school. Gandhi School insists that LEA already knew about the middle school when they approved the high school, and it is not a separate school. They applied to get the legal status of the middle school but were rejected. They met the President of LEA and realized that he is very opposed to the alternative school and even think it demolishes Korean education and conventional schools. They are starting a campaign and need international support to keep the alternative values in Korean Education and develop it. This fight is very important for the future of Korean Alternative education as the school is like a symbol of the progressive education in Korea. You can get some more details about the school from their website at <http://user.chollian.net/~gandhis/>. Tae Wook Ha. Email: [taewook@achi.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:taewook@achi.freeseve.co.uk).

## NEPAL

AERO recently arranged a grant from the **Edwards Foundation** for **Sri Matri Aurivindo School**. The school currently has 35 kids from Nepal, aged 2 to 15; future plans include expanding classes through high school. It is directed by **Ram Chandra** and is located in a perma-culture community aiming for self-reliance. They have a number of cottage industries such as incense making, milk sales, bamboo crafts, rice mill, and a woodworking shop is being planned. The school is required to use the government curriculum, but intends to transition to more open education. All kids currently work on the land, care for the cows, make incense, etc., and that is part of their education. With the funding, a basic perma-culture training seminar was held by **Cynthia Edwards** during which a small tree nursery was created. An additional parcel of land was also purchased with the grant. Email: [auroasrm@ntc.net.np](mailto:auroasrm@ntc.net.np).

## RUSSIA

**The Eureka Institute of Educational Policy**, founded by Alexander Adamsky, provides advanced training of teachers and educational managers via two-year full-time correspondence study. The model is "institute without walls." There are two academic sessions a year, and five branches in four countries: the United States, Great Britain, Holland, and Israel. **The Eureka International School** is a unique three-year program consisting of six training sessions in different countries. The program goes

on to educate Russian children in English. For more information about these and other Eureka programs, please contact them by email at [eureka@online.ru](mailto:eureka@online.ru). Web: [www.1september.ru/](http://www.1september.ru/)

**Moscow International Film School's** new project, **Freedom**, aims at involving juvenile convicts from Russia and other countries in joint creative work with the students of MIFS (theater, film and animation). For the MIFS students the task is to mix with the teenagers and make co-authors out of them, and hopefully instilling in them a love of freedom in an effort to prevent them from becoming repeat offenders. To this end, the play "Jonathan Livingstone Seagull" by Richard Bach was chosen for the project that will be produced by the teenagers. By presenting this play in corrective institutions of the United States and Russia, we hope to convey the meaning of freedom for our difficult audience. We also want the convicts to try and draw that part of the play where Jonathan is flying - the image of free flight. We wish to edit an animation film out of these drawings and to make it a part of the performance. We are looking for partners for the project: people, schools, and other organizations who work with young convicts or with the problems of freedom in education. Email: [mifs@mail.ru](mailto:mifs@mail.ru). (Ed: MIFS students and teachers recently visited us in New York and traveled across the USA)

For the last several years I have been leading a research on the **EPOS (Educational Parks of Open Studios)** variety of Liberal Learning. Within this ideology we have tried to find a decent way to effectively transform the less productive Class-Schooling regime into a more productive "Educational Park of Open Studios." EPOS-school presumes that every student constantly exercises his right to the free choice of place and form of his or her own study. All that is done within the ordinary frames of a comprehensive secondary state school. We intend to open several new EPOS-schools combining in it all the compatible varieties of modern liberal and democratic education. Children of different levels can study without the usual system of curriculum, lessons and assessment. Our educational Center investigates the possibility of creating such open groups on the basis of Open Verticals, which present every student the ability of actual Self-Determination in a more dynamic educational environment. In order to start similar "Park-Schooling" projects in other schools I am ready to work in different fields:

1. As a member of teachers team, sharing my experience of overcoming the problems, which inevitably arise in the period of starting.
2. As an organizer of this "team work".
3. As an adviser and supporter of the teachers in their work in park-studios.
4. As a leader of my own biology-studio.

## SCOTLAND

**Are Kids People?** (From Scottish Home Education Group):

Is it me or has anyone else noticed the number of shops banning unaccompanied children recently? Yesterday, Ned (10) and Kes (4) asked if they could go into the Oxfam shop. I was outside the shop with Joe (12). The younger pair went in and came straight out again, saying, "We're not allowed in there now without a parent." Now, the children have always been able to go into the shops unaccompanied, so I was rather surprised. In I went...

Me: "Is there a problem with these children?"

Shop dragon: "No, but its a blanket policy; no children unless they are accompanied by an adult. No children under the age of fourteen."

Me: "Why? If they are not causing any problem, surely they have the right to use the shop?"

SD: "Its policy. Health and safety! If a child injured itself in here the shop would be responsible!"

Me: "Its a charity shop, not a gun merchants! You'd be responsible if I injured myself, or if an unaccompanied child injured itself? Children have rights, surely?"

SD: "Well, its policy. No one under fourteen. If he (gesturing at Joe) had been with them it would have been alright."

Me: "He's twelve!"

SD: "He's tall."

Me: (beginning to lose patience) "Oh, so its only people smaller than you that you pick on, is it?"

SD: "Children who are out of control shouldn't be out on their own. You're not allowed to let children under fourteen out in the streets on their own, you know. It's against the law. I'm surprised to see these children out on their own."

Me: (really losing it now) "Children out of control?! Anyone would think children were wild animals, roaming the streets in marauding packs, gobbling up old ladies in charity shops for breakfast! I've seen pubs which advertise themselves as 'family' establishments, with signs which say 'well behaved children and dogs welcome', as if there are no badly behaved adults!"

And with that I gathered the brood and left in a huff.

Shortly afterwards I met up with the other two, Polly (7) and Ben (9) who had been shopping together. I asked if they had had any problem in shops. Ben said, "Well, Mummy, we went in the Oxfam shop and the lady in there said, 'Oh dear, now I don't know what to do. I've just had your brothers in here, but I don't want another argument with your mother, so you'd better stay!'" At which I laughed aloud in the street, and yelled "Woohoo!" got on me broomstick and flew off home!

I feel that the rights of children, especially the Home Educated ones who actually use shopping as part of their education, are being very much eroded by these policies. Of course, if kids cause a problem, or if adults cause a problem, shopkeepers should chuck them out! But it seems to me to be an organised form of bullying. Another example of the child-unfriendly society in which we live. Mary. Email: [Herald@altavista.net](mailto:Herald@altavista.net)

## TAIWAN

We are the teachers & students from **Pei Cheng Autonomous Experimental School**, the "first free learning middle school ever established in Taipei, Taiwan. Much emphasis of the school has been placed on democracy, love and freedom. Its goal is to develop in its students a sense of independent learning and enthusiasm in search of the truth. For the past three years, the general evaluations to the school conducted by the Bureau of Education have given us quite good ratings on developing students' independent thinking and motivating students' academic studies. Our former mayor and his team wholeheartedly advocated the school, while our present mayor, Ma Yin Chiu, has not been supportive. The policy that new students' registration is not being allowed from the year 2001 on, unfortunately, was declared in January by Ma's government. After many rounds of tough negotiations with Taipei City government officials, there is still no sign indicating that they will revise the policy. We think it is unwise of Ma Yin Chiu to make a decision like this. It not only inhibits the diversity within the school system in Taiwan but also retards the development of a democratic society. We strongly urge you to please support us by sending e-mail directly to our mayor Ma Yin Chiu, or contact us to get more

information. Mayor Ma Yin Chiu, e-mail: mayor@mail.tcg.gov.tw.  
Pei Cheng Autonomous Experimental School, e-mail:  
otto5@kimo.com.tw.

## THAILAND

### DAVID GRIBBLE'S TRIP TO MOO BAN DEK, THAILAND

**AND:** Moo Ban Dek takes children who have been abused in the slums of Bangkok, deserted by their parents, or who have become orphans in conditions of destitution; many arrive seriously malnourished, some as young as two years old. The school provides them with shelter, two sets of clothes, three meals a day, health care and education up to the end of the primary level. When they reach this level they may leave, go to the local secondary school, or undertake vocational training in rural or urban areas under the care of Moo Baan Dek and the Foundation for Children in Bangkok. The school's philosophy embodies Buddhist principles and there is a weekly school meeting based on the Summerhill one. The

atmosphere is one of freedom and love. Lessons are voluntary. Even though some of the children arrive physically as well as mentally retarded by their experiences, it is a wonderfully happy place. Moo Baan Dek has a website at [www.fcc.or.th/mbd](http://www.fcc.or.th/mbd)

## VENEZUELA

I am in Venezuela, and hope to set up a Summerhill-like school. At first, we will work with children who work on the streets, and have no schooling, mostly due to miserable conditions. I am right now working as a volunteer with these kids, but am organizing a foundation to help them. Someday, I hope to set up a residence for street kids, and to use Summerhill principles to educate them. I went to college in Alabama for a while, but am mostly self-educated. I would like to get help from whoever can help, not financially, but in terms of information, recommendations, documentation, etc. Vanessa Di Domenico, Maracaibo, Venezuela  
Email: jajije@cantv.net.

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# HOME EDUCATION NEWS

## FEEDBACK FROM HES FES:

Readers may have read about the **Home Educators Seaside Festival** last year in Charmouth, England. There were 900 home educating parents and children camped out by the sea last year, but this year there were 1427, according to Organizer Andy Blewett. Here are some comments from participants:

"I have never encountered such a diversity of folk and yet an utmost feeling of belonging."

"Thank you for all the marquees that were set up and all the different types of music played. The kids cabaret made me feel so proud of all of us, those parents who had supported their children to have a go, learn those instruments, and those brave souls who sang, some without backing tape, told jokes, and acted out mini plays. Outstanding, there was not a dry eye in my vicinity! My children are already practicing for next time!"

"The children had a great time discussing Pokemon cards, and negotiating swaps or sales. My son swapped email addresses with some children so they can discuss N64 games, etc. I haven't seen him so happy in ages. We just didn't want to come home! It was good to see the ingenuity of the home-educated kids who, for example, set up a café (Chaos Cafe). Great fun, and definitely chaos!"

"There was a fantastic talk by a woman who had been

home educated and is now a violinist. She astounded her pupils when they found out she has no paper qualifications in music (not even grades). (When a secretary asked her what letters she had after her name she told her to pick her favorites and jumble them together!) Though she felt under a lot of pressure to go to music college, she worked instead playing the violin and traveling around the world and learning from all the best teachers at her own expense. She expressed her personal view that no matter how clever a person is, everyone has only about 3 weeks' worth of information to give! I thought that was great."

"It was fabulous meeting so many of you from this list & to have the pleasure of getting to know your families. I feel very honoured to be a part of a wider community working towards a better future for our children. HESFES has given both of my children more confidence in themselves and dare I say it...a firmer 'identity' as Home Ed kids."

"Bearing in mind how wonderful it was for the adults, I think it was Susie (2 years old), who really got the most out of HESFES. I could give you loads of examples to illustrate how her attitude to other children has become more hopeful, but it would run to pages, and so I will give only one: Before HESFES, Susie would say, "I'm going to see Georgina today." On the second day of HESFES, we noticed that she had started saying, "I'm going to find my friends." You may have seen my previous e-mails to the lists about trying to find friends for Susie to play with, and I had tears in my eyes when I heard her talk in terms of 'friends' instead of using individual names. Yesterday, we went to a playground with a 'lorry' climbing frame. She climbed in behind the wheel and I saw her steering this way and that, so I asked her where she was going. She laughed, and said, "I'm going

to HESFES!” That just sums it all up really, we didn’t want to leave, and can’t wait to go again.”

**The Self-Education Foundation** is a philanthropic organization working to build and support a cohesive movement, across cultures and disciplines, of communities initiating their own education. The Foundation supports incarcerated self-educators and their supporters; homeschoolers, unschoolers, and dropouts; independent media-makers; the popular education movement; and student-led school reform. They raise money to fund groups working on community campaigns and they produce a newsletter, among other things. For more information, contact them at PO Box 30790, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Your questions and comments about **Resource Centers** seem to be the bridge between what the Old Fashioned Homeschoolers (Lifers) have and what The New Breed Homeschoolers want. (I call the people who know from the time they get married and have kids that they will keep them home from traditional school the Lifers and the ones that pull their kids out of school at their wits end, as a last resort, the New Breed.) The schools are actually putting fire into the Homeschool Movement, if there is one. I ran Family Playce, a Homeschool Community Center, in the Bay Area for two years. When we were at the point of decision making to either move out or change zoning, I chose to stay and be a Resource Center. I closed last June so that I could find a more professional way to re-open. Basically, I need funding. It’s ideal to go on as a Co-op, but the basic needs must be met first, then the co-op runs as profit. Most of the families are waiting and anxious. They found something they didn’t even know they lived without, community bonding. Anyone out there with the background of administration and funding? That was my weakness. Always Learning, Marcia Williams.

I talked to you awhile back and bought your book and the homeschool resource center video. We started **The Imagine Center**, a non-profit homeschool resource center, in October and now have about 25 members. We offer weekly workshops, field trips and testing services. We are open from 12:30 to 4:30 pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Things are going very well and we are now beginning to put together ads and promotions of the program. We wanted it to start small as a pilot program and test out some ideas. We hope to have our own place perhaps in the fall and open 9am to 9pm Monday through Friday, offering workshops for parents and community members as well. I appreciate your work and hope that perhaps we can have you visit us in the future! **Justin Humphrys**, an Imagine student. The Imagine Center, 16 Lookout Drive, Asheville, NC 28804-3330. Tel: (828) 254-8013.

**Unschooling** is child-led learning in an enriched and supportive home environment. Forced learning is a

young method of education which repeatedly fails, most often producing children and adults who feel out of touch with the real world and their purpose and value in it. Unschooler children learn while being involved citizens of their families and communities. They develop their unique, innate talents and feel productive from day to day. There is nothing wrong with a child’s ability to learn. Rediscovery and faith in the natural and undeniable human desire to learn, create and produce will help us retrieve a strong belief in our children and how they are an integral part of our world, from the day they are born. This column presents any and everything about the unschooling way. The Unschooler has a web page with past issues at <http://www.rof.net/yp/theunschooler>.

From *Education Now*, by Tamsyn Fortune-Wood, 12 years old: Children have no choice over their education, you tell us, but for as many as 150,000 home-educated children (in England – *ed.*) this isn’t true. These children don’t want any kind of school. School is a training ground for bullies and victims. School is a place where you learn what someone else has decided for you. School is a place where parents can leave their children for free, without taking responsibility for their education. Having a say in the type of building or the uniform or even some small say in what is taught or how teaching is done won’t make much difference. The choice that children need is whether to be there or not. If more parents realized it or allowed it, children already have this choice. I like to choose what and how to learn. I don’t want to be in a place where my property can be confiscated. For me, learning is about living. I learn from everything I do and I make choices all the time. Choices are what growing up is all about and the choices have to be real, not just a bit of consultation to make you feel better. Home education doesn’t give you the school you want, it gives you the education and life you want. Spring 2001.

### **Report on a Meeting of a Cross-Section of NYS Homeschoolers in Upstate NY**, by David Callihan (Sent originally on 2/25 to the NY-Alert):

We had over 25 parents along with a few of their children in attendance. Let me share a few things as I see them that came out of the meeting:

1. There is a clear consensus that parent-directed education is an unalienable right and liberty that is protected by our Constitutions (U.S. and State) and that we have every right to demand that our civil government align its laws, statutes and regulations with this right.
2. We concluded that the highest mission that the newly formulated group should pursue is “Educational Emancipation” for all families in New York State. Our focus will be on New York. Other states that wish to follow our lead are free to do so.
3. We agreed on the following name for the newly formed group: Families Reaffirming Educational Emancipation (FREE) in New York State. We also developed a statement

of purpose and a set of means or methods to achieve our purpose.

We plan to meet regularly on a quarterly basis. We also will use the NY-Alert list as our main means to communicate among ourselves. Our agenda for the meeting was determined by rating the list of 18 suggested agenda items, including: Determining the specific constitutional issues; Determining our stated purpose, developing a specific set of goals and objectives around that purpose, and one or two explicit steps to take in the next six months that will gain public notice; Eliminating or ultra-minimizing of the NYS homeschooling regulations; Determining how to become an effective lobbying organization in New York State to influence the Department of Education and the NY State Legislature to recognize the authority of parents to direct the education of our children the way we see fit without unnecessary civil government intrusion and coercion.

