

#36 Autumn 2002

\$4.95

The

Education

Revolution

in

The Magazine of Alternative Education

www.EducationRevolution.org

Table of Contents:

News

Being There

By Jerry Mintz

Mail and Communications

Edited by Carol Morley

Home Education News
Public Alternatives
Charter Schools
Waldorf
Montessori
International News and Communications
Teachers, Jobs and Internships
Conferences

Aerogramme

Book Reviews

AERO Books, Videos, Subscription, Ordering Information

The Education Revolution

The Magazine of the **Alternative Education Resource Organization** (Formerly *AERO-gramme*)

417 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Heights, NY 11577

ISSN # 10679219

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AERO and The Education Revolution Magazine

AERO, the **Alternative Education Resource Organization**, was founded in 1989 as part of the not-for-profit School of Living. The mission of AERO is to build “the critical mass for the education revolution by providing resources which support self-determination in learning and the natural genius in everyone.” AERO provides information, resources and guidance to students, parents, schools and organizations regarding the broad spectrum of educational alternatives: public and independent alternatives, home education, international alternatives, higher education alternatives, and more. The common feature in all these educational options is that they are *learner-centered*, focused on the interest of the learner rather than on an arbitrary curriculum. AERO, which produces the *Education Revolution Magazine* quarterly and maintains the Education Revolution website, is the networking hub for education alternatives throughout the world (www.EducationRevolution.org).

The Education Revolution Magazine includes the latest news and communications from the alternative education world as well as conference updates, job listings, book reviews, travel reports, and much more. With our readers’ support we are helping make learner-centered education available to all students throughout the world. We welcome your participation and involvement.

Welcome to the Education Revolution,

Albert Lamb
Managing Editor

News

The IDEC’s of March

By Dana Matthew Bennis

Although the Albany Free School IDEC adventure of 2002 may pale in comparison to the IDEC odyssey of 2003, the story of the past six months, as told by one of the participants, is an interesting one.

The idea to host IDEC first took form in March of this year, beginning as discussion and brainstorming among a few Free School teachers and AERO staff. As the idea began to take hold, we found much support among the entire Free School community, including parents, teachers, students, and friends of the school. We realized that to be considered as a host school it was imperative that we attend the IDEC this year hosted by Tamariki School in New Zealand.

The Albany Free School is a democratic inner-city school which has been running for thirty three years. We have fifty-five students aged 3-14, seven teachers, and an internship program for four interns each year. Our Council Meeting system brings everyone together to solve immediate issues, and we have All-School Meetings each week to discuss and make decisions about school policies. A student is chairperson at all meetings and each student and teacher has one vote. Classes are non-compulsory and students are in complete charge of their day.

We wanted to host the IDEC here in New York largely in response to the increasing standardization of education in the USA, a test-driven approach that, we learned at IDEC 2002, is taking hold in many other countries as well. With the large number of democratic and alternative schools and home educators in the US as well as around the world, a conference in New York has great potential. Our hope is to demonstrate that there is a different system out there which works, based around democracy and respect for children instead of high-stakes tests and competition.

Our dedication to travel to IDEC 2002 and make this proposal set into motion quite a flurry of activity. Since the cost of travel to New Zealand is so high, we decided on a small group to represent The Free School and AERO at Tamariki. That group was Austin Cavanaugh and David Jordan (7th graders at The Free School), Isaac Graves (15-year old alumnus of The Free School), Jerry Mintz of AERO, and myself. We traveled with Fred Bay of the Paul Foundation, and Meredith Bay, Fred's daughter. Although the group was small, we still had to do a great deal of fundraising.

One of our first fundraising ideas happened to be one of the most beneficial – creating a magazine about IDEC and democratic education. We set out writing people involved with democratic education across the world and asking them if they wanted to send some of their recent writing to us for

the magazine. We also asked people right here in New York, including Chris Mercogliano, director of The Free School, and Tim Graves, Isaac's father who is a professor of education at Hudson Valley Community College. The whole group spent many days contacting local and national businesses to gather ads for the magazine.

Due to his involvement with two Free School magazines written as fundraisers for their long trips, Isaac has a great deal of experience working on magazines. He expertly took over editorship of the Free School IDEC magazine and wrote the opening editorial. We brought copies of the magazine for each attendee of the IDEC in New Zealand. Our other activities included email and letter fundraising drives, a spaghetti dinner, and a New Zealand party and auction, the last of which was run by auctioneer Jerry Mintz.

One of our more ambitious ideas was to receive a ticket donation from one of the airlines which flies to New Zealand. We spent a great deal of time contacting the airlines, but the state of air travel in the past year has been quite grim. Although no airline gave us a donation, Air Pacific, the principle airline for Fiji, gave us a significant discount. There was a catch, however: we had to stop over in Fiji. And not just stop over, we had to spend several nights there each way, since there is only one flight from Fiji to New Zealand each week. Those of us traveling conferred, and decided to make the extreme sacrifice and spend some time in the beautiful paradise of Fiji!

After 3 months of hard work, we managed to raise nearly \$8000. It happened to be just enough! The trip and the conference were amazing. Everywhere we traveled we met friendly and helpful people. As you know from other articles in this magazine, our proposal to host IDEC 2003 was passed! We can only hope to organize the next year's IDEC as skillfully and effectively as IDEC 2002. We are hard at work already. Congrats to Tamariki!

To be on the list to receive updates about IDEC 2003, email Dana at dbennis12@yahoo.com. For more information on the trip and IDEC 2002, read the article by Jerry Mintz.

What is an IDEC?

By David Gribble

David Gribble is author of Considering Children, A Really Good School, and Real Education. He was a teacher at Dartington Hall and helped found Sands School, both in England. He has been involved with IDEC since it began in 1993.

IDEC stands for International Democratic Education Conference. It is not the name of an organisation or a group. What happens is that at each year's conference a school volunteers to run the conference for the next year. (In practice there has sometimes been delay in finding a volunteer, and for 2000 there had to be a choice made between several schools.) At intervals calls have been made for an official structure of some kind - another one came at Summerhill in 1999 - but in practice the autonomy of individual schools in arranging their own conferences has made for exciting variety.

Once representatives of a school have agreed to run a conference, everything is in their hands - dates, participants, cost, accommodation and style of conference. The length of the conferences has varied between two days for the first one to a fortnight in 1997. Students from both the host school and visiting schools have nearly always played a large part; the conference at Sands in 1997 and the Tokyo conference in 2000 were in fact run almost entirely by students. The longer conferences have included days of sight seeing and varied social and cultural events. Sometimes there has been a full program of prepared talks and workshops, and sometimes the program has been entirely decided by the participants after they arrived; sometimes there has been a bit of both. Some conferences have been funded entirely by the host schools or by outside agencies, but some schools have had to charge a fee. All decisions about such matters are taken by the host school.

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

For the first four years it was known as the Hadera Conference, and I sent out a newsletter two or three times a year. There were few contributors, and eventually it was abandoned. The hope was expressed that the internet

could provide a substitute (Jerry Mintz now offers an IDEC listserv: idec@edrev.org).

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

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

The 2000 IDEC in Tokyo was organised by a committee consisting mostly of students, and attracted around a thousand participants.

The best way to demonstrate the development of IDEC is a simple list of the conferences and the countries represented there.

- 1993 The Democratic School of Hadera
Israel, Austria, Israel, UK, USA
- 1994 Sands School, England
Austria, Israel, UK
- 1995 The WUK, Vienna, Austria
Germany, Hungary, Israel, Norway, UK, USA
- 1996 The Democratic School of Hadera, Israel
Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel,
Palestine, Ukraine, UK, USA
- 1997 Sands School, England
Austria, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Palestine, Turkey, New Zealand,
Ukraine, UK, USA
- 1998 The Stork Family School, Vinnitsa, Ukraine
Germany, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, UK, Ukraine, USA
- 1999 Summerhill School, England
Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Israel,
Netherlands, New Zealand, Palestine, UK, USA

- 2000 Tokyo Shure, Japan

Australia, China, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Israel, Korea, New Zealand, Palestine, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Thailand, UK, Ukraine, USA

Students in Germany Raise a Strong Voice

By Karsten Wenzlaff

Just in the beginning of September, two weeks before the Parliamentary Election in Germany, the Federal School Student Organisation of Germany organised a congress, gathering several hundred school students and demanding rapid changes in the educational system.