**R**eport on a Sub-Group of LI Homeschoolers Meet in Islip NY: The homeschool meeting in Islip was remarkable and enlightening. Although there were only nine of us, we represented a wide range of educational alternatives and organizations. We came to unanimous agreement that the bill currently before the New York State legislature should be tabled. Senator Kuhl, head of the education committee, put forth a bill to raise the age of compulsory education to 17, which was vetoed twice by Governor Pataki. When Kuhl's suggestions for homeschool law were turned aside, he then decided that the best way to deal with the situation was to put forth legislation. This is a worrying prospect not only to homeschoolers, but also to private schools, because for 52 years the law has been in a gray area, with virtually no actual laws covering it. Therefore, the current regulations are unconstitutional because you can't have regulations relating to legislation which doesn't exist. The people connected with LEAH were concerned that they were not being represented properly, and they didn't buy into supporting HSLDA's involvement in the process. A couple of potentially damaging aspects of the current bill, even if passed as is, are that the superintendent can dispute almost anything in the proposal of a homeschooler, wherein it can be appealed to the local board or then to the Commissioner. The thought was that the bill is unlikely to make it through the legislation, but that our active opposition would be useful, as it was in the vetoing of the bill to raise the compulsory education age. We agreed that it would be useful to have another local meeting, tentatively scheduled for the sec-

ond Saturday in June, site to be determined.

## Jenifer Goldman's Book Featured in *Paths of Learning*

*Jerry writes:* The spring issue of *Paths of Learning* (<http://www.great-ideas.org/paths.htm>) featured extensive excerpts from my niece, Jenifer Goldman's book, *My Life as a Traveling Homeschooler*, written when she was 11 years old. She is now 21, is a licensed veterinary technician, and works in a laboratory in Denver. She also helps her father and boyfriend run a computer game store.

One of our readers recently sent the following comments upon reading Jenifer's book, which is still available through AERO:

"I wanted to tell you that (my son) Scott and I and my husband Doug and my best friend Lynn all read and loved Jenifer's book -- the photos and the stories and the funny bits (I love the last page, where J. tries to find something bad about homeschooling and cannot. And the TV show where the host says, "The lady in bed." Talk about a Freudian slip!) What a wonderful gift, that she could capture her experience so beautifully and you could get it into the hands of people like me who so appreciate it! And what a gift to her, that she has someone like you who believes in what she has to say! It has done my heart good. Thanks to you both for sharing the stories (and I adore the family meeting vignette where you're sitting on the sofa by yourself. I laughed for five minutes.) After our first family meeting I gave Scott some space and then later in the evening asked him what he thought and he said, "Personally, I thought it was ridiculous" but, it was a beginning. I love kids. They are so brutally frank!"

## BOARDING SCHOOL FOR HOMESCHOOLERS:

The creators of the **Academy of the Rockies**, a homeschoolers boarding school that ran for 10 years in Idaho, announce the **Freedom Mountain Academy**, a boarding

school set in the mountains of Tennessee. This coed school is designed for 23 students of ages 15 to 20 to experience a work/study/adventure program. From the words of the founders Patricia and Kevin Cullinane, "Whether your homeschooled teen is preparing to finish high school in a more conventional setting, go on to college, take up an apprenticeship, or enter the work force, Freedom Mountain Academy can provide an ideal transition year." For more information, see their website: [www.freedommountainacademy.com](http://www.freedommountainacademy.com) or email them at [FMA@naxs.net](mailto:FMA@naxs.net).

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# ALUMNI NEWS

This season I got into a “discussion” with my father about how my life would have been different if I had not had the opportunity to attend **The Free School** and **Shaker Mountain**. I stressed that the freedom to study at my own pace and make my own decisions gave me a sense of confidence that I did not receive from public schools. My father very adamantly stated that we are who we are, and will always be who we are. That is hard to argue. But, I know inside that if I had to conform to the thinking and processes of bureaucracy surrounding public schools that I’ve attended, I would be a lot angrier today. I could not get him to accept this. A friend pointed out that maybe he doesn’t want to think or entertain the possibility, because then he would have to deal with the fact that his 7- year old son is a student right now at such a school. In other words he does not want to rock the boat. His attitude — that many people survive public school, and there is nothing wrong with a little discipline — secure his decision. I respect my father’s mindset. Yet, I am very grateful, for my years of ‘rug ratting’ with The Free School community, and exploring at Shaker Mountain, whereas I am just appreciative about a few incidents within the public schools. I am glad to hear that Path of Learning is going to do a special feature. It is important that people can put in perspective what and how alternative education has shaped their lives. I am hoping that most will be positive responses. Recognition seems to be very important now for the alternative school movement. People need to know alternatives exist. With this new (or maybe not so new) plan to punish schools with poor academic scores (is that not brilliance), and with the agenda of education hot on the table, who knows what kind of mentalities will be encouraged to flourish. People need exposure to what alternative education can offer, and how enlightening ‘hands on’ learning can be. Angela. Email: [angelacross@lycos.com](mailto:angelacross@lycos.com).

The **Blue Mountain School**, in Floyd, VA, held a 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Home-Coming, Reunion Party, and Music Fundraiser on May 12 at the school. The celebration included 6 hours of music, activities for all ages, live bands, food and vendors. Many people attended, including teachers, students, parents, alumni, friends, supporters and local music lovers.

For two years I went to **Kirkdale School**, a free school in London. Basically there were no rules, or at least none that lasted throughout the whole time I was there. Sometimes the grownups made a rule; other times there were rules that kids made. We had school meetings but not on a very regular basis and we had group meetings but they weren’t regular either. I think that sometimes people felt that a meeting was necessary and they would call one. There were no punishments and no judiciary, not even a decent problem solver in the lot of us. I have no idea why this school was so chaotic, at least it must have seemed so to the adults and it certainly sounds like it now when I write about it, but I loved it. It reminds me of a family. In the family situation, at least in mine, there are no set rules, only rules that come and go as they seem necessary or as long as someone is there to enforce them or

people are willing to follow them. At Kirkdale the adults’ rules seemed to last as long as the adults were willing to put the energy into enforcing them. The same could be said for the kids’ rules. To look at it another way, you could describe it as one big informal unschooling homeschooling group. I am not at all suggesting that Kirkdale is a model that should be copied. On the contrary, I couldn’t imagine ever wanting to work in such a school. I don’t even know if I would choose such a school for my kids. But in that time and in that situation for my brothers and I, it worked. I was always glad of having been to other schools and not spent my whole young life at Kirkdale, or at any one school for that matter. it was one of the greatest times of my life. Liz Reid. Email: [lizanderrol@home.com](mailto:lizanderrol@home.com).

The late, great **Vershire School** (1968-1988) of Vershire, Vermont is dead, but not forgotten. A reunion for all is planned for July 21st. Plans include cocktails at John Bebe’s bar in Chelsea and possibly a picnic at the ruins of the old school if we can get permission from the owners of Judgment Ridge. For more information, email Bill Spain at [WSpain@marketwatch.com](mailto:WSpain@marketwatch.com) or Jim Lockey at [Coby8@msn.com](mailto:Coby8@msn.com). Web: [Vershirealumni.org](http://Vershirealumni.org).

I have been involved in homeschooling and alternative schools since I was a child. As an adolescent I went to **Summerhill School** in England and then spent a few years homeschooling before deciding I wanted to go to College. I found **Vermont College** and entered the College’s Adult Degree program, which is designed for adult students but occasionally has younger students and found a school where my interests and experience drove my education. It is the most holistic higher education program I know of. I developed my ability to think, and make connections in the world and in the world of ideas. No grades, no high and mighty authority. The mentors are there to support and guide you. Now I work here and love it. If anyone would like more detailed information about how Vermont College works please contact me directly. Jasmine Lamb, Admissions Counselor, Vermont College, 36 College St., Montpelier, VT 05602. Tel: (800) 336-6794. Email: [jlamb@norwich.edu](mailto:jlamb@norwich.edu)

# TEACHERS JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS

**T**he position of teacher/director is now open at **Quillayute Valley School District** NO.402, P.O. Box 60, Forks, WA 98331-60. It is an 8-12 Alternative. Position consists of full-time teacher plus separate contract for director position of .04 of salary. We are on the state salary schedule. We handle about 70 students with 2.25 certified staff and 2 classified. Teaching would be any subject except Science. Director position handles the discipline, student records, scheduling, and staff supervision under the leadership of an off campus principal. The District contact person is Kara Leavitt. Tel: (360) 3746262 ex 103, or (360) 374-6262 ex 121 for more info. Web: [www.forks.wednet.edu/](http://www.forks.wednet.edu/).

**Santa Monica Alternative School House - SMASH** - is looking for a K-8 Principal. SMASH is a public alternative school with approximately 200 children in multiage cores. Successful administrative experience and/or leadership ability. Minimum of five year's full-time teaching experience with at least two years at the elementary or middle school level. MA or Ed.D. Degree. Applicants must hold or be eligible for the CA Administrative Services Credential. Web: [www.smmusd.org](http://www.smmusd.org). Contact: Dr. Joseph N. Quarles, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, 1651 Sixteenth Street Santa Monica, CA 90404-3891. Tel: (310) 450-8338 ext. 272. Fax: (310) 450-0898.

**Liberty School** — A Democratic Learning Community in Blue Hill, Maine is looking for the right person to develop and lead its new Classical Music Program. There are no high schools in Maine that meet the needs of serious musicians who want to be prepared for conservatories or music colleges. Our structure and philosophy will enable serious music students to integrate their passion for music with their high school education. Students could practice, take private lessons, study music theory, music history and spend a good part of their day playing music with other serious musicians. If interested, send resumes to Music Committee Liberty School, PO Box 857, Blue Hill, ME 04614. Email: [grnbrg@downeast.net](mailto:grnbrg@downeast.net).

**Renaissance Progressive School**, a progressive charter school on a 42-acre ranch, seeks extraordinary teachers to help us establish and grow this learning alternative. Built around 4H, all students have animal projects. All students take riding lessons twice per week. RPS is K-12, currently serving K-8, rolling up one grade per year. Needed are people with at least a bachelor's degree who love children and bring a richness to share. Our goal is to graduate peacemakers and independent life-long learners with their creativity and joy for learning still intact - whole people who can create new knowledge. Distinctive elements of the program are mixed-age grouping, student paced education, performance assessment, project oriented learning, developmental theory, teacher as mentor, process goals, and required parental involvement. Contact Mari-Jean Melissa, [JLM@Strato.net](mailto:JLM@Strato.net). Tel: (863) 701-1044. Fax: (863) 701-1046.

**Hilltown Cooperative Charter School** is an innovative, public K-8 school in western Massachusetts inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and committed to an arts integrated curriculum and active parent involvement. We are searching for an Education Coordinator. This leadership position is responsible for overseeing edu-

cational philosophy, policy and practice; working collaboratively with teachers, students and parents; ensuring consistency and quality of teaching. The ideal candidate will have 5 years elementary teaching experience, curriculum development and supervision, knowledge of **Reggio Emilia** and a commitment to innovation in education. Co-teacher for mixed 7th and 8th grade. The ideal candidate will be energetic, creative, Massachusetts certified, with middle school teaching experience and strengths in math and science. Send resume to HCCS, Box 147, Haydenville, MA 01039. Tel: (413) 268-3421.

**Sudbury Valley School** has instituted a Staff Training Internship Program, designed to provide prospective staff members with sufficient experience to function effectively in Sudbury schools. In order to be considered for this program, which has limited enrollment, an application (available from the school upon request) must be submitted, and the applicant must be prepared, after a visit and if accepted, to be present at the school a minimum of 21 hours per week for approximately five months. The fee for this program is \$2,000. During the program, interns are treated as visiting staff members and are introduced to all aspects of life at the school. They are also assigned a mentor with whom to work directly. Direct inquiries should be sent to the school at 2 Winch Street, Framingham, MA 01701.

**School Within A School**, a thirty two-year-old democratic program at Brookline High in Brookline, Mass., is looking for a half time (two courses) English teacher for next year. Additional teaching in main school possible. Send resume to SWS, 115 Greenough St., Brookline, MA 02445 or email to [ellen\\_kaplovitz@brookline.mec.edu](mailto:ellen_kaplovitz@brookline.mec.edu).

We will be offering a boarding summer camp in conjunction with **Grassroots Free School** in Tallahassee, Florida. Grassroots is modeled after the Summerhill School in England. From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. M-F, we will join with the students for fieldtrips, organic gardening, theatre, Spanish, dancing, juggling and more. The remainder of the day and weekends will be spent in a family setting. We will be participating in a wide range of activities like riding, swimming, Yoga, cooking and painting. Grassroots camp is open to kids from around the world. We can also accommodate children with some kinds of psychological or physical disabilities. The camp will be open from June 4th to August 26th. Kids can attend for three, six, nine or 12 weeks. The camp is for ages 7-11 (siblings up to 14 yrs. old may also attend). Contact us soon as space is limited. Campers will be living with my 5 yr old daughter, a teacher and me. For more information, contact the school at 1-850-656-3629 or myself (Muni Mueller) at 011-49-40-6477726 or Falkentaleweg 1, 22587 Hamburg. Resume and references available upon request.

A rare opportunity for an experienced teacher to lead a lively team in a small, established progressive school for 3 - 11 year-olds. Children come first in a stimulating, unpressurized environment without the constraints of SATS [the English tests for primary school children.] The position is open from September 2001. **Park School**, Dartington, Devon TQ9 6EQ, UK. Telephone 44 (0) 1803 864588 for information pack.

We are in need of a nurse or medical technician, certified in CPR & First Aid to work at our summer camp in South Florida, June

8th to August 16th. A stipend, tree room & board, (and possibly airfare) would be given. Weekdays, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:30 PM. The camp is located on the grounds of Lynn University and you would live in a University dormitory. If interested please e-mail **Denise Felice**: [Q275ymw@aol.com](mailto:Q275ymw@aol.com).

**The Village School** of Northfield, a public K-12 progressive charter school with 70 students in Northfield, Minnesota has two-three full-time openings for September 2001 for Special Education and integrated, general teaching at the middle (grades 6-8) and intermediate/elementary (grades 3-5) levels. Additional qualifications of physical education, science, and/or Spanish helpful but not essential. Modeled after Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts, The Village School's core educational values include students' self and world awareness, intrinsic learning and self-direction, and social and character growth. Emphasizing environmental education, the school is located on the Cannon River, with a pond and other natural areas on the site. Send letters of application, resumes and statements of educational philosophy and/or inquiries to **Olivia Frey**, The Village School, 1100 Bollenbacher Court, Northfield, MN 55057. Tel: (507) 663-8990. Fax: (507) 663-0392. Email: [villageschool@charter.net](mailto:villageschool@charter.net).

**John Woolman School**, a small rural Quaker boarding school in the Sierra foothills, is looking for teaching and support staff for the 2001-02 school year. Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resume to: **Amy Cooke**, Head of School, 13075 Woolman Lane, Nevada City, CA 95959. Email: [jwshead@woolman.org](mailto:jwshead@woolman.org). Web: [www.woolman.org](http://www.woolman.org).

**Village Elementary School**, an independent non-profit school offering kindergarten through 6th grade, is currently seeking a creative and energetic full time primary teacher for immediate employment. We are located in a small semi-rural community approx. 1 hour north of San Diego, 2 hours south of LA, and 1/2 an hour from the coast. The school is centrally located within town on a 2 acre campus and has a very involved and committed parent group. Our ideal candidate would hold a valid teaching credential and preferably have a Constructivist, developmental background. Interested candidates should e-mail their resume to [Village@tfb.com](mailto:Village@tfb.com). Or send a resume and cover letter to Village Elementary School, 602 South Stage Coach Lane, Fallbrook, CA 92028. Web: [www.VillageElementary.org](http://www.VillageElementary.org). Tel: (760) 731-1007.

**The Community School**, a 30-year public alternative elementary in the Lake Washington School District, Kirkland, Washington, is seeking a teacher for the "Youngers" class (ages 6-7-8). This is a very small school of 75 students/three classrooms in its own building, with an integrated, whole-school curriculum, cross-age activities, ungraded, and emphasizing cooperation, not competition. The whole school goes to camp twice a year, has an annual "Town", celebrates Halloween wholeheartedly, swims several times a year, and goes on many field trips. The position will begin fall of 2001. They have special dispensation to hire outside the regular hiring pool, although any applicants would first need to go through the Lake Washington School District Personnel Department. Applicants need to inform Personnel that they are applying specifically for The Community School. Contact the district if interested. Web: [www.lkwash.wednet.edu/](http://www.lkwash.wednet.edu/).