The congress was held in Darmstadt in the center of Germany, which made it easy for the participants to convene. Lasting three days, the school students had the opportunity to discuss their views with politicians, teachers and parents and among themselves.

One guest was the German Minister of Education, Edelgard Buhlmann of the Social-Democrats, who claimed to have increased spending on education, setting Federal school-standards and giving new initiatives for providing more equal access to education. She was criticized because not enough effort was made to prevent the application of university and high school tuition.

Another guest Otto Herz, one of the famous thinkers in education politics and co-founder of the Laborschule in Bielefeld, a school which is experimenting on new pedagogics and is said to have adopted some elements of Free Education. He said to the school students “While society has changed a lot, the basic elements of school systems haven’t changed for a hundred of years.”

The school students discussed other issues of their school life in various workshops. Topics included were practical (how to organize a school newspaper, how to deal with conflict situations between teachers and school students etc.) and more theoretic (the role of education for society; how capitalism and socialism use school etc.).

Throughout the congress it was voiced by the school students, that they need to have a strong voice in educational issues, that they want more formal and informal rights in the decision making process of school administration, and they want to be the ones to determine the learning process.

In A Box

At the Idec conference in New Zealand this summer AERO and the Albany Free School were successful in their bid to host the IDEC next year in the United States. It is hoped that many IALA schools and organizations will help and participate in the conference. The date has not yet been set, but perhaps it can dovetail with the PA IALA next summer. It will be held in the Albany, NY area.

IALA Conference in Duluth

By Jerry Mintz

The International Association for Learning Alternatives had its 32nd annual conference from June 28th to June 30th 2002 in Duluth MN at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center.

There were about 175 people in attendance at this year's conference. A number that was a little disappointing but not too surprising in the wake of September 11. It was held in the beautiful city of Duluth, which is right on Lake Superior. There were enclosed walkways all around the downtown area so that people could walk from their hotels to the convention center and around the downtown area through them. One startling aspect of Duluth is that it can sometimes be 20 or 30 degrees warmer in the upper part of the town than in the lower part of the town, which is right on Lake Superior. We were told that the Lake usually doesn't get warmer than 50 degrees even in the late summer so has an air conditioning effect on the town. One of the highlights of the conference was a cruise out into the lake.

The first keynote speaker, Howard Fuller, Director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Milwaukee's Marquette University and former superintendent of the Milwaukee public schools, turned out to be very fortuitous. This was because it came the day after the Supreme Court made the decision to legitimize private vouchers with public school money, something that Howard Fuller firmly believes in from his experience in the Milwaukee system.

Another keynote speaker was Susan O'Hanian. Among other things she's written the book *One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational*

Standards, published by Heinemann. Her new book is called *Caught in the Middle: Non-Standard Kids and a Killing Curriculum*. Her talk was well received as many teachers who are involved with alternative education have been fighting against the standardization and high-stakes testing movement.

The participants came from a variety of geographic locations, such as the states of Washington, Oregon, California, Nebraska, Ohio, Iowa, New York, Connecticut, Kansas, etc. One of the thrusts of IALA will be to help states that do not have alternative education associations to create them. The overwhelming feeling on the part of coalition members is that those organizations will include a wide variety of alternatives ranging from homeschooling through Waldorf and Montessori to a variety of public alternatives including charter schools and public homeschool resource centers.

Changing Schools was the central networking publication for this organization through all of its existence. Five years ago they lost their editor and *Changing Schools* was kept alive by making it a part of the *Education Revolution* magazine published by AERO. This will now be returned to the new central office of IALA in Minnesota, which is now staffed by their director, Cathie Hartnett. AERO will help IALA with several services, including the creation of a network of international connections and members.

This was the first official meeting of the organization under this name, the original decision having been made two years ago at a conference also hosted by the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs and ratified and put into effect last year when a national board was created. This board is chaired by Wayne Jennings, a well-known educational pioneer from St. Paul, MN. Other board members include David Lehman, founder and principal of Alternative Community School in Ithaca NY; Lynn Vincent, president of the MI Alternative Education Organization; Ray Morley, a program manager for the Iowa Department of Education; Elizabeth Quigley, director of Middle Earth, an alternative school in Pennsylvania; Bob Wiley, Executive Director of the Washington Association of Learning Alternatives; Herb Zisselman, Assistant Principal of Phoenix High School in Lawrence, GA; Robert Barr and Don Glines, educational pioneers and ex-officio members.