**The Family Life Academy Charter School**, a holistic minded New York K-5 Charter School opening in August 2001, is looking for Kindergarten Teachers, First-Grade Teachers, a Special Education Teacher, a Literacy/Special Program Coordinator, an Assistant Director, and an Administrative Assistant who wish to co-create and model a supportive learning community where all are committed to their own and each others growth and where all chil-

dren can achieve high standards while growing as responsible caring human beings and developing their own truths. NYS certified (or pursuing certification) and Spanish bilingual Teachers and Assistant Principal would be preferred. We believe in encouraging inquiry while integrating active, engaging projects, core values and arts into curriculum. We place a high value on family/community collaboration and on engaging reading and writing activities. Send resume to: **Isabel Gutierrez**, The Family Life Academy Charter School, 14 W 170th Street, Bronx, NY 10452. Email: [FLACS@yahoogroups.com](mailto:FLACS@yahoogroups.com). Tel: (888) 280-8833. Web: [www.geocities.com/familylifeacademy](http://www.geocities.com/familylifeacademy).

**Renaissance** is a parent participation public school located on the west side of Los Angeles. We have openings for teachers in fall, 2001, in our K-5 program. We are a start up K-8 charter school with a humanistic educational approach. Must possess a valid California teaching credential. We prefer someone with experience teaching in a public or private school setting, working with emergent, constructivist, integrated curriculum and multi-age groupings. Responsibilities: 1. Develop and maintain stimulating and nurturing program and environment that meets students individual and group needs. 2. Develop and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum within the purpose, goals, and philosophy of the school. 3. Model and promote positive interpersonal communication and problem solving skills. Competitive salary. Please send resume to **Mary Daval**, [mdaval@zippnet.net](mailto:mdaval@zippnet.net) or fax 310.838.6806 or call Janin Paine 310.560.5088.

**Waking the Village (WTV)**, is a nonprofit, and was founded in Sacramento, California by **Bridget Alexander** and **Blithe Raines** two teachers eager to inspire and educate at-risk and homeless youth. In the summer of 1999 WTV recruited and trained 18 at-risk youth to cycle across America. The youth left behind drugs, alcohol, fighting and aimless days to face the challenge of cycling 2,300 miles! Along the way, the group performed good deeds in each state. The journey was a success and revolutionized the lives of the riders. Since the end of the journey, WTV has been mentoring youth and envisioning a residential school. Currently, the organization is raising funds, and seeking a coalition of hard-working, good-hearted people ready to dedicate their lives to building a vibrant, nurturing community to help children, youth and families. We need experts in a wide variety of trades, sages, teachers, artists, farmers, carpenters, counselors, coaches, chefs, and patient elders to guide us all! Tel: (916) 372-6272. Email: [wakingthevillage@hotmail.com](mailto:wakingthevillage@hotmail.com). Web: [www.netsamurai.com/village](http://www.netsamurai.com/village).

**Wondertree Learning Center** in Vancouver, Canada has an opening for one educator to work with a group of 12 learners (ages 6 to 12) in a two-group learning center. The position is for September 2001 and we need someone who has a teaching certificate. We are a learning program based on equality of learners, self-designing, and synergistic community involvement. Contact **Brent Cameron** M.A., Wondertree Foundation for Natural Learning, Box 38083, Vancouver, BC V0B 2C0 Canada. Tel: (604) 224-3663. Email: [brentcameron@telus.net](mailto:brentcameron@telus.net). Web: [www.wondertree.org](http://www.wondertree.org)

Highly regarded 24 year old community arts organization, full day school and studio complex in nation's capital offers dynamic opportunities for exceptional visual and performing artists, architects and writers, of diverse cultural backgrounds who teach. With architecture and the other arts as the means of education, and accomplished artists as complete teachers, **Children's Studio School** has earned national recognition for its "Arts As Education" approach to developing multi-dimensional thinking in young chil-



dren. Faculty, administrative and intern positions are open for the Fall. Contact **Marcia McDonnell**, president and founder, 202-387 6148/5880. Or email resume and arts statement to [studiomm@studioschool.org](mailto:studiomm@studioschool.org)

**Blue Rock School** is a small, child-oriented elementary school in West Nyack, New York. We are seeking a creative head teacher for the third grade for fall 2001. Please fax resume and cover letter to: Blue Rock School, Phone: 845-627-0234, Fax: 845-627-0208, 110 Demarest Mill Road, West Nyack, NY 10994

**The Community School** is currently accepting applications for live-in interns for the summer and winter terms. Join a community of dedicated educators who work intensely for six months with eight residential students striving to complete high school. Gain skills in non-traditional academic assessment, tutoring, student-initiated learning projects. Assist students in developing job skills, leisure time activities, conflict resolution, anger management, assertiveness, cooking. Practice the School's unique model of relational education. Learn about the Passages program serving 30 teen parents through a home-based curriculum. Benefit from weekly meetings with your internship advisor. In exchange for this volunteer position, the School provides you with room and board. To apply, contact Emanuel Pariser at P.O. Box 555, Camden, ME 04843. Tel: (207) 236-3000. Email: [emanuel@cschool.acadia.net](mailto:emanuel@cschool.acadia.net). Web: [www.thecommunityschool.org](http://www.thecommunityschool.org).

Full-time elementary teacher wanted for democratic, innovative, cooperative school. Experience in alternative education preferred. Must be able to be certified in PA. Send resume to Hiring Committee, **Upattinas School & Resource Center**, 429 Greenridge Rd., Glenmoore, PA 19343. Non-discriminatory as to race and other individual differences. [Sandy@upattinas.org](mailto:Sandy@upattinas.org)

**EDUCATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER SCHOOL:** We are an innovative, public K-8 inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and committed to an arts-integrated curriculum and active parent involvement. This leadership position is responsible for overseeing educational philosophy, policy and practice; working collaboratively with teachers, students, and parents; and ensuring consistency and quality of teaching. The ideal candidate will have 5 years of teaching experience, preferably at both the elementary and middle school levels; experience with curriculum development; experience supervising teachers; knowledge of Reggio Emilia, and a commitment to innovation in education. Please send resume to: HCCS, Box 147, Haydenville, MA 01039

We have positions for math and science teachers at **School for the Physical City**. SPC is a grades 6-12 small public school (350 students) located at 55 E. 25th St. in Manhattan. There are openings in grade 8 and in the high school. We are an Expeditionary Learning school and we strive to help students reach high academic goals through project-based curriculum. Contact Michael Soguero at 212-683-7440 and/or fax resume and letter of interest to 212-683-7338. Please mention you saw the opening mentioned in Education Revolution. Web: [www.elob.org](http://www.elob.org).

**The Albany Free School**, an inner city, democratic, community- and freedom-based school for kids 2-14 has a paid staff opening for next year. The pay stinks but the kids are amazing and the work is very fulfilling. The primary job requirement is to be a warm hearted, flexible and creative person, open to the unexpected. **The Free School** is also initiating a comprehensive, yearlong residential internship program that will include valuable learning experience both in and outside of the school. The Free School is an

independent, freedom-based, inner-city day school for 55 kids ages two to fifteen founded in 1969 by Mary Leue. The internship program has three main components involving school, community, and personal growth. Interns will teach full-time in the school with the ongoing support and guidance of a mentor, who is a member of the paid staff. The program will open with an introductory weekend retreat beginning August 24, and will end June 14, 2002. For more information or to apply, contact Chris Mercogliano at [albanyfreeschool@yahoo.com](mailto:albanyfreeschool@yahoo.com) or at (518) 434-3072.

The **Squamish Waldorf School Association** invites applicants for an experienced Waldorf Kindergarten teacher for fall 2002 and Grade One for 2003. We seek individuals whose style reflects humor, grace, integrity, and determination. Our ideal teacher is energetic, outgoing and warm. We welcome all applications but would prefer someone with experience. Please contact Zan Romeder, P.O. Box 515, Squamish, BC, V0N 1G0, Canada. Email: [zan@mountain-inter.net](mailto:zan@mountain-inter.net).

## Teachers Seeking Jobs

**Marus Whitman ECO Program** has a special education certified teacher opening. The ECO program is a public school choice for middle school students. ECO offers an experiential, environmentally focused curriculum. ECO is located at the Cumming Nature Center and enrolls fifty students (selected by a lottery) in a two-year, looping curriculum. Candidates should have a strong interest in outdoor activities and the environment. Responsibilities include serving as a special education resource and as the social studies teacher. Contact Malcolm MacKenzi, ECO, 6472 Gulick Rd., Naples, NY 14512. Tel: (716) 374-9050. Web: [www.mwcsd.k12.ny.us](http://www.mwcsd.k12.ny.us).

Teacher with a degree in alternative education from the City University of New York and six years experience working in alternative schools Pre-K through seventh grade looking for work in Nassau or Suffolk county in New York. Specialties include math, science, English as a second language and music. Taught for three years in Denmark. Presently assistant to Alternative Education Resource Organization executive director, Jerry Mintz. I believe in a student-centered approach to education. Can be reached at 631-859-0868. **Steve Rosenthal**.

**Susan Daily**, a certified High School English/Environmental Studies teacher and 9-year veteran of Instructing with **Outward Bound** is looking for a teaching position in an alternative school. She has taught for 4 years in alternative, environmental schools and brings a wealth of creativity, inspiration, and whole-learning education to any school. Please contact her at [susantinsley@yahoo.com](mailto:susantinsley@yahoo.com).

I am certified to teach grades K-8, general subjects. I am also familiar with the Waldorf schools and their ideology. I have more than six years of teaching experience as an college English college instructor. My background in the arts and humanities is extensive. I maintain exemplary collections of classical music recordings and outstanding films. I paint, write fiction, and compose music for French horn. I would ideally want to teach classes in modern European literature and creative writing seminars, where the focus would be "supernatural and strange tales." I believe in developing childrens' intellects, imaginations, and deep sense of morality. I favor the interdisciplinary approach, where literature can be linked to the fine arts as well as spirituality and philosophy.

I wish to teach in: ME, VT, RI, MA, NY, or PA. I prefer to work with students who are in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and above. My name is **Charles Kroll**. Please contact me at: (978) 649-3961, or: e-mail: [Rupert\\_T\\_Brand@yahoo.com](mailto:Rupert_T_Brand@yahoo.com) .

**Inna Thompson:** I am searching for a job in alternative education. I have worked with youth for the past twelve years in a variety of settings. My enthusiasm, creativity, humanistic philosophy, spontaneity and belief in children's abilities have led me to believe that I am a radical teacher who will flourish in an alternative setting. I seek a school in which the teacher's job is to guide and counsel the students, a school which is made up of students, teachers, family, administration and the community at large. I am a teacher who listens to her students, who believes that students can achieve at high levels, who is passionate about teaching and who believes in knowing who my students are as people. I have taught Art for the past three years at the high school level, worked in two continuation schools and was a camp counselor for nine summers. I want my classroom to be like summer camp, fun, spontaneous, real, full of friends, loving, and with a strong focus on empowering youth. Contact me at [inmathompson@hotmail.com](mailto:inmathompson@hotmail.com)

I am a well-traveled published author with a diverse background and a great deal of teaching and lecturing experience internationally. I excelled in graduate school, but my most important experiences are from outside academia: family, growth, environmental and social studies, and love. I am looking for work teaching children or adults. The actions must be holistic and practical. INTEGRATED SKILLS and ABILITY LEARNING: This type of education is based on 3 principles: 1. INTEGRATE AND TRANSFER learning from different areas. 2. DISCUSS how it all relates to real life 3. APPLY AND PRACTICE in real life. It is meant to bridge the gap in education (K-PhD) that separates what we study from real life. EXAMPLE OF CLASSES: FILM: Parallel between character's symbolic battles and our struggles. LITERATURE/LANGUAGE ARTS: Nature of language: ways to limit, understand, and empower. JUDO: Must make sure all your "parts" work together when you act. Each class must go from the "academic" to the real. We must practice what we learn in our life, and workshop what does not work and what does.

**Andrea Gaudiano**, [andrea1165@yahoo.com](mailto:andrea1165@yahoo.com). Short term address & phone: 400 N 500 W #231, Moab, UT 84532 (435) 259-0829

I am seeking a teaching position in an innovative teaching environment. I have taught in bush Alaska for the last two years moving to a different isolated Eskimo village every twelve weeks as required by my itinerant position. My strengths lie in the ability to reach students other instructors give up on. By nature, my nurturing instincts are very strong and I am drawn to high-risk students. I offer a variety of choices for students to gear their work towards projects, reflecting and/or building personal strengths. My personal choice is to continue teaching and living in an intimate environment. I find solace in small, personalized environments. If you have any positions for which you feel I would be qualified to formally apply, please contact me. **Christine Chimo**, [ccchimo@hotmail.com](mailto:ccchimo@hotmail.com).

**Diane Bancroft** is seeking a position as an educator. She has considerable experience working with students who have various behavioral and emotional support needs. Her work at Julia de Burgos and at the Korean American Education Center makes her a candidate who is willing and able to work with bilingual and English as a Foreign Language Students. Currently, she is expanding her certificate to include Spanish. She is also an outstanding swimming coach capable of directing any Aquatics Program. Contact Diana at 821 Clifford Ave., Ardmore, PA 19403-1271. Tel: (610) 630-0865. Email: [bancrofd@juno.com](mailto:bancrofd@juno.com).

Enthusiastic artist seeking part or full time teaching position in Maine for Fall 2001. B.A. in English and fine arts. Experienced with all grades K-12, as well as with troubled and mentally disabled children. Preference with younger grades. Not currently teacher certified, but willing if necessary. Please contact **Rebecca M. Verrill** (207) 539-4846 [rebeccamay21@hotmail.com](mailto:rebeccamay21@hotmail.com)

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# CONFERENCES

June 29-July 1, **The Annual International Conference on Alternatives in Education**. Innovation and Choice Within the Public School System; New Roles and Responsibilities in a Paradigm of Choice; Alternative Learning Opportunities: Meeting the Needs of All Learners; Beyond Schooling in the 21st Century. The National Alternative Schools Conference began as a project of the Indiana University Alternative School Teacher Education Program. Started by Vern Smith, Bob Barr and Dan Burke, the first summer conferences were part of the summer school program. The first big conference was in the fall of '73 at Minneapolis. Contact Bob Fizzell. Email: [eduserve@igc.org](mailto:eduserve@igc.org).

July 8-13, 2001. **I\*EARN (International Education and Resource Network)** will hold its annual Youth Summit and Teachers' Conference in Capetown, South Africa. I\*EARN is a non-profit K-12 network of 5,000 schools from 100 countries whose purpose is to enable young people to undertake projects designed to make a meaningful contribution to the health and welfare of the planet and its people. Each summer, the network comes together in a different location of the globe to share their experience of teaching and learning through collaborative online projects, and to build new and ongoing project work throughout the school year. For conference information: <http://ac.wcape.school.za>. For information about I\*EARN: <http://www.iearn.org> or call (212) 870-2693.

July 20-21, **New England Homeschool and Family Learning Conference**, Boxboro Woods Holiday Inn, Boxborough, MA. 978 263-8701. Features David Albert. Further info: 207 657 2800

July 26-29, **Whole Schooling Consortium/Whole Language Umbrella/Rouge Forum**, Chicago, IL. Build community, oppose high-stakes tests, begin a conversation, and an action-agenda, that addresses both the rising demands of the tests, and enhances the chances for successful resistance. Email: [rgibson@pipeline.com](mailto:rgibson@pipeline.com). Web: <http://www.coe.wayne.edu/CommunityBuilding/WLU2001.html>.

July 27-29, 2001, Bellingham, WA. **Giraffe/Partnership Conference**, sponsored by the Center for Partnership Studies and the Center for Non-Violent Communication. Featuring Riane Eisler and Marshall Rosenberg and linking partnership education and non-violent communication. For more information, contact IPN, PO Box 323, Tuscon, AZ 85702; (520) 298-6542; [delmeraz@aol.com](mailto:delmeraz@aol.com).

August 6-16, the **Tenth Anniversary of the First Festival of New Schools**, Moscow, Russia. This celebration will take place on a ship going down the Volga River. For more information: Ute Roehl, Frans Halslaan 13, 1412 HS Naarden, The Netherlands Tel. +31-35-6944583 fax +31-35-6950368. [ute.roehl@hetnet.nl](mailto:ute.roehl@hetnet.nl)

Oct. 5-12, **The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Soul in Education Conference**, Kahili Mountain Park, Kauai, HI. Jerry Mintz, Joseph Chilton Pearce, Sambhava & Josette Luvmour, Chris Mercogliano, Dr. Alan watkins, Jack Miller, Peggy O'Mara will be some of the keynote speakers. The mission: To create a forum for the exploration of conscious, realistic, practical responses and methods on which to base appropriate and timely education for all. Contact Children Believe, PO Box 253. Kilauea, HI 96754. Tel: 1-888-615-8889. Web: [www.childrenbelieve.com/conference/spirit.htm](http://www.childrenbelieve.com/conference/spirit.htm).

October 11-13, **In our Voices: Reclaiming our Classrooms, Schools, Democracy**, Ohio University, Athens, OH. The Institute for Democracy in Education (IDE) annual conference. IDE is a partnership of all participants in the educational process — teachers, administrators, parents and students — all with the belief that democratic change must come from those at the heart of education. For more information please visit the IDE web site at: <http://www.ohiou.edu/ide/CONF.HTML>.

October 17-19, **Alternative Education International Conference**, Lodz, Poland. The main theme is alternative education – practical and theoretical dilemmas. The main organizer is Professor Boguslaw Sliwinski of Lodz University, who is an authority in Poland on alternative education and has written a number of books on the subject. If anyone wants to know more about this, please contact David French at [david@mail.filus.edu.pl](mailto:david@mail.filus.edu.pl) or Agnieszka Sliwerska, Alternative Education Conference, Wydział Nauk o Wychowaniu Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 90-553 Łódź, ul. Kopernika 55, Poland. Tel: +48 42 637-1644 ext. 34. Email: [bosliwer@krysia.uni.lodz.pl](mailto:bosliwer@krysia.uni.lodz.pl).

## Special Section:

# CHANGING SCHOOLS

Since 1973: The Journal of Alternative Education

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Edited by Albert Lamb

## *Changing Schools and The Education Revolution: Partners for Four Years!*

By Jerry Mintz

**A**t the 1997 conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan, we were faced with a crisis. *Changing Schools*, the magazine which had been at the networking core of our "non-organization," had lost its editor and there appeared to be no replacement. At an organizational meeting here at AERO we discussed this problem and agreed to expand our AERO magazine to include *Changing Schools*. We would continue to publish it as a section of our magazine, and put in the same kinds of articles, as well as publicize the annual International Alternative Education Conference.

Of course, by more than doubling the size of our magazine much additional production expense would be incurred. But this expansion has enabled the Education Revolution magazine to go much further in depth into the issues. It was agreed that an effort would be made to encourage state alternative education organizations to subscribe to the magazine in bulk, and to get individual members to subscribe from other states. As had been done in the past to support *Changing Schools*, it was also agreed that \$1000 from each conference would go toward defraying the costs of the magazine, the ads for the conferences, etc.

Now, three years later, AERO has continued its commitment to keep *Changing Schools* alive. We have produced three years of quarterly magazines with a *Changing Schools* section of up to 24 pages. We created the IALA listserve, which has now been going for almost a year. We have provided thousands of labels from our database to help the conference organizers in their mailings. We also have links from our website to the conference website. With our 800 number we have served as a clearinghouse for people looking for information about the IAAC and IALA, funneling them to the appropriate contact people.

The state organizations of Connecticut, New Jersey, and Georgia have had bulk subscriptions at a discount rate of \$10 a year. This and the individual subscriptions from IAAE attendees have not, to this point, defrayed the additional cost of more than doubling the size of the

magazine. Fortunately we have had some foundation support to make up the deficit. Also, this year we gratefully received the \$1000 support for the first time, from the Minnesota conference. Therefore, at this year's conference we hope a decision will be made by the new International Association of Educational Alternatives to continue *Changing Schools* and have it as its official publication, as a part of the *Education Revolution Magazine*.

This group has, quite intentionally, been a non-organization since its inception. I attended my first conference in 1985, at State College, PA, and have been to every conference since then except one. At that 1985 meeting Dave Lehman of Alternative Community School in New York proposed that we become an organization. But this was resisted over the years. One of the reasons was because of the split between the choice and at-risk approaches. At last year's momentous organizational meeting which created the International Association of Educational Alternatives (IALA), it was decided that the new organization would be open to a spectrum of educational alternatives. AERO as an organization - as represented by its *Education Revolution/Changing Schools* magazine- is committed to promoting and networking this spectrum of educational alternatives. We feel that the movement must become more cohesive, rather than remaining in parallel universes, if we are to have a real impact on the whole education system. Sometimes this is a lonely fight, because it is far easier to pick a niche and stay there. But in these days of high-stakes testing, educational alternatives in all forms are now threatened, and learner-centered approaches will not become available to all children unless there is a coordinated effort by the millions of people who practice these alternatives, including home educators, independent alternatives, public choice and at-risk programs, and charter schools. We sincerely hope that IALA will decide this year to get behind the continuation of *Changing Schools*.

# High Stakes Testing

By E Wayne Ross and Kevin D. Vinson

First published: Sunday, February 25, 2001 as:  
"Special to the Times Union, Albany NY"

**B**ipartisanship in Washington is not always a good thing. Take, for example, recent proposals to re-define the federal government's role in education. Although nearly identical and potentially 'bipartisan,' save for the President's support for school vouchers, George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" and the Democratic Leadership Council's "Three R's" plans contain elements that place public education at risk.

Both plans would streamline national education priorities by reducing duplicative programs and bureaucracy. And both plans would provide states with more flexibility by freeing them from certain requirements in return for submitting to performance agreements that reward improvements and penalize states and districts that fail to improve. But the heart of both proposals is an accountability system that pegs federal funding to test scores and threatens quality public education.

Standards-based education reforms have been promoted by a coalition of groups from across the political spectrum including teachers unions, National Governors' Association, The Business Roundtable and U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

High-stakes tests used to decide who gets promoted, receives a diploma, or what schools receive adequate funding have been the key element of reforms enacted in 49 states, even though the results are proving disastrous for students who have been unnecessarily retained in grade, denied diplomas and subjected to a lowest common denominator education in the name of higher standards.

Test-driven reform proposals such as those offered by Bush and Congressional Democrats are out of step with what a growing number of researchers, parents, teachers and even standards-based education reform advocates know and continue to discover: Placing an emphasis on testing, rather than learning, harms students and fundamentally corrupts the processes of education.

As the negative effects of high-stakes testing schemes become more widely experienced, even testing advocates are having second thoughts. Learning First a

coalition of groups with a collective membership of nearly 10 million and a vociferous proponent of standards-based initiatives recently called for 'midcourse corrections' of such reforms because too much emphasis is being placed on testing. Many states are now backing off high-stakes testing plans, delaying implementation timelines or adding accommodations for students.

The bottom line is that high-stakes testing damages education and no amount of tinkering with test-driven reforms can mitigate their effects. Here are 10 research-based reasons why test-driven reforms should be scrapped:

When tests are used for important decisions, any early benefits are quickly outweighed by substantial insidious effects on the system they are intended to monitor.

No test is good enough to serve as the sole or primary basis for important educational decisions. This is a widely held principle in the testing profession, one recently reiterated by the National Research Council, which concluded: "An educational decision that will have a major impact on a test taker should not be made solely or automatically on the basis of a single test score."

When important decisions are linked to test scores, teachers teach to the test. The tests become the curriculum as teachers adjust instruction to enhance test scores rather than teaching in ways that are responsive to the interests and needs of their students. Teaching to the test narrows the curriculum.

High-stakes tests transfer control over the curriculum to the people who write the exams (most often large corporations). Instructional time and resources are increasingly devoted to test prep and taking practice tests (sold by the test companies.) Authentic teaching and learning are threatened as corporations reap profits.

High-stakes tests actually undermine high standards by encouraging students to skim the surface and memorize material they will soon forget. Focusing on the short-term goal of raising test scores deprives students of the chance to develop the skills, knowledge and habits of mind they need for future success.

Focusing on test scores undermines student motivation to learn. The assumption that test scores are all that counts overlooks a substantial body of psychological research suggesting that a focus on how well one is doing is very different from a focus on what one is doing. Moreover, a preoccupation with test performance often undermines interest in learning, quality of learning, and a desire to be challenged.

High-stakes tests threaten our most vulnerable students. They undermine, rather than enhance, equity for

students of color, immigrant students, special needs students and students from low-income families.

Testing is not a viable strategy for school improvement. State testing systems take educational authority away from local communities and put it in the hands of the testing bureaucracy. The way to improve schools is to build a strong curriculum, provide ample professional development for teachers and, most important, foster local community involvement.

Scores on high-stakes tests are not accurate representations of students' performance. Such scores can be surprisingly inconsistent; that's why every major test publisher tells schools not to use them to make decisions about grade retention or graduation. Recent studies suggest that state-mandated tests, like those given in Michigan and Ohio, more accurately measure family income than students' educational achievement.

When test scores are central to decision-making, people tend to treat test results as the major goal of schooling, rather than as a useful but fallible indicator of achievement. Current bipartisanship on education policy is rooted in the notion that increased levels of testing can improve education. The fact is that reliance on high-stakes testing helps few, and as a strategy for reform, assures that many children will be left behind.

In the *Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs Newsletter* this spring there were some good comments about the mania for testing, made by the MAAP's President, Bill Zimniewicz:

In my opinion, testing is a poor method to evaluate students' schoolwork. A teacher from South St. Paul performed an experiment. He gave his students a test that included multiple choice and matching questions. His students had been studying the subject matter being tested. The teacher then gave a student who was not in his class the same test. He told that student not to read the test, but instead to randomly select answers. This student got a higher score than all of the students in the class. There is a lesson to be learned here too. Unfortunately, the same people who vociferously advocate for more testing will refuse to learn this lesson. Educators for too long have passively allowed others to dictate what the tools to evaluate student performance should be. We have allowed others to define our roles. Imagine any of us telling lawyers or bankers how they should perform their job duties. It is not that I object to evaluation and review; but I think we need to assert our

mission and create the necessary tools and strategies to use when evaluating whether or not kids are showing growth.

## BULLYING AT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

### A word from Albert:

On the AERO listserve in March there was an interesting exchange, initiated by Tammy Rousso, about the issue of bullying in alternative schools. Schools concerned with creating an environment that lets kids have a lot of freedom are always going to have some trouble with bullying. In democratic schools working structures for effectively dealing with bullying usually evolve over time but it is not an easy issue. Alternative schools have sometimes been a dumping ground for children with severe emotional problems. As Helen from Windsor House shows in her reply to Tammy, bullying can be difficult to deal with through being so particular. Some kids just know how to push the button of other kids and make their life hell. And the psychological can be as hard to deal with as the physical.

When I was a teenager boarding at Summerhill School, in the 1960s, there was a year when I was the only big kid who had his own room. It was right next to the large room where all the Cottage Kids, aged 8 to 11, made their home. I had a lock on my door but one time, when I had happened to leave my door open, one of the big kids took the door off the hinges and removed it. I came back to find that all the little kids now had the run of my room. I brought the issue up in the meeting, I knew who had done it, but I'm afraid the meeting just laughed about it. For several weeks I kept bringing the issue up and I could never get the meeting to take it seriously. Even I could see the humor of it but it was still a very unpleasant experience. Finally I made a concerted search of the woods around the school and found my door buried under a pile of brush.

The most difficult issue is when a child is subjected to constant harassment and physical bullying. Democratic schools have to get kids over the stigma attached to "telling on each other," and show them that bullying is a community issue. By the way, in future issues it would be interesting to hear from others who have experiences of bullying at alternative schools.

After Tammy Rousso brought up the issue she explained a bit more about her situation:

A message from Tammy Rousso :

I am homeschooling (unschooling) my children by default. I live in a part of southern California where there really is no choice of alternative schooling in less than a two-hour drive. We are quite happy being together at home, but I can see that my children would also like the opportunities to develop the types of relationships with

other children that happen when they are together day after day learning and playing. But, one of my concerns would be that bullying may be allowed in the support of freedom. I am curious if that is indeed the case at alternative schools or if it's a non-issue.

I subscribe to this list in the hope that I might become aware of a school in my area. Or in the event we decide to relocate, or maybe even take on the task of starting a school of our own at some point.

A second message from Tammy :

I am curious if those of you who run alternative schools could tell me if you ever deal with episodes of bullying or one child being continually abused by classmates? If not do you attribute this to the fact that overall the children are happier and therefore less malice? Do your schools attract a different kind of child to begin with? If you do experience bullying how is it handled?

A message from Jerry :

From my own experience in founding a directing an inner city democratic school for 17 years, the fact is that there was very little bullying in the school, and virtually no fights. The fact that anyone could immediately call a meeting by ringing the meeting bell was a big factor. We had a lot of motions passed about bullying, including verbal bullying by younger or smaller students. We also had something called the "stop rule," in which people would say "stop" when they were so upset about something they were on the verge of violence. More details about this system on our website at <http://www.educationrevolution.org/demschoolgov.html>.

In terms of the kind of kids we attracted, about half of them would certainly have been called at-risk, most were low income, but we had many who were there simply because the parents believed in the philosophy.

A message from Helen at Windsor House :

We have experienced several different types of bullying. Each time we were so naive that it took us far too long to put an end to it.

One time it was one girl who seemed to be able to turn everyone in her social group against one of the members. The victim changed all the time; so all of the girls didn't dare stand up to her because they would be next. JC gave consequences. We talked with the group, we talked with the girl, we talked with the victims each time. Finally, JC said they would all be separated for a day the next time it happened. That simply made it go underground. It got so vicious that several girls left at the end of the year. At last, we asked her to leave.

Another time it was two boys who were forced to attend our school because no other school would take them and their probation required them to attend school. They terrified even me. One was 11 and the other was 12! They talked about 'curbing' their enemies, etc. I managed to keep them from

doing anything really awful until the last day of school, when they announced that they were going to beat up all the kids who gave them lip in the six months that they had been there, because they weren't coming back to Windsor House and didn't care if I expelled them. I ended up taking them out for pizza to get them out of the school. One snitched a pop while we were there. Boy, were we glad to see the end of that year. After that we agreed to simply not take kids in that situation no matter what the School Board said. Incidentally, one-on-one, they were rather sweet.

The third type was two boys with wicked tongues who said the most devastating things about their friends. They were often quite funny, and the whole group of boys insisted that they didn't mind when they were the butt of a joke. They refused to write complaints on each other. Unfortunately, one of them was a victim-personality, and he got the worst of it. We worked with that group for months to no avail. Then one day the victim boy hit the teaser a really good whack on the shin with his hockey stick, and things changed. Unfortunately, that boy left the school at the end of the year and had a lot of trouble keeping from being bullied in his life. The bully and his sidekick stopped being friends, and the bully turned around and became a pillar of the school and his sidekick left the school, got in with a bad bunch, and ended up in trouble with the law.

A group of girls last year were mean to each other (eight in the group) and one or the other (or even several) was in tears every day. They wouldn't write complaints on each other. That didn't stop until three girls left at the end of the year and the whole dynamic of the group changed.

Right now we have a boy fresh from public school who is using very strong intimidation tactics. We are moving very fast on this one. He wrote a threatening, very nasty note on someone's email, and the Judicial Committee suspended him for a week.

# The Albany Free School goes to Spain



Luke on the Mediterranean in Spain



Damon is buried on the beach



Mike at Aquarium in Spain

In April kids from the Albany Free School raised funds to go to Spain for a couple of weeks. They stayed with one of their staff members who happens to have a house there. While visiting Spain the kids sent email back home to everyone at the

Free School. Here is a selection of comments taken from their many entertaining messages:

## DAYS ONE AND TWO

Monday & Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>

*Dearon*

*Byrd*

First, when we were at the airport I thought it was weird. We got there too early. Then after a while, Mike dropped his ticket in the heater and I thought we were screwed. Then my Dad taught me how to open the heater so I opened it to take the ticket out.

I felt confident boarding the plane. I wasn't scared. It took a while when we were in the air, but when we landed I thought we were going to clap, but then we didn't.

When we got off the plane in Spain, it took a long time to find the suitcases. We got a taxi and went to Alberto's house. When we got there, they had food and chips for us.

## DAY THREE

Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>

*Luke Diamente*

Today we went to the ramblas - a large open area where people sold things. It was fun. After that, we tried to find the beach. It took us a while. The water was cold but the sand was warm and we buried each other in the sand. Going home, we had to walk up steep hills. When we got there, we had a class meeting and went to sleep.

*Mike Baker*

Wednesday morning when we woke up, we walked down La Ramblas. La Ramblas is a tourist site. After, we walked to the beach. The waves in the Mediterranean Sea were really, really big and were throwing me and Marat and Damon around. When you are in there and the waves hit you, in the face, you get a lot of salt water in your mouth and it doesn't taste good.