After considerable discussion back and forth within the board, it was decided that the fledgling Pennsylvania Alternative Education Association will host that next year's conference; most likely the year afterwards will be hosted by the Michigan Association, followed by the Washington

Association. The 2003 IALA conference will be in the Philadelphia area at the Valley Forge Convention Center, June 26 - 29, 2003.

A Learning Journey Through Siam (Thailand)

Jim Connor

This is an extract taken from an entertaining account of a group trip that featured an incredibly full itinerary. One of their first stops was at the second annual Global Community Gathering, a conference which brings together alternative projects working with children in Asia.

It was a tiring twenty-four hours of travel from the cold Philadelphia winter to the heat and the bustling streets of Bangkok, Thailand, thousands of miles away on the other side of the globe. With stops in New York, Anchorage, Alaska and Taipei, Taiwan it seemed we had already been traveling for weeks. As the plane touched down, all of our hopes, dreams, fears and expectations of the last few months slowly faded into reality, we had finally arrived in South East Asia. Four months of preparation, including language classes, cooking classes, comparative cultures studies, fundraising and much more, seemed so far away. Here we were, thirteen Americans and one Thai, ready to face the challenges which lay just ahead of us, five weeks of travel together through the enchanting Land of Smiles.

As we exited immigration and customs, we were greeted with smiling faces and the sweet smell of jasmine garlands from dear friends. Nao, who flew a month before us to make preparations, her sister, brother, mother and friends were there to greet us with open hearts and smiling faces. Our friend P'Nart from Ban Thor Phan, Make Dreams Come True and Eli, a student who visited Thailand last year and moved back this year to live a Ban Thor Phan, drove over 6 hours to meet us at the airport. There we were, sitting in the middle of Bangkok's airport floor, as if it were a long awaited family reunion, eating exotic fruits, wonderful fried breads and fried bananas, trying out the few phrases of Thai that we knew as we waited for our friends from Japan, Korea and Russia to arrive.

Slowly we gathering everyone and emerged into the sweltering heat of Bangkok's streets to cram into a bus loaded with disco balls, mirrors, flashing lights and a karaoke machine. We were headed off for Nakhon

Pathom, home of the largest Buddhist chedi, or stupa, in all of Thailand and the place in which Buddhism is thought to have entered Thailand from its native home in India.

We then moved on to Kanchanaburi, to the famous bridge over the River Kwai, where we met our friends from Moo Baan Dek to have dinner on a floating restaurant just below the famous bridge. After almost 42 hours of travel for our group, we arrived that evening at Moo Baan Dek, Children's Village School where we would spend the next five days at the 2nd Global Community Gathering (GCG). Following this, we would move to another children's project, Ban Thor Phan, Make Dreams Come True, located even further west along the Burmese border, for the second half of the Global Community Gathering.

The Global Community Gathering is a gathering which started last year in Thailand to bring together alternative projects working with children in Asia. Last year brought representatives from Japan, Korea, India, America and all over Thailand. This year, students from the Haja Center in Korea and from the Moscow International Film School from Russia would also join us to work on a television series about the effects of violence in this world. The gathering was held in several languages; Thai, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and English. The aim of this gathering is to be together as human beings, and share in all the pleasures that brings. To laugh together, cook together, play together, farm together, swim together, be silent together, and explore new cultures together, all while in the presence of wonderful projects working with children coming from difficult backgrounds.

Moo Baan Dek, Children's Village School was home to the first GCG last year and is a democratically run community and school, based on Summerhill School in England, which also incorporates aspects of Buddhism. The school serves over 150 children coming from poor, orphaned, and abusive backgrounds. The school is run by All School Meeting which is held once per week and is set in the lush jungle along the famous River Kwai.

We were able to attend the All School Meeting, visit classes with the children, and sleep in the children's homes to form closer relationships with them. We also joined the children each morning at 5am to work in the organic gardens which were started by the famous Japanese writer, Masanobu Fukuoka, author of *The One Straw Revolution*. The garden supplies most of their food. We then joined in the morning assembly where all of the children do group massage.

One of our favorite times at Moo Baan Dek was swimming, bathing, washing clothes and playing together each afternoon in the refreshing water of the River Kwai. We had an international food night where each group cooked food from their country and we participated in workshops at the school on batik, woodworking, painting, ceramics, sewing, weaving and spinning with the students. One day we traveled to the magnificent 7 tiered Erawan Waterfalls and to the town of Kanchanaburi and the famous Bridge over the River Kwai. As our time at Moo Baan Dek came to an end, we all crammed back into the bus for a six hour journey to towards the Burmese border, where we would spend the next several days at Ban Thor Phan , Make Dreams Come True.

Ban Thor Phan, Make Dreams Come True, is currently the home for 27 orphaned, abused and former Burmese child soldiers, situated along the Burmese (Myanmar) border. P’Nart and P’Yu have opened their home to children from all over Thailand and Burma. Rising before the sun, chanting the Sanskrit words, *Baba Nam Kevalam*, “Love is All,” the children chant and then quietly begin their morning meditation. Again, at the end of the day singing and meditation ease the sun down and welcome in the rising moon over the hazy mountains. This is the peace and harmony of Ban Thor Phan.

Here the children learn how to become more self-reliant and aware that they are in control of their own lives. They are truly loved and cared for, which helps them become strong, caring, independent children. It is truly a place where “Dreams do come True”. As part of their daily activities, the children help in the making of natural tie-dye clothing. From collecting the plants and herbs, to preparing the cloth, boiling the cloth and herbs and finally sewing the clothing on treadle sewing machines, the children all find joy and peace in the work that makes their home such a special place. Besides learning meditation and just becoming part of this magnificent family, we also were able to take a trip to a local Buddhist temple deep within a cave and traveled to the famous Three Pagoda Pass at the Thai-Burmese border.

Our explorations through this enchanting Land of Smiles was an incredible learning experience for all. Everywhere we went we were welcomed in with smiling faces and wonderful food. Exploring another culture is a learning experience which constantly keeps you aware and always pushes you out of your comfort zones. An open mind, clear communication and a willingness to be flexible are lessons which we faced each new day of our travels. This was an experience which all of us will look back on and learn from throughout the rest of our lives.

There will be future trips similar to this one which will be focused on natural building projects in Thailand, including bamboo and cob construction, which will be used to support children's projects. The trips will involve homestays and community service projects and will work to create a space to explore the issues of traditional wisdom being lost to westernization with the local people we meet. Currently, there is a two month trip scheduled for the Fall of 2002 and another trip during the first few months of the new year 2003. For more information, questions, or comments about the trip, please contact Jim Connor and Saowanee Sangkara at The Whispering Seed, 610-668-1850 or email sea.anicca@juno.com.

More Democratic Ping Pong

By Jerry Mintz

This is a follow-up to the Ping-Pong story which appeared in 2001 issue of the Education Revolution.

The democratic process in my Boys and Girls Club table tennis program has continued. When I first started the democratic meetings, the kids acted as if it was something like a public school class: talking, not paying attention and so on. Eventually, as they began to realize that every decision they made was the decision for the club, they got more and more serious about the meetings and wanted to make sure that they were in them and that their votes counted.

A more recent issue involved the kids questioning the work ethic of two of their elected supervisors. As a result of that, they had a meeting in which they elected temporary assistant supervisors who would take their places for one week. The idea was this might be a permanent thing and the others might be removed depending upon how it went when they came to the next meeting. The supervisor's job is to take responsibility for the Challenge Ladder and make necessary changes, as well as resolving any disputes and refereeing any matches where people seemed to have some problem - and basically keeping the program going smoothly.

They felt that two of the more recently elected supervisors were doing a good job but two of the ones that had been in longer weren't doing as good a job. In fact, there was an issue about one of them that had come up in which the Number One player was saying that he would accept a challenge if people would basically give him a bribe; that is, give him some food or

money. That was brought up in a meeting and it was voted that this was not allowed; they didn't make it retroactive because it hadn't been a rule before.