I was surprised there weren't any crabs, starfish, turtles or fish that we could see at the beach. After the beach, we walked around and saw a FREE TIBET protest. I thought that Free Tibet meant that it was free for people to bet, but I learned that it meant that the Chinese are trying to take over Tibet, but everyone wants to stop them. It was a little scary because people were screaming and you didn't know what they were saying because they were talking Spanish.

## DAY FOUR

Thursday April 26<sup>th</sup>

*Tiffany Monson*

Today we have been here three days and you wouldn't believe the things we saw. First, we went to this school, Sadako, at 10:30 in the morning. I was amazed at how up to date the Hispanic kids were on English. It was kind



or pathetic because nobody in our class spoke Spanish. The part that I enjoyed was when everybody (Two classes from Sadako and my class) went on a mini-tour of Barcelona. First, we saw the soccer stadium of a less popular football team, as they call it. Then after we went to the most popular soccer stadium. I was surprised how big it was because it was bigger than an American NFL stadium. Then we went on to a beautiful building built by Antoni Gaudi, who is a very famous architect. I got tired so quick because it took ten minutes of exhausting climbing to get to the top of the most famous unfinished cathedral in the world. I was scared to go to the top due to the height and safety issue of the building being so old and the fact that it was unfinished.

### *Isaac Graves*

Today we went to the school Sadako. For about a month before the trip we had been talking (via email) to some Spanish students at the school so once we got there we were able to meet our pen pals. It was a really interesting experience. They spoke pretty good English and were able to understand us pretty well. It is cool to see how similar they are to Americans that age (13). They have the same style, like many of the same things, such as musical interests, and they talk about the same things. After talking for a little while we got a tour of the city in a double-decker tour bus. First, they took us to a soccer stadium to see the team practice a little bit. That stadium happened to be the stadium used in the 1992 summer Olympics. After seeing the stadium, we then went to see another soccer stadium where they're most famous soccer team plays. Their stadium seats 100,000 people. We also got to see a Museum of the team. It is amazing to see how big soccer is here. That team to them is bigger than the Yankees. Then we went to see undoubtedly the most famous Gaudi Church. The church is amazing.

Soon after that they took us to the beach. We played volleyball, their version of kill the carrier, and we swam. In one way, the beaches were different because in Spain and many other European countries aren't so uptight about nudity. So, the men aren't the only ones with their tops off. Their lunch was really nasty so I had pizza Hut, and then we went home and did our grocery shopping. We bought fresh crab and shrimp in Europe's largest outdoor market and Damon and I made a great meal.

### DAY FIVE

Friday April 27<sup>th</sup>

#### *Marat Lozhkin*

Today I went to the school Sadako. Everybody was really nice. I met a lot of girls. Spanish girls are kinda hot but too skinny. I got two new pen pals. The seventh grade showed us the whole school.

Then we ate lunch at the school and it was actually really good. But I couldn't finish because my food and psychological clock was off. When I eat here, it doesn't feel right.

### DAY SIX

Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>

#### *Tiffany Monson*

We started out the day climbing up an exhausting hill of stairs to see the historic Gaudi buildings. First, we saw a house that looked like a gingerbread house. Isaac and Dearon argued about it being tile or mosaic. Afterwards we went to the beach where we found a dead decapitated rat. We then went on to a cleaner beach. In the mean time Jeff was picking up Marat's dad from the airport, due to the fact that he got really homesick. His father came to get him and bring him home.

After we ate out we went to a very big carnival called Feria de Abril (April Fair). I felt sick going on one ride called The Revolution, it was scary because it turned me upside down while water sprayed off my face 20 feet off the ground. I went in the bumper cars nine times. We went on many rides, which I was surprised about due to the smallness of the fair. Afterwards, we waited two hours for a cab where we experienced many unruly Spaniards.

#### *Dearon Byrd*

Today we went to the fair. The first ride we saw was the ride where you went up in the air and you were up there for five minutes and then it just dropped you. I almost got all my teeth knocked out from getting rear ended in the bumper cars. Tiffany smushed me in the frog ride. The fair was right next to the beach. So we went from playing on the beach to the fair. I love swimming in the ocean. I swam there for an hour.

### DAY SEVEN

Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup>

#### *Isaac Graves*

Today was a fairly lazy day. We woke up at 12:00. We rested and hung out for a while because we were still tired from staying out late the night before. After a while we started to pack because we were going to the beach house tomorrow.

### DAY EIGHT

Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup>

#### *Isaac Graves*

Today we were supposed to get up at 9:30 a.m. so we could catch the bus to Costa Brava and the beach house we'd be staying at for the next five days. But Jeff set the alarm wrong so we woke up late. We didn't have much

time so we had to hurry. We finished packing, got dressed and cleaned up. We ran to the subway hopped on and we were on our way to the bus station. We got to the bus station just in time. Jeff bought the tickets and we went. We traveled through the Spanish countryside for three hours until we reached Begur, a small town where the beach house is located. When we got there Mercedes met us (with the help of Jose) and in two cars they took us to the beach house.

## DAY NINE

Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>

*Mike Baker*

When we woke up we went swimming in the swimming pool at the beach house. Later we drove to Tossa Del Mar. When we got there we went to the ocean beach and Dearon and Damon went swimming. There was a little oil in the water. It was really cold so I didn't go swimming.

Everybody went shopping to get gifts for family members. The streets were really small with old buildings. It looked like Italy. Jeff, Megan, Luke, and I went to ancient castle remains and we walked around through there. We walked down and found a cave in the rocks by the ocean. We went in a little and it was really dark. No one had flashlights we only had lighters. I got scared because Megan snuck up behind me and yelled.

## DAY TEN

Wednesday, MAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

*Tiffany Monson*

Today was so cool. We drove two hours to a town called Figueras where the Salvador Dali museum is. Four of the students left after seeing just a little bit because they said it was boring and too strange. Surprisingly, I found it to be very interesting. It was kind of crazy though, because a lot of his work took up the whole wall and he was no taller than 6'3".

Once we got home I cooked two dishes of Lasagna - one meat dish and one vegetarian. We brought everything down to a pebble beach and had a cross between a beach fire and a bonfire. We ate three hours later.

*Luke Diamente*

Today we decided to go to Figueras to go to the Dali museum. On the way we saw some Ostriches. When we got there we saw many cool paintings statues, and sketches. We also saw a huge, weird painting of a woman standing by an open window that if you stepped back far enough it looked like Abe Lincoln.

## DAY ELEVEN

Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>

*Isaac Graves*

Before we went to Spain we all had different ideas about what we wanted to do once we got there. So our teacher said, "Whoever wants to do something, why don't you each plan a day." So this is the day I planned.

We all woke up to leave by 10:00 a.m. this morning, because we all had to get ready to go to Andorra (Andorra is a small country between France and Spain). Once we got our stuff together we went down to the van and left.

After a while of traveling we had entered the Pyrenees Mountains. They were amazing. They were huge and beautiful. Up and down, up and down, we stopped for a few times: once for horses, once for snow, and another time for people's bladders. Eventually we reached the Andoran border. For me, that right there was the highlight of the trip.

Jeff had heard about a water park in Andorra called Caldea and so he asked where it was at a gas station. Then we were off.

It was a very odd structure, hard to explain, but it was odd. Inside we took a virtual helicopter ride that showed us Andorra. It was all right but the real entertainment came after - a huge indoor pool. It had parts where you could swim outside without leaving the pool, and where you could go into Jacuzzis. It was so awesome. After our time expired for us staying in the pool, we ate out and went home.

## DAY TWELVE

Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup>

*Mike Baker*

When I woke up I started to pack up because it was our last day at the beach house. We threw our bags in the van. We missed the bus because the policeman stopped us and made us wait because they were filming a movie. We had to drive to the next bus stop and catch the bus.

When we got to Barcelona we were supposed to be at the Sadako School at 4:30 p.m. to go over to the kids house and have dinner with them, so we rushed home to change and get ready to go. At the school, we divided into 2 groups. Damon and Dearon were in my group. We left to go to the subway. I lost my own ticket and one of the kids from Sadako used his ticket to pay for me.

When we got to Lucas's house we played video games and with his dogs. We were waiting for Lucas' mom to come home. She was real nice and asked us what we wanted to do.

I rode down to a restaurant on Lucas' scooter and they rode down on skateboards while the mom walked with Damon & Dearon. When we got to Pans we all got sandwiches.

We went back to their house and played video games and wrestled each other. Everyone left, except one of the girls, and her dad brought us home. The dad had a new car. The car was started with something that looked like a play station memory card and you just had to push a button to turn it on.

DAY THIRTEEN  
Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>  
Tiffany Munson

Today, which was our last day, was the best day. We first started out by going to the IMAX. After that we went to the zoo. I found the apes to be most interesting. The albino monkey was astonishing; it was so human related, as were a lot of the monkeys. That zoo had everything. The peacocks shocked me too, because they were just walking around. Peacocks were in the cages with almost all the animals. Afterwards we went to the aquarium. I found that I really disliked it. The only good and quality animal they had was the penguin. Later we packed and got ready to go home tomorrow.

Overall I enjoyed the trip and will have good memories to look back on. I have no favorite moments from this trip because they were all great moments.

## Lead Poisoning in Children

In the news there has been a mention of a reduced but still significant rate of lead poisoning in children. Robert Lefkowitz, whose naturopathic ideas have been very important to my own health, recently sent the following:

"During World War II, the armed services treated some 20,000 men and women for extreme lead poisoning using EDTA chelation therapy. EDTA is a man-made amino acid and is harmless and found in many food products as an additive for various purposes. It is also effective in removing other toxic metals from the body. This has been thoroughly researched and documented and there are several thousand doctors in the U.S. who use EDTA chelation therapy for arterial sclerosis (to remove calcium build-up on artery walls) and other purposes. What I would like to know from my readers is if chelation therapy is being used with the many thousands of children who are diagnosed each year with lead poisoning. There has been great emphasis on creating safe lead-free environments for children, but I have never heard this therapy being used with children who have been unfortunate enough to have lead poisoning. Please let me know if there is anywhere in this country where it has become an approved medical practice to help children who have lead poisoning by the use of chelation therapy." — Robert Lefkowitz

## Home Birth and Alternative Education

Anna Babina wrote to the AEROList on the connection she has noticed in Russia between the incidence of home birth and alternative education. "Communicating with alternative educators in Russia," she writes: "I found out that among parents who refuse traditional schools there are many of those who gave birth to their children at home. They are consciously against maternity hospitals because they consider them full of violence. What is the situation in other countries like? Are 'birth without violence' and 'education without violence' connected?"

Anna received many answers. For instance Susan, writing from Los Angeles, volunteered: "I feel that birth and education are very related. As a result of the growth that I had to experience from the birthing of my children I do feel that I have more courage to take the step and choose alternative education for my family. I know in my heart that it doesn't matter if they turn out O.K. at the end. It's the process that is important. I could not imagine being able to put my kids through 12 plus years of torture."

Patricia, from Fayetteville, Arkansas, agreed: "I think there IS definitely a connection... It is an instinctive mistrust of patronizing, dishonest institutions, a reaching towards solutions that 'traffic not in lies' As for 'regular' schools... I just heard a great advertisement on the radio re: your child's problems at school, promising that some hospital's 'team of caring professionals' will go to the core and find your child's UNDERLYING PROBLEM and steer him or her towards a better (MORE ADAPTED TO SCHOOL) future."

Patricia also said: "I knew I would homeschool my child—the philosophical outlook is very much the same—why should I give up control of my body and my birthing experience to doctors who for the most part are really not caring about the emotional/spiritual aspects of my birth, as well as the natural way my body was meant to birth a child. Why should I give up my child to public school, which for the most part are not feeding my child the holistic education that I wish for him?"

"Here in Fayetteville, I would say that 90% of the women who are homeschooling or alternative schooling had homebirths, and again, it is connected. We have a midwifery school here in Fayetteville, which helps."

And a woman named Sharon added: "My husband and I had all four of our children at home because we felt birthing was a natural occurrence, not a medical procedure. It was a wonderful and bonding experience for all of us. I think taking charge of our children's education a very natural extension of this experience."

# My Three Weeks at AERO

By Dana Bennis

(Ed note: Dana is now on staff at AERO)

At some point last year, I was “surfing” the internet for information and web sites about alternative education, since I had recently discovered such alternatives exist. I came across AERO, the Alternative Education Resource Organization. It seemed very interesting, but since it was located just 20 minutes from my hometown in New York, I figured it must not be a very important organization. It did not take a very long time for me to realize it was just the opposite, and that it was incredibly fortuitous that I lived so close to its location! I contacted Jerry, told him when I would be in New York for my winter vacation, and went over to his house the first day I could after arriving in New York. I continued going there nearly every weekday for the next 3 weeks.

When I stepped into the main room that Jerry uses as his office, I could not help looking around (I am not exaggerating or dramatizing) at the bookcases and shelves and boxes and piles of books and magazines and pamphlets and video tapes and audio tapes. I had an urge to see what was there, and luckily Jerry did not mind as I spent a great deal of time during my first three weeks there browsing through as much as I could; and I probably only saw 1/10 of what is there. There were books by important writers including Holt, Neill, Reich and Lane, books about alternative schools such as Summerhill, Sudbury and Shaker Mountain, books about homeschooling, education in general (even some questionable curriculum guidelines and standards!), AERO-Gramme/Education Revolution issues, SKOLE issues, NCACS issues, and lots more. I also had an urge to organize the room a bit, and I was able to do that for a short time while searching for children’s books that Jerry could take to the Stork School in Ukraine, when he visited in January for their 10<sup>th</sup> reunion. (The room could still use more work though!)

While at the house, I had a great opportunity to observe Jerry and AERO in action. A large portion of his time was spent reading and responding to emails, often forwarding them to other interested people (including the AERO and IDEC and IALA mailing lists), and always saving each email in a huge directory in Microsoft Word, in order to be located quickly for future use. There were numerous times when Jerry referred to this directory, looking up people’s contact information or other info

stored in previous messages. I sure hope that computer does not crash because it has a LOT of information saved on it! (Actually I believe it is all backed up on disks.)

Often, parents would email AERO asking for advice on alternative schools in their area, and Jerry would respond giving several suggestions, and again forwarding the email to people who might be of further assistance. Although email may have taken the place of the phone as the most popular form of communication, many people still called AERO’s 800 number or 516 number to speak directly with Jerry about these same issues. Furthermore, Jerry often used the phone to speak directly with someone if he thought it would be more effective than an email, including phone calls to Albert Lamb in England, who helps a great deal with the publication of Education Revolution.

Upstairs, Steve Rosenthal works compiling information, answering incoming calls, and writing book reviews for the ER magazine, among other activities. Jerry also participated in a weekly online chat session, involving people from the US, England, Israel, and Russia. Many of the recent discussion have focused on the state of the IDEC Conference of 2001. In short, I learned that Jerry and AERO provide the essential foundation for a vast network of parents, educators and others interested in learning more about educational alternatives, sharing their experiences, and spreading the word about these alternatives.

As for me, in addition to perusing as many books and magazines as I could, I helped with various projects. One which I already mentioned was to search for children’s books for the Stork School. Hiding behind other books and binders, and interspersed here and there I managed to find a stack full of books that children might like; hopefully they arrived safely in Ukraine and the kids are enjoying them. One of the major projects I undertook was to edit stories that Jerry wrote about his Shaker Mountain School, about his own experiences as a student at Goddard and Antioch, and about various other subjects related to alternative education. It is my hope, and Jerry’s as well I believe, that these stories can eventually form the basis for a book that would be a fascinating first-hand account of Jerry’s involvement with alternative education. That, of course, would be a bit down the road.

Perhaps the “project” I enjoyed the most was simply talking to Jerry about education and alternative schools, and listening to him as he discussed with me what he was doing, who he was emailing, and what it meant. It was a great way for me to learn more about the world of alternative education, and I felt that Jerry listened to me and valued my opinions. One of the topics we discussed was AERO itself, how Jerry felt about it, and how he thought that while it was doing a good and important

like to see more communication among the people involved in educational alternatives. And more importantly, he constantly feels limited and restricted from doing those things that he believes could benefit more kids and help to spread alternative education even further. While he sees many schools, teachers, organizations and parents in need of assistance, there is only so far the donations to AERO can go. In addition, Jerry would love to get more help at AERO, someone with whom to collaborate and create a synergistic relationship which could accomplish a great deal more and help to achieve his goals for AERO. But again, funds are limited. Since I see so much of value in alternative education and in the work AERO is doing, I sincerely hope that Jerry's (and my own) dreams of helping more kids can be more fully realized in the future.