At one of the meetings there was a discussion about a new rule we made that you had to accept two challenges a day, which was raised from one. The question was whom you'd have to accept as a challenger. They were trying to put in a rule that you could choose which person you'd accept, because any of the people six places away from you could challenge you. That was voted on and passed.

There were two dissenters: one was a student who was afraid that his challenges wouldn't be accepted. According to our system we asked the minority to say, if they wanted to, why they voted against. It was thought that this might possibly create a situation in which certain kids could be effectively excluded from being able to make challenges because as soon as they challenged someone, that person could try to get someone else to challenge them and then play that match. We then had a re-vote and the meeting unanimously changed it to the fact that you have to accept the first challenge, and then other challenges in the order that they're made.

There was another situation that developed: I got a call from one of the students who thought that I should be informed about an incident that had happened that day. It really felt like nothing different from the kind of call that I would get from another staff member when I was running my school. He told me that one of the supervisors had made an error in judgment that day in which there was a conflict going on between an 8-year old and a 9-year old. The 9-year old was calling the 8-year old names and this supervisor, instead of just correcting him on that, took the side of the other boy and was rooting for him during the match. It eventually reduced the 9-year old to tears and he wasn't even able to continue. The feeling was that this was the wrong approach. So this other, more newly elected supervisor, a 12-year old, was calling me to let me know what had happened.

When I came in we had a special staff meeting. We'd never before actually had a staff meeting of the supervisors – the four kids and the three temporary assistants. We discussed the best way to handle that kind of situation and everyone agreed that the supervisor should never take sides, that they should always be fair in handling these things.

Overall, I think it's just amazing how these kids, who go to regular public school and have had no previous experience with empowerment and with making these kinds of decisions and taking these responsibilities, have been able to do so.

One day I was walking to the Club on a day when I don't usually volunteer. I passed by a baseball game on the field as I waked down the

sidewalk. As I went out of sight of the field and toward the entrance of the club I barely heard a yell from the field, “Jerry’s here!” When I got to the door there was a line of people to sign up for ping pong lessons—the baseball game had immediately disbanded!

At a recent International tournament (Spinmania) I told this story to Ben Nisbit, former director of the US Association of Table Tennis. It seemed to me that to have a culture at a Boys and Girls Club where table tennis was more important than other sports was unusual. I asked him where else one might find that. “China?” he said. He hadn’t heard of it in the USA. He is working on creating a table tennis curriculum to encourage the expansion of the game.

At the Spinmania tournament, our students swept all the lower level trophies. We won the under 750, under 1000, and went to the finals of the under 13. Another student, 8-years old, went to the finals of the Under 10 division of the New York area Junior Olympic warm-up.

I was recently surprised and flattered when the Boys and Girls Club selected me as Volunteer of the Year. Also, they are talking about spreading this idea on a national level to other Boys and Girls Clubs. Maybe it’s easier to spread the idea of democracy in a non-school situation in which the staff doesn’t have such a vested interest in control as they would in a regular public school where the teachers spend so much of their efforts working on control.

Art Rosenblum

By Judy Rosenblum

For those who haven’t heard of him, Art Rosenblum was a pioneer in the environmental and communities movements. We are very saddened by this sudden loss. The following is from the text of a very moving eulogy written by Art’s wife Judy. Jerry.

Art Rosenblum was killed in a car accident last week at age 74. He was a peace activist since the 60’s, a writer, printer, pilot, mechanic, and inventor. From the time Art was a small child, he was ahead of his peers and his time. He was moved by and felt personally involved in the politics around him, as a Jewish child hearing news of events in Europe as the Nazis rose to power. As a teenager, he had strong visions of a different, positive future, and felt that he had a mission to bring these visions into being. When

he was 20, he went to Paraguay to join the pacifist community called the Society of Brothers, where they followed the teachings of Jesus and held all things in common. In 1964, he felt a calling from God to leave, and so, at age 38, he struck out on his own for a second time. For two years, he traveled all over the country, setting up print shops for any group that opposed the Vietnam War, asking only room and board in communes along the way.