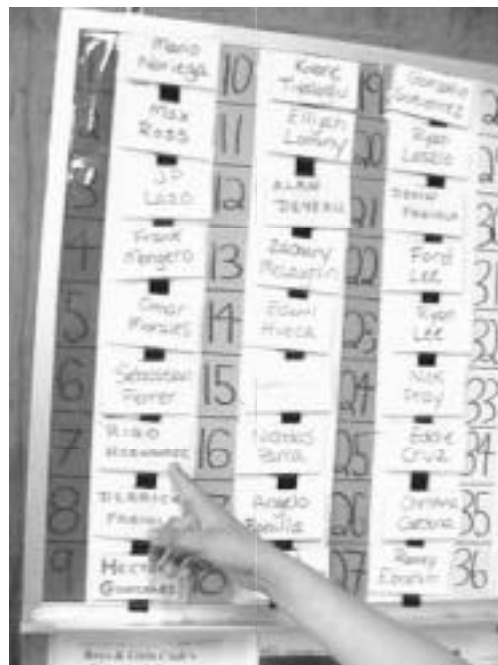
One day during my three weeks at AERO, I went with Jerry to the Boys and Girls Club at which he teaches table tennis and has helped to organize a tournament ladder. The ladder contains all of the players' names, and the kids have a chance to challenge other players to a game in order to reach a higher spot on the ladder. Well, we arrived at the club and immediately kids started asking me who I was, would I play ping pong with them, and was I better than Jerry? (The answer to the last one, by the way, is a resounding NO!) The kids were real open and welcoming, and I immediately felt like I belonged.

Soon after we arrived, little Kyle announced that he wanted to have a meeting to discuss some issues about the ladder. We all went into the kitchen (the only available area at the time), and sat in chairs and on the counters. The kids discussed some of the general rules of playing and the rules of the ladder, and there was enough support to change one of the rules. I was amazed at the way the kids discussed the issues and spoke their minds. I wonder how often these kids have the chance to make decisions about their lives outside of the ping pong club. After the meeting, I played thrilling games of Around the World with many of the kids, and by the time I left I felt that I had truly connected with them. I also realized that many of them are significantly better than me at ping pong; we're talking about 7 to 11 year-olds here!

I have no doubt that Jerry's warm personality and the opportunity that the democratic meetings give to those kids to have ownership in what they are doing are a large part of why I was so completely welcomed and accepted. I envision the warmth, acceptance, openness and energy I felt from the kids at the Boys and Girls Club increasing a hundred-fold at a school embracing this approach, and I look with great excitement and anticipation towards the day that I can join that type of environment. It is this environment that AERO hopes to provide for all children, and I plan to help achieve that goal in every way that I

# PING PONG STORY: Democratic process in a non-school setting

By Jerry Mintz



The Lasers Ping Pong Club Challenge board,  
with 55 members



Max, 10, plays against student from Newark Boys  
and Girl's Club

**T**eaching table tennis has always been intertwined with my educational philosophy. Because I knew the sport so well, and because it is perceived by students to be 'non-academic,' I love to demonstrate to them that they can be such good learners in something that doesn't set off their phobias and traumas, inflicted by traditional education.

I've been playing table tennis since I was a kid and I love the sport. Along the way I had a couple of big breaks in learning the game. One was when the New York State junior champion was a student at Goddard College when I was there. I got to play and practice with him. At first he killed me. I'd get only a few points. One day I finally beat him. The next day he withdrew from the college. I always wondered if it was a coincidence.

Another break was when I was running my school in Vermont. Lim Ming Chui, former number one player in Hong Kong decided to move to Vermont, because it was between Montreal, Boston and New York, where he played in tournaments. He decided to have a big tournament to see who the best players were in Vermont, with a \$500 first prize. Hundreds of people came out of the woodwork, paying a \$10 entry fee. Of course, Lim won the tournament, but he used the money to start a league at his house, so a few others and I got to play there regularly. I consider him to be the best teacher in the country. Among other things, his son became a member of the North American team and his daughter became the NCAA champion. Because I learned with Lim it has subsequently helped me in teaching the sport. While I was in Vermont I taught three different students who became Vermont junior champion.

I've taught table tennis at educational workshops all around the country and around the world (England, Russia, France, Ukraine, Canada, Japan, Israel, Denmark, Japan). Here, close to where I live on Long Island, in New York, I discovered a Boys and Girls Club. I liked the club because it had a good cross-section of children from different cultures. It is near Glen Cove, in Locust Valley, called the Grenville Baker Boys and Girls Club. It just celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

I started volunteering at the club about ten years ago. Most of the kids there only know me as "Jerry, the ping pong guy." I never had any set hours through those years. I just came in when I found that I had an extra hour or two to volunteer. When I came in the boys and girls would come over and ask me to teach them. Through that time I was mostly working with teenagers. Some of them became fairly good but usually after a few years they drifted away from the club. Occasionally I would hear from them years later. For example, earlier this year a young man stopped me in the parking lot of the Farmers Market where I like to shop for organic food, just down the road from the club. He asked me if I remembered that I had not only taught him ping-pong, but had taught him the Morse code. He then went on to get his amateur radio license and is now is working in a complex field of physics and electronics at Stonybrook University.

Recently, when I was shopping at the Farmer's Market a young stock worker came over and said, "Aren't you Jerry? Do you remember me?" I thought I did remember him, and when he told me his name that was

confirmed. The last time I had seen him, a few years ago, he was a very disturbed boy who came from a very abusive family and was going to a special school. He was often thrown out of the Boys and Girls Club, and may have been thrown out for good at some point. He told me he had been in and out of trouble since that time, and had eventually wound up at the youth detention center. He told me with some pride that he discovered to his shock that he was the best table tennis player at the detention center. It seems to have been a pivotal event for him. He subsequently found that he was the best at another school he attended. He said he is now at an alternative school, which he likes. He is a senior and hopes to graduate this year. He wanted to know which days I would be volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club so he could go in and show me how much he's improved. This boy gave me (and everyone else) a very hard time when I had worked with him at the Club. Little did I expect that my teaching him table tennis could help turn his life around. I didn't think anything got through to him.

I also helped a boy of twelve whose family had just emigrated from Venezuela. This boy had a lot of problems, including a stutter, and very low self-confidence. Within a year after I began teaching him he became the best player at the Club. He then became good at other sports and a good student in school. The confidence he got at table tennis carried over to the rest of his life.

The last three years saw two youth directors come and go. I didn't get much support or respect from them and I thought about not volunteering any more. But this year a dynamic young woman, Jenny Wright, arrived from Colorado as the new youth director. At first she couldn't understand why the children at this club played better table tennis than any other club she'd seen, and she wanted to find out why. When I first came in this spring and told her I taught table tennis, she started to introduce me to a boy who she thought was the best player. As soon as the boy saw me he said, "Why, that's Jerry! He taught me to play!"

From that time on she has given me tremendous support. In a departure from previous years, there was a lot of interest from the younger students at the club, so I started working with them on a regular basis. They generally range from seven years old to 11, with many of them about ten.

Suddenly the whole thing just mushroomed and I found I needed to make a schedule, going in twice a week, to accommodate all the interest. Earlier in the year I had encouraged a staff member there to start a table tennis ladder, but it had been trashed within a week. Every time I went in I was besieged by at least a dozen children, each wanting to be given an individual lesson – which I would try to do in a total of two or three hours.

I decided to try a different approach by establishing a new ping pong club, which would be run

democratically. The first one was scheduled on a Wednesday at 5 PM and we now meet every week at that time. The first meeting was quite chaotic. The children acted like they were in an out of control public classroom. But we managed to go through the proposed rules of the ladder, deciding which ones we wanted, and we elected a Supervisor of the ladder, a ten year old, with a seven-year-old assistant.

These were the first ladder rules passed by the meeting:

1. Only the elected Ladder Supervisor can change and update the ladder, and if not available, Club staff members. If they are not available, the Assistant Ladder Supervisor can change the ladder. If anyone changes the order who is not allowed to do so, they lose their place on the ladder.
2. All challenge games are to 21.
3. Someone not on the list may challenge anyone on the list. If they win, they move into that place and the loser goes just below. If they lose they go to the bottom.
4. Anyone on the list must accept one challenge a day if they are at the Club. To stay on the ladder each person must accept at least one challenge a week.
5. When you are on the list you may officially challenge only people up to three places higher on the list, however someone may accept a challenge from a player ranked lower if they wish.
6. A player may request the Supervisor or volunteer to referee the game.

As subsequent meetings the students became more and more serious as they came to realize that they were, indeed, making the decisions for the group. They amended the ladder rules, gave the supervisor a vote of confidence, agreed to have a match against another Boys Club in New Jersey which had challenged us, and decided on the design of club tee shirts which Jenny then ordered for. All questions are now seriously discussed, with enthusiastic votes. They even voted down my proposal that older students in the teen room upstairs be able to challenge on their ladder. They said they might reconsider it in the future, but for now suggested that the teens set up their own ladder, and furthermore, they challenged the teens to a match.

The challenge ladder grew like crazy and now has 55 students on it. The top half dozen are fairly equal and the places keep changing. They are all improving very rapidly. This is very much an "in the zone" situation, for those familiar with that concept, not too easy and not too difficult, but the perfect situation to keep rising

to the challenge.

Three months into the process the director introduced me to a consultant who had been brought in to do a leadership training session with the staff. He came down from Schenectady, where he supervises four clubs. He was startled by the challenge ladder, not simply because of the number of children on it. What amazed him was that this bunch of fragile pieces of paper was being totally respected by the students. He said, "If this were at any of my clubs it would have to be under Plexiglas or something."

I explained to him that what was protecting that board was the democratic process. The students had voted on every aspect of what the challenge procedure was going to be and had even voted on the consequence would be if someone moved the names around without the authorization of the manager who they had elected. One student had done that—*once*. He was taken off the list and had to challenge from scratch. That was it.

I knew what the consultant was talking about, because that had happened here earlier in the year, absent the democratic process. But I hadn't seen it in such stark terms until he mentioned the Plexiglas. You could almost see and feel the physical results of the democratic process with these kids. They probably hadn't had anything else in their previous lives in which they had such control and respect.

After only five months of coaching this group there was a nationally sanctioned table tennis tournament at the Spintech Club in Plainview. At my suggestion, some of the parents brought their children to the tournament. A group from a club in Newark, New Jersey brought a group there also. One of my students, a ten year old boy whose family had emigrated from Peru, won the 12-and-under event. But there are many others at the club with about equal ability. A ten-year-old Jewish boy came in third in the competition, but currently heads the ladder. One thing I love is how all of the kids are willing to help anyone out by teaching them what they know, even their younger siblings! I like to think that is partly because I teach in such a way that the students understand the concepts behind the instructions. (For example, after being away from Summerhill for a few years I was surprised to find two very good players there whom I had never met, but who played with my style. It turned out they were taught by students I had coached on my visit several years earlier!)

We generally have our meetings on Wednesdays. One week a seven year old reminded me that we needed to have a meeting. After having had many of these meetings, the students came to realize that at least in this one area of their lives, they were really making the decisions. Their attitude about the meetings has changed dramatically from that first one.

But one Wednesday meeting really floored me. The members had decided that three months was long

enough for the term of Supervisor, and that they should have another election. The previously elected Supervisor chaired that meeting, and they subsequently elected a new one, another 10 year old, with the former Supervisor becoming the assistant. But a week later the issue had arisen that the new Supervisor had allowed his cousin to beat him, in order to help him move up the ladder, and then had beaten him to regain first place. They questioned whether this was ethical. There was an intense discussion about this, first starting in a separate room. When we had to vacate that room the meeting was forced to go in the main recreation area, with so much noise around us we had to shout to be heard. BUT NOBODY WOULD LEAVE THAT MEETING UNTIL THE ISSUE WAS DECIDED. I can't remember being in a meeting under such difficult circumstances, Again I was impressed by the intensity of their involvement in the democratic process. They decided that it would not be fair to make a decision that was retroactive, but they passed a rule that from then on the participants in such manipulation would be removed from the ladder if it were proved to be the case.

The Spinners Club, an adult table tennis club to which I belong, recently decided to institute a table tennis ladder after they heard about the success of ours. They asked for and used the decisions made by the six to ten year olds in the Boys and Girls Club as the basis for their ladder, and asked me to introduce the concept. After a brief attempt by the owner to impose his ideas about the rules, everyone realized that the democratic approach was best, and that's how we have continued. About 20 are on the ladder so far (with 58 now on the Boys and Girls Club ladder).

In June we had our first match, against a club in New Jersey (we won, 5 matches to 4). We had a practice in which teams of our own players were evenly created based on their position in the ladder. The victories tied, the final match came down to two lower level players fighting it out with everyone else watching with seriousness, a nice lesson on the importance of every player. Then, in the doubles tournament, the top ranked player was matched with the lowest, again for balance. The final went to three games and extra points and involved two middle level partners playing the top player, ten years old, and his 7 year old partner, who was just thrilled.

We had a meeting to decide how to select our team. A few kids thought I, as coach, should choose the team. Others thought there should be challenges. But the thought was presented that the 10 year old supervisors knew more than I did about the relative standing of the players. Without much fanfare it was passed that the two supervisors would choose the team and put them in proper order, after which people could challenge for positions. This was overwhelmingly passed, after which there was very spirited challenging

for the next two hours.

This is a democratic system that depends entirely on the students, all of whom are under 11! I'm only there a few hours a week. They are there six days a week, and the system is running smoothly. In April the Boys and Girls Club staff member in charge of the downstairs was gone for a month for back surgery, but the system continued to work without a hitch with the substitute staff. There are adult Boys and Girl's Club staff members, but they had no involvement with the ping pong club. In a meeting this week more proposals and refinements were proposed and passed. One student questioned the authority of 10 year old supervisors to resolve disputes. The two 10 year old elected supervisors seemed hurt, and others in the meeting said they thought they were doing a fine job, and the questioner seemed satisfied. To me, the significance of this project lies in the fact that this has happened in a non-democratic school situation, run by students under 11 who have had no previous experience with democratic process before this year.

Two of our Boys and Girls Club students, both ten, are now listed among the top 15 in the country for under 12 years old. Their names appeared in the most recent Table Tennis Magazine, much to their own shock and that of the other members of the club. By next year I wouldn't be surprised if half of these kids had national rankings for their age level. In any event, I think it is giving them a lot of confidence in their lives. If nothing else, maybe some of them will catch up to me one of these days in the Farmers Market parking lot with some good life stories to tell.



# Interview With Bob Barr

Jerry Mintz : We are at Connecticut College at the International Alternative Education Conference. Bob Barr was the keynote speaker today. He's an author and educator living in Boise, Idaho now. He is very famous in alternative school circles. He used to run a program, training teachers to teach in alternative schools. This is one of the biggest needs we still have now. There are over thousands of alternative schools – but there is no really good training program for people who want to teach in alternative schools. Bob Barr, we are very fortunate to have you with us today.

Bob Barr : It's great to be here; thanks for inviting me.

JM: Earlier today in your talk you told me something that I didn't know there was research on. You said had been researching violence in schools. Tell me a little more about this.

BB: Over the last 30 years, there have been a number of national studies that have been conducted looking at the schools where there were a relatively large number of violent acts. It's quite remarkable that the conclusions lined up as carefully as they did – and the number one issue was school size. It's almost an accepted conclusion these days that the larger the school the more likelihood that there will be school disruptions and school violence. The Columbine High School seems to be a classic example of that. A school with 1800 students, kids arrive there and if they're not organized and engaged in some particular activity, chances are that a lot of them are going to feel disengaged, isolated, and really lonely and often alienated. I interviewed a 7<sup>th</sup> grade kid not long ago for a research project. I said, "Why did you leave that big beautiful middle school with the food court and computers in the classroom...you just had everything over there...and came to this little raggedy, dusty, alternative school program?" These are the words of this young kid. He said, "Over there no one cared if I came to school or not, no one knew my name, I was just invisible." I asked what's it like over here? He said, "This alternative school is like a happy family. I've gone from being an invisible man to being a family man."

JM: You've been involved in the education of alternative educators. Do you think that this is happening to an adequate amount right now around the country?

BB: No I don't. As a matter of fact, I think some of the

worst things that are happening around the country happen in the name of teacher education. We try to do a generic teacher – we just put everybody through a general kind of program, put them in a classroom, and say they're a teacher. Yet the world is becoming increasingly diverse, there are all kinds of schools out there, and over the last decade or so, like Montessori education has developed a very strong powerful program to prepare teachers for their kinds of schools. We used to have at Indiana University an opportunity for very dedicated people to learn how to teach by spending a year in one of the exciting alternative public schools somewhere in the US. They actually learned how to teach by being in a school for a year teaching. As far as I know there's not a university program anywhere in the country today that's preparing teachers for other than this kind of generic schools out there.

JM: I think there are even some colleges that don't give credit for students that want to intern in an alternative school. I think it's more of a turf battle than anything else, but the kids are the ones that suffer.

BB: Yes, I think so; I think there's no question about it. Our kids are our greatest resource. I loved your comment: If a kid comes home and says he's sick of school, it's not the kids problem...there's something wrong with the school.

JM: Something wrong with the school...kids are natural learners.

BB: Kids are natural, excited learners, and sometimes schools pound that out of them. And it's a great tragedy when it occurs.

JM: I don't know what we can do; I mean, we can talk about it on this show and people listening will get it but I don't know what we can do to get across to more people the idea that they've got to look to educational alternatives as the way to approach education with their kids. What do you think is the key about alternative education that works?

BB: You know, in this country, we never tell everyone to go to the Catholic Church, we never tell everyone to go to the Methodist Church, yet we insist that everyone go to a public school that is exactly the same everywhere across the country. We wouldn't tell a parent you have to take your children to a chiropractor or you have to take them to a general practitioner. We have unlimited choices in the field of medicine and I talk with parents all the time and they'll say their kids education is probably just as important as their health, why don't I have the opportunity to choose in the same way that I do in the arena of religion and in the area of medicine.

Yet, in public schools people seem to think there is only one way.

JM: Are you suggesting maybe there shouldn't be compulsory education then? In other words, it should just be up to the parents to decide if they're going to teach them at home, and that would be the primary thing, and then there would be other schools they could send them to, or how would you do that?

BB: Well, what I think what toward in the United States is an incredible array of different educational alternatives. Just listening to the news a moment ago about trying to reduce class size, there's a staggering cost to do that. But I tell you we're just around the corner where there will be homeschooling, online learning, students learning through technology and incredibly sophisticated CD ROMS and they will be going to school as well.

JM: And charter schools are just exploding.

BB: That's right. In Minnesota, they are now developing community learning centers that are like Kinko's; they're open 24 hours a day and they're online so you can either come to the building and learn something or you can learn it from the comfort of your home.

JM: And who sponsors those?

BB: They're public schools.

JM: Those are public schools? Community learning centers — public schools in Minnesota. What do you think it is, though, about alternative education that's different from the standard public school? What's the main thing, do you think?

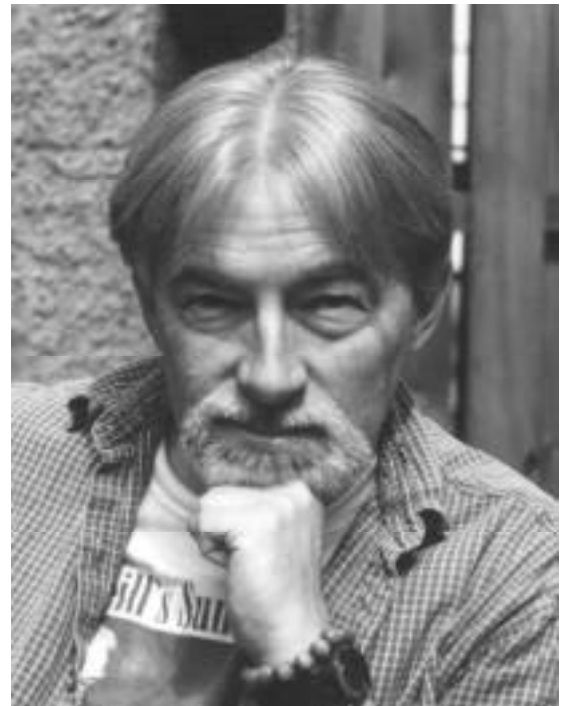
BB: Well, the research is very powerful about this: they are all small schools, and there is no question that that's powerful. Number two, the teachers want to be in those schools...the teachers volunteer to teach in the schools, so you've got this very personalized learning.

JM: Thank you, Bob, for being with us tonight.

# Sharing Democratic Ideas

## A word from Albert:

As Jerry says, in one of the listserve messages that follows Leonard Turton's fascinating account of sharing his Club House Democracy concepts with another public school: "to get through the eighties, those who survived it had to become very low profile." At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century perhaps the climate is changing. Survival may now involve becoming more high profile. Certainly there are many alternative educators with a wealth of experience that could use a forum for sharing some of their hard-gained wisdom.



Leonard Turton

The following is a long listserve message from Leonard Turton :

*"The reason so many teachers are distrustful of this system, or any situation that allows so much freedom and respect for the student, is because in the wrong hands it is a promise of disaster. I doubt many others could replicate your Club House Democracy." Jodi*

I started Club House Democracy about eight years ago. After running an alternate school, a home schooling centre, teaching special education, and finally teaching in a special program for delinquent/expelled students I was asked to teach a regular class of grade six students who, in the words of the principal of the

time, were out of control. This was an amusing comment for anyone who has dealt with really troubled kids, and besides the fact that I had this sea of 28 children stuck in a cube floating before me - I had never dealt with such numbers in such close quarters - it was all pretty tame. But also troubling. So I began to adapt alternative/free school ideas into the public classroom. I did it because I wanted to see, once and for all, if I could break down some of the myths about the dangers of giving children some responsibility, and give kids some control over their school life.

The system evolved over about 5 years and then settled into a pretty straightforward approach, with new jumps or revelations coming every few months that made the whole idea work better and better. The keys to the whole thing are covered in the Journal entries (*shared on the AERO listserve - ed.*), although there is a lot of documentation in folders here at my house that I hope will some day get scanned or retyped etc.

Three years ago I was lucky enough to have a young teacher from grade seven move down to grade five. And again lucky to have a second new person become a teacher of grade four. Both are young enough to be my children, and both are kindred spirits. We became fast friends, and began to share ideas and successes and frustrations on an almost hourly basis. I can't even recall when Naomi started to try Club House Democracy. She is so adept at it now. I am amazed how she discusses the subtleties of the system with any other curious people. Brad started a bit later. He was two floors below us so communication wasn't that easy at first. But I recall the day he came through the upstairs hall doors with this grin on his face.

"It's crazy. It's amazing..."

"You had the meeting?"

"Yeah... and they just can do it..."

"It is spooky. It's like there's a democracy gene or something."

"I know. It was amazing. We just started... and they did it."

This year Brad moved upstairs and slowly but surely introduced Club House Democracy to a new group of eight/nine year olds. When we really want to show off, we take people to watch these little kids run class meetings, or management meetings, or run parts of the school day on their own the way they have decided to do it. It shouldn't be comical, but it is, to watch people this small run their own affairs based on rules they have voted in place themselves.

Club House Democracy here is now in operation with its fifth principal, and although I have sold it differently to different principals (the current one is a true democrat!), the system has been so beneficial to the kids in this tough area that no administrator has had reason to question what we were up to.

We were talking about the success of everything last week and one of the ideas we floated, quite rightly I think, is that many of these kids have lives that they have no control over - split families, emotional devastations, street gangs and bullies etc. - and, in contrast, this system offers them control over their own lives during the

day at school. It gives them a power over their environment that they don't have in their homes or on the street. We are thinking that this is one reason the children around here embrace what we do so completely.

Anyway, about five weeks ago I got a call from a teacher who used to work here named Hannah. "We've heard you are doing interesting things?"

"Yeah?"

"Meetings and things."

"Oh... yeah. We call it student self-government."

It seems that Sarah, in my class, had been talking to an aunt that knew someone at this school, Westside, and gossip started about what we were doing - I guess Sarah explained it quite thoroughly - and the explanation had made the rounds. This school was in crisis, behavior wise. A lot of the teachers were not very happy and of course that's when a school is ready to 'try anything.'

So Hannah asked if two teachers could come and visit and see what we were doing.

"Oh sure... no problem."

\* \* \* \* \*

The funny thing was that it was a problem. I suddenly realized that here was something I had always wanted - my little idea to spread through my school, and then to others - and now that this was all happening... well, I wasn't sure what was happening.

At the same time I was lucky to get a very good student teacher to train with me for a month. As Tana started to take over the class I watched as some of the kids were thrown into old habits. Tana was impressed by Club House Democracy. She had never seen anything like it, and was immediately committed to it. But she was still a novice and old kid habits of going after untrained people can die hard.

Luckily, Tana was able to deal with the problems, (an essential part of the whole scheme was that I was happy to see it work with someone new) and by the end of the month with me I am pretty sure that if I had left, the Club House Democracy would have continued. I'm also sure that she would have struggled at times, and that she would have made adaptations. But I am reasonably certain she would have succeeded because she basically believed in the idea - she had seen it done by us - and because she had Brad and Naomi and Nancy along the hall who were experienced. The 'context' would have made it go.

While Tana was there the two teachers from Westside made arrangements to get a half-day off school and visit. About a thousand approaches were running through my head. It seemed to me that I was to be caught in the educational version of a media sound bite: How to convey the essence of thirty years of alternative work, and nine years of putting together what we now do in a two hour visit and make it amount to anything.

I got depressed. I cursed myself for not having worked harder to put together a short manual.

And what should they actually see? Meetings, as anyone involved with them knows, can be too short, or just reasonably short, or long, or too long - fascinating, bor-

ing, profound, trivial. And here were two people just floating in for 'advice and help.'

"Not possible." I started to tell anyone around: "It's not possible. And they are grade seven and eight teachers. You got to start earlier than that. And it's the end of the year. This is pissing me off. If they come here and then don't get it and go there and try it wrong and it fucks up then people will say: 'It doesn't work...haha ... we always knew giving kids responsibility wouldn't work ... and now we've proven it!'"

"Fuck," I said to Naomi. "I don't like this at all."

\* \* \* \* \*

I had told the kids earlier that the teachers had requested a visit. I told them why. And I made a motion that we allow them to visit. The class passed the motion. So the day before I went up to the front of the room and said, "I'm a little confused about this. I want these people to see what we do but, well, first of all they can't be here all day, so they will miss a lot. I want them to see Mr. Main's room because watching the little kids is interesting. So they will see a grade four meeting and the grade fours end off their day. And I want them to see one of our meetings because they are different - a lot more laid back, a lot more casual - and they are grade seven and eight teachers. But it is important that it's a good meeting... because... well, we don't want to fake it but we have a chance to teach some adults here, so they can let some other kids have some more freedom. So it has to be a real meeting but also a teaching meeting. In other words not one of our short boring ones. And then after school they will probably want to hang around and talk. So if some of you would like to stay that would be good."

The kids suggested that we list possible agenda items (we usually just pass a sheet around 10 minutes before we start) to see what we might talk about - and then at least we would have an idea ahead of time for the visitors - so we did. And we came up with a decent list - some things that we had been avoiding, some things for the future that we hadn't got to talking about yet and so on. When we added this to the next day's regular list we came up with a balanced group of items; room business, committee business, academics, some personal situations and so on.

I talked to Brad and we decided I would talk to the teachers for a half hour, then they would watch my class, then the grade fours.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Hi. I'm Sam and this is Troy."

The class was with Tana and I took the two teachers across the hall and into the staff room. After a few pleasantries I started to outline the basics of what we do. Anyone who has experienced a large number of interviews or who has given a number of speeches on the same topic knows that after a long while, since the message is the same and the questions become predictable, a person can eventually become efficient at conveying a ba-

sic message. When I started to explain Club House Democracy I could feel myself eerily approaching the beginning of that journey. (With the alternate school, after eight years, such talks became second nature.) Veering this way and that I stumbled onto a reasonably coherent summary of what I do, trying to keep in mind that I was talking to traditional teachers. What was different was that these people wanted to take away some information to work with. That is quite different than giving a radio interview, or spinning a message to a newspaper reporter.

One thing I tried to hit on was that we had first started with grade six kids, and now with grade fours, and that our sevens and eights had two and three years experience running their own affairs. I also tried to emphasize that the physical space was important - there had to be things to do and be concerned about and not just rows of desks - and a part of the reason for having a government. And I pushed the concept of authority sharing, of the artificiality of school and the political realities the kids had to be made aware of - of humor, of the concept of a business partnership, and so on. Then we went back to the room for the meeting.

\* \* \* \* \*

The meeting was a magical thing. Stephanie ran it like only she can, and the kids proceeded to go through a long agenda in a relaxed and... well, it was just like a staff meeting, actually. At times serious, at times hilarious, at times intense, at times very informal. Stephanie knows how to let the rhythm of a meeting flow, let people veer hilariously off course, bring them back, be casual but then strict when required. I was out of order on purpose several times, and was reprimanded. There was a great debate and several motions. At one point I wanted to show Sam and Troy how we play at random chaos and so when Matt was reprimanded for continuously forgetting to hold the wooden car demolition derby I moved that we boo and humorously insult him for thirty seconds. This was passed and Stephanie duly timed us all. Matt stood, grinned and yelled back. Then Steph announced time was up and everyone laughed and returned to the next item.

After that I went down with the two teachers to Brad's room where I asked permission from the chairperson to listen in (tiny Lisa, fluent in both English and Mandarin Chinese, presiding like a prime minister on a cushioned stool in front of a microphone). We watched the meeting, and then I left Sam and Troy to observe the rest of the afternoon in the grade four room. (To show you where we are at here, they were amazed that I could leave my classroom to do this while Tana remained behind on her own. To us, well, that never enters our mind.)

When I left Brad's room I was elated - I didn't know if these teachers could make what they were seeing work elsewhere, but I definitely knew that what they were seeing seemed absolutely extraordinary to them - and that the kids, just like at my alternate school, just went about their business, visitors or not, with a proud sort of self confidence that was very inspiring. It was their Club

House. I there was no doubt about that fact.

\* \* \* \* \*

After school Sam and Troy joined Brad, Nancy, Tana and four students in the theatre space across the hall. It was touching to see Sam in particular admit to being a traditional teacher who no longer wanted to be traditional.

"I was brought up that way, the teacher in charge. But the more I teach the more I know that it doesn't work anymore. The more I think that what you're doing here is the right kind of thing to do, but I'm afraid to give up that authority in case the kids take it the wrong way and I lose control." (This was actually amusing considering that Sam is a very imposing, a huge guy. He would tower over most kids.)

He talked a lot to the students about his concerns, and they assured him that it doesn't happen that way and they explained in quite clear terms how we do what we do. I was very impressed by how articulate they were, how they really seemed to understand what we do. After all, they had never had to explain it to anyone before, so I really didn't know what they might say.

After everyone had left but Sam, Troy and I, we discussed their particular school, and how they were working only with older kids. They began to name other teachers who they thought would buy into Club House Democracy, and others who wouldn't. It appeared, against my judgement, that they would be starting with only intermediate students. So I said, "Well, you know, if you can make that work... that's exciting...because that's different than here. So if you can make it work with older children from scratch you will have really accomplished something important, something all your own."

Then I said, "You know the deal is - and I don't know what you think - but the deal is...we are all equal. The kids and I are equal. At the gut level. Experience aside... it starts there... total equality."

"Well, we're all just human beings," piped Sam."

"Yes. Yes, we're all the same bits of star dust or whatever... all human."

It was then I figured Troy and Sam might actually believe enough to make it work. We shook hands and they thanked me profusely while I said I wished I could have been of more particular help. They fully intended, said Troy, to experiment right away as a preparation for starting fresh with new kids next September. They said they would like some students to visit.

I said sure, and said that close contact would be important.

A couple of days later the principal of Westside wrote me a note to tell me how amazed Troy and Sam were at what they had seen, and how valuable the experience had been.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fast forward to two weeks later. Another phone call. Two more teachers... Rebecca and Tracy wanted to visit

and bring the students.

"I guess what Troy and Sam have been trying hasn't been a total disaster then," I joked to Naomi, "or two more wouldn't be coming."

So we did it again, only this time I arranged for them to see a grade seven and grade five meeting before my class, and then the fours again. (It was fun for me to see Naomi's grade fives who have evolved a very junior and very different type of meeting that I thought was quite brilliant for the age of the kids.)

At the end of the day we again had a talk. This time with the two grade seven students asking questions as well. Rebecca, an older teacher, said, "I don't understand why no one knows about this. It's wonderful. You should be giving workshops." (The only thing that was weird was that the two of them kept scribbling notes... like they were at a seminar.)

As they were leaving I said, "If you do go ahead perhaps next year we can set up an e-group to keep in close communication with one another."

\* \* \* \* \*

Last Monday Shelly, our principal said, "I was talking to Phylis (Westside's principal) at the principals' meeting and she said that she feels uncomfortable with giving kids control, that she doesn't really believe in it. I told her there's no loss, that it's a sharing of authority."

This made me angry and I said, "Well personally, I think that people who have to feel that they are in control, who need to be are, well, neurotic. After all, Napoleon - now there was a guy in control. But I guess no more than that can be expected because if you're a principal you've shown two things: One, you don't want to teach, and Two, you want control." I don't usually get so petty around an administrator, and immediately felt dumb. Luckily, Shelly, like us, has no ego attached to her work. We just all do our damn best, collaborate intensely, and revise continually.

Wednesday I told Shelly that I'd like to set up an e-group with the teachers from Westside. I asked her if she'd phone Phylis and tell her - so that she didn't think the teachers were working behind her back - and suggested that both principals be members of the group as well so that they can get a running description of what we're up to.

Friday Shelly came up to me and said, "I called Phylis. She thinks an e-group is a great idea. And she'd like to visit the school and see the kids and the meetings."

We laughed.

I set up the e-group this afternoon.

So, Jodi, we shall see... I had no idea if Club House Democracy would translate to other classrooms and stumbled onto Brad, Naomi and then Nancy by accident.

And now we shall see what we shall see. Eight classrooms in two schools. Keep your fingers crossed for us.

Leonard

A reply from Jerry:

I hanks for that brilliant report on your attempt to spread the Word. It jolted me into focussing on what I think is our most important question at this moment in history: How DO we effectively communicate the ideas that WE ALL UNDERSTAND to EVERYONE ELSE, so children everywhere can become empowered. If we can answer this question, it may have some impact (like saving humanity from its own self-destruction!).

Of course, this is AERO's basic mission, but I feel we are doing it much too slowly. I think one of the problems with the movement for educational alternatives was that to get through the eighties, those who survived it had to become very low profile. A lot of us became satisfied with simply keeping our own little oases of sanity alive, and stopped trying to proselytize.

So, is that acceptable now? I don't think so. What do you think?

Lets throw out some ideas about what we can do to help others discover what we already know.

For our part, AERO will start organizing some seminars on how to do democratic process. We'd like volunteers from this list and elsewhere, who would be willing to organize something in your area, or participate in some national seminars and training programs (can someone come up with a better word than training, PLEASE?).

From a message from Ludmila  
Is WORKSHOP a better word?

From a message from Helen , from Windsor House :

I would be willing to do some public speaking on democracy in the Greater Vancouver area.

A message from Jerry :

Thanks, Helen. We'll keep a list of resource people in each area and refer people who call us from those areas. Every month we hear from pretty much everywhere.

A reply from Kathleen :

I have the same feelings as you do. With so many of us believing and doing respectful educating, it's time to spread the word more broadly. I have wanted to do that as my work. I believe that the process of open space technology is a great way for people of like minds to come together and share information, passion, ideas for forward movement, support. I had an idea to offer a coming together in a type of conference that is done in open space so that the topics that are discussed are raised by the participants. This would not be training *per se* but sharing of experiences, ideas, support, what to do next etc. Let me know if I have told you enough so that you understand and also let me know if you would be interested. After reading your idea, I thought of offering regional gatherings to bring like-minded educators together to support each other and move education forward in a larger way. The regional conferences could be done all at the same time or on a rotating basis.

A message from Jerry :

Kathleen, I like the image of regional seminars being organized all around the country, spearheaded by people in the AERO network.

We have a tentative list of people who are willing to be leaders and consultants in their communities. AERO could provide logistical and networking support, maybe even find some seed funding. It's a good idea. Who's up for doing this?

## ADD/ADHD revisited

A message posted on the AERolist

It has been a while since anyone addressed the ADD/ADHD ("H" stands for "hoax") issue. A friend sent me a reference to the Hunter School: (<http://www.hunterschool.org/index.html>), in which personnel concur with Dr. Thomas Armstrong (<http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/> ["myth"]) regarding ADD/ADHD: "...We view children with Attention Deficit Disorder not as disabled or disadvantaged, but as possessing a powerful talent to learn and succeed. Children with ADD think faster and can perceive a wider range of stimuli than other children. . . ."

The Learning Web (<http://www.thelearningweb.net/> [link to ADHD]) corroborates:

But a growing body of researchers feel these problems mainly result from students with learning styles that conflict with their teachers' teaching style - and that there are much more natural alternatives than drug treatment...

ADD should be ADA for Attention Demanding ADVANTAGE! Has anyone else noticed that the manipulation of multi-tasking in a Microsoft Windows or similar environment requires multiple attention foci? ADHD really stands for "A Damnable Hypocritical Deception."

And a reply from Ken Jacobson:

Hi, thanks for the interesting posting. I have pointed out on this forum before, and I ask your indulgence for repeating, that my cross-cultural study of ADHD has me convinced that the behaviors that are claimed as "disorder" are behaviors we all exhibit. Further, it's very difficult to say that one person exhibits them more than another, if that person is observed over a long enough period of time in several environmental settings. Since we all exhibit ADHD-like behaviors, it is easy to label someone ADHD who's behavior or learning style offends a particular person (parent, administrator and/or teacher) or culture (USA vs. England). I guess my point for writing this posting is to point out that the labels ADD and ADHD signify very little, and to play the game of the labelers by trying to put a positive spin on the labeled behaviors allows the labelers to cry mis- or over-diagnosis and continue on their harmful ways. [kenj@anthro.umass.edu](mailto:kenj@anthro.umass.edu)

# BOOK REVIEWS

## Greg S. Goodman's Alternatives in Education: Critical Pedagogy for Disaffected Youth

### Review by Dana Bennis

As Goodman makes clear, this book has a specific target audience. It is not meant to be a broad view of educational alternatives or a description of a different paradigm for all schools. What this book does provide is a methodology for schools serving "disaffected" or "at-risk" students. Goodman believes that such schools must look and be vastly different from the institutions which the students recently left in order for those students to be successful. "Successful" for Goodman means helping the students until they can adequately return to the traditional system.

Through his experiences at the Wonalancet Alternative School in New Hampshire, Goodman describes the environment, curriculum, relationships, and assessments that can be beneficial for at-risk students. Goodman's insightful stories, psychological background, and experience with outdoor education provide the reader with pertinent information and useful discussion. Perhaps the untraditional environment he describes would be beneficial not only for "disaffected youth" but for all students.

Alternatives in Education is available from Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 275 Seventh Ave., New York, NY. 10001, [www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com), (212) 647-7706

## A Clearer View

By Daniel Greenberg

Review by Steve Rosenthal

During the school year 1998-99, Sudbury Valley School celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. One of the activities scheduled was a series of six lectures by Daniel Greenberg. *A Clearer View* is a record of these lectures.

The simple titles i.e. "The Meaning of Play" or "What is the Role of Parents" hide a good deal of original and deep thought. In "The Meaning of Play" Greenberg challenges the American Heritage Dictionary's definition "To occupy oneself in amusement, sport or other recreation" maintaining that play is the indeterminate portion of an activity. He concludes "giving children the

freedom to play is giving them the freedom to explore the nature" (of invention)

Anyone who enjoys the adventure of discovering will not be disappointed with *A Clearer View*.

The Sudbury Valley School Press, 2Winch St., Farmingham, MA 01701, (508) 877-3030

## Homeschoolers' College Admissions Handbook,

By Cafi Cohen

Review by Steve Rosenthal

As homeschooling becomes more widely accepted it's exciting to see the number of really good books on the subject. One of those books is *Homeschoolers College Admissions Handbook*. The title is somewhat deceiving as the first chapter discusses whether it's necessary to go to college at all. But that's just Ms. Cohen's way of being thorough. Other chapters are "Writing a Transcript," "Campus Visits and Interviews" and "Finding Money."

Each chapter ends with a list of dozens of related books and web sites. The book is peppered with first accounts of the admissions experience and money savings tips

If you are a homeschooler considering college this book is a must.

Prima Communications, Inc., 3000 Lava Ridge Court, Roseville, CA 95661, (916) 787-2663

## Towards a Critical Multicultural Literacy

By Danny K. Weil

Review by Dana Bennis

Weil claims that society is being brainwashed. Our values and choices, he declares, are dictated by and associated with the "culture of power" (the capitalist, market economy), and determined through "cultural encapsulation and ethnocentrism." Such statements recall Illich and Freire. As a result of this "associational thinking," Weil believes there is no encouragement for people to think critically, and no impetus to question the dominant culture.

Weil supports a school curriculum in the service of humanity, not in the service of the capitalist economy. Such a curriculum would emphasize critical thinking about society so as to free the mind to learn about itself

and others, and to understand the roots of prejudice, poverty, and other world problems. Weil's hope is that in this way students can become more aware of the ethnocentrism and injustice prevalent today so as to initiate a cultural and social transformation. Perhaps the only, though important, feature Weil does not suggest is literally practicing a democratic society in the classroom, which would inherently involve critical thinking and decision-making by each individual about themselves, others, and the operation of the school. Weil, on the other hand, seems to rely on a curriculum-directed approach.

Weil presents his position in great detail and with much complexity. If you can get through it, this could be a great resource in the quest for social and educational change. Dr. Danny Weil, BA, Pd.D., JD, 251 Campodonico Ave., Guadalupe, CA 93434 Ph: 805 343-2544, fax: 805 343-2776 [weilunion@aol.com](mailto:weilunion@aol.com)

## Two New Editions of Homeschool Resource Books:

Review by Dana Bennis

Both Jean and Donn Reed, *The Home School Source Book*, and Mary and Michael Leppert, *Homeschooling Almanac 2002-2003*, have updated their extensive books to include the most recent information about homeschooling, the newest materials available, and current contact lists for organizations, support groups and conferences throughout the US and the world. These two reference books are not without their differences, of course. While the *Homeschooling Almanac* reads more like a reference encyclopedia, *The Home School Source Book* is written more as a compilation of essays and stories about the homeschooling experience. The *Almanac* appears in a familiar, standard book format, whereas the *Source Book* has more illustrations and is typeset in two different fonts to distinguish between the two authors. Both are worthwhile and full of information for the present or perspective homeschooling family.

*Homeschooling Almanac 2002-2003*:

Prima paperback, \$24.95

*The Home School Source Book*: Brook Farm Books, \$29.95

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\$5 each.

New ! *My Friend Lenny: A Memoir of my Life in Music, with personal stories about Leonard Bernstein, Mike Wallace, Paul Simon and others.*

By Ouida Blatt Mintz

Ouida, long-time AERO volunteer, tells the story of growing up with Leonard Bernstein, Mike Wallace, singing duets on her pop demos with Paul Simon, piano-teaching secrets, triumphs and tragedies in her life, etc. [www.myfriendlenny.com](http://www.myfriendlenny.com) Special to AERO subscribers: \$15 including postage!





## NEW! A FREE RANGE CHILDHOOD: SELF-REGULATION AT SUMMERHILL SCHOOL

By Matthew Appleton

An updated, insightful account of everyday life at Summerhill. This is the first major book to appear on the school since A.S. Neill's 1960 bestseller inspired an international movement for alternative education. Through graceful and reflective writing, Appleton expands on Neill's stirring call for educational freedom, and explains how the world's most famous alternative school continues to demonstrate that children thrive in an atmosphere of freedom, trust and self-government. \$19.95

## THE UNDERGROUND HISTORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

A Schoolteacher's Intimate Investigation into the Problem of Modern Schooling (412 pages)

By John Taylor Gatto

Gatto's thesis is that the American public school system is efficiently doing what it was intended to do: Creating a docile, trained, consumer-oriented population which will not question the control of the country by big business interests. He backs this up by quoting the founders of this system, who actually articulated these goals, and in the process, knocks down icon after icon. You had better read this book. You may argue with it, not agree with some of it. But you should certainly be aware of what John has unearthed. AERO was able to get some of the first printed, pre-publication additions. \$30, and if you order soon, we will send it with no additional cost for postage.

## CREATING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

From A Coalition for Self Learning

"Collaborative homeschooling could replace schools," says a new publication

In 1980 there were about 20,000 thousand homeschoolers. In 1990 there were over 200,000 homeschoolers. By 2000 there were nearly 2,000,000 homeschoolers. At this rate there will be 20,000,000 homeschoolers in 2010, and 200,000,000 million in 2020. Impossible! but it shows that schools may be replaced as more students learn out of school than in school. As homeschooling has grown homeschoolers have started forming

"homeschool support groups." In the past year or two there has been a proliferation of cooperative community life long learning centers, learning co-ops, and other forms of collaborative non-school learning organizations forming. This phenomenon is explored in this new book. \$19.95, and if you order soon, we will send it with no additional cost for postage.

\**THE ALMANAC OF EDUCATION CHOICES*, Editor in Chief Jerry Mintz, Associate Editors Raymond Solomon, and Sidney Solomon, with over 6,000 entries by state in zip-code order, and a dozen informative essays about how to start a new alternative, how to start homeschooling, use of computers by alternatives, etc. Includes the Montessori, Waldorf, Quaker, charter, public choice, and at-risk schools. Send \$20 plus \$3 postage. Canada, add \$5. Out of US, add \$10-\$15 for air mail postage. Special for paid subscribers, only \$15 plus \$3 postage

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

Contact AERO for sets of labels from the Handbook/Almanac database. Entire list is \$60 per thousand names. Subsets can be custom-created.

\**My Life as a Traveling Homeschooler*, by Jenifer Goldman, The Solomon Press. An 11-year-old describes her adventures visiting homeschoolers and helping her uncle, Jerry Mintz, start new alternative schools around the US and Canada. Kids everywhere are reading this book and deciding to write their own books! NOW ONLY \$7.50 for AERO-GRAMME subscribers

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

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

NEW! *National Charter Schools Directory*, published by the Center for Education Reform. It is the 2000 list of all the charter schools in the country, by state, in alphabetical order. \$25 plus \$3 postage.

NEW! *The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling*, Patrick Farenga, President of Holt Associates. 1998 version, great practical overview of how to start homeschooling. \$10.95 plus \$2 postage

*Making It Up as We Go Along.*, Chris Mercogliano's book about the history of Albany's Free School. \$15 plus \$3 postage

## AUDIOCASSETTES:

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

## VIDEOS

\*New! Video of demonstration of democratic decision-making process at Home Education Seaside Festival (HES FES), Charmouth, England, May 2000. 900 home educators with 500 children attended the Festival. 18 minutes, \$15.

New! Two hour video of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Stork Family School, Vinnitsa, Ukraine. Said one person who received it: "I loved your Stork video. What an amazing school! You have some of the best footage of

happy young faces I've ever seen." Call AERO to order. Each sale will support Stork. \$25 including postage

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

\*HOMESCHOOL RESOURCE CENTERS. A video of three homeschool resource center featuring the Snakefoot Education Center, at Common Ground Community, Puget Sound Community School and Clearwater School, both in Seattle. Snakefoot is a group of families that created a center in which 15 homeschooled children met three times a week. They also hired resource people. He video also includes an interview with Any Smallman, Founder of PSCS, and a video of radio interviews with Clearwater. \$25

\*SUMMERHILL VIDEO. Two videos in one: the 1990 International Alternative School Conference at Summerhill, with interviews of Summerhill students and alumni as well as vivid footage of the Summerhill end-of-term celebration. Also, Summerhill's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in August, 1991, featuring more alumni interviews, and a Summerhill democratic meeting. We also have a 1995 tape of Sands School and Summerhill. \$25 each

\* Two videos: Beautiful International Democratic Education Conference at Stork Family School, in Vinnitsa, Ukraine and the 10<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary Celebration in 2001. \$25 each

\*Nellie Dick and the Modern School Movement. A fascinating two-hour interview with a 96-year-old pioneer in the alternative education movement. Born in the Ukraine of Jewish, anarchist parents in 1893, she started anarchist schools in England back in 1908, went to the US in 1917 to teach at the Modern School (based on the work of Francisco Ferrer) in New Jersey, and taught at and ran Modern Schools until 1958. Her son Jim, who was a student at the Modern Schools and is now a 70-year-old pediatrician, is also interviewed. There are also excerpts from the Modern School reunion in 1989 which featured the Spanish Modern Schools. \$25

\*Transcript of Nellie Dick and the Modern School! \$5  
CONTACT AERO FOR FOUR OTHER MODERN SCHOOL VIDEOS

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

**PHONE CONSULTATIONS:**

Want to start a new alternative school or homeschool resource center? Looking for an educational alternative for your children? Looking for a job in alternative education? Set up a private phone consultation with Jerry Mintz. He knows what's going on today in the whole field of educational alternatives and can help you with in-depth answers to your questions. Call 800 769-4171 for an appointment. Only \$65. In-person consultations arranged individually.

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*Matthew Appelton author of a Free Range Childhood on recent tour of US*



Photo BY John Lawhead

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