In 1969, he came to Germantown [in Philadelphia, PA] to start a commune devoted to finding ways to bring about a whole new age of peace and love to the world. He took the Christian teachings that communal life had taught him and continued to use them, believing that human actions against injustice could bring about a true "kingdom of heaven" on Earth. Art began a neighborhood radio station and had parties for the local teens. Here he created a small nonprofit organization called Aquarian Research Foundation. He wrote a newsletter for over thirty years about alternative lifestyles, safe energy, psychic research, and sustainable living. The first five years of the newsletter are published in his book, *Unpopular Science*. Art had an offset printing press in his dining room, which he used to print newsletters, and also a booklet on natural methods of birth control, which grew into a book that sold over 90,000 copies. When we married in 1976 after a 28-day courtship, I helped him edit the fifth edition. The next year, Art became a pilot at age 49 and started flying all over, bringing people to visit intentional communities. He took in printing apprentices, training them for free in exchange for their help printing flyers at cost for peace groups. In the heart of the Cold War, he printed and distributed 300,000 "Big Party" invitations in 1984 to visualize and celebrate, in advance, the disarmament of the world. In 1988, he flew a Soviet sociologist to visit intentional communities in the U.S., and we wrote and produced the first video on such communities, called *Where's Utopia?* He influenced Ted Turner to create the Turner Tomorrow Award, which resulted in the prize-winning book, *Ishmael*, by Daniel Quinn. Art got the [Philadelphia] *Inquirer* to do a cover story on Quinn, and the two writers became friends.

Art learned that children brought up with a lot of love and affection become peaceful adults. He raised our two kids to be loving, free, creative, and caring about the needs of the world. He picked up every hitchhiker on the road that could fit in the car. He took in homeless people to live with us. He championed homebirth, breastfeeding, home schooling, polyamory, communal living, natural foods (especially seaweed), alternative medicine, and every cause that came down the road.

He flew his small plane to Cuba a few times at age 69. He took in young participants in the “Philly Freedom Summer” project to organize support for death-row journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal from its inception in 1995. He inadvertently got himself arrested posting “Free Mumia” stickers on city property. He promoted the Disclosure Project’s efforts to get UFO information out in the open. At 74, “seaweed man” still bounded down the stairs two at a time and taught carpentry to our daughter. He spent his last years writing articles on his listserv and teaching our son about electronics and politics. He started a free radio station which the FCC shut down. He threw out our old printing press and got two old copy machines and made handouts about Dennis Kucinich and Israeli refuseniks. On his last drive out, he was transporting a computer that was to be the first in a project to give computers and mentoring to disadvantaged kids in the neighborhood. Art wanted a world without money, where everyone’s needs would be met. He deeply believed that if he worked for the universe, the universe would work for him. And it did, many, many times. He never gave up trying. He said, “The difficult things we do right away; the impossible takes a bit longer”. He didn’t believe in death. He said that death is just a change of lifestyle. He believed in the existence of a spirit world beyond this one, and thought that even after people die physically they can have great impact on the course of events on Earth. *Email Judy at: artr@juno.com.*

In A Box:

WHY MAKE DECISIONS DEMOCRATICALLY?

By Jerry Mintz

It may seem easier in the short run to have to have basic decisions made by a leader or leaders. It just doesn't work well in the long run. When students, workers or members participate in the decisions which effect them, there are several benefits:

- They take responsibility for the decision and its enforcement.
- They know why it was made, and can initiate changes if they become necessary.
- They learn how to make decisions, in a group and on their own.

- They learn how to be articulate, advocate for a position, and how to express their feelings.
- By being called on to make such decisions based upon what they perceive and how they feel, they learn more about themselves and what they really want.

No one ever said democracy is an efficient system. It really is more work. It is just the best one we know.

In a Box:

Fundraising?

Fundraising is about more than asking for money. It is about engaging someone in your cause and giving him or her the opportunity to do good. It is also about organizational credibility. The very process exposes the soul of your organization as you ask others to join you in the journey to do good. Too many volunteers and agency professionals set out with high hopes and find themselves short of their goal and frustrated. Read a short article that outlines eight helpful principles to consider in designing your next fundraising effort. Web: www.glocalvantage.com/scissues/page5.html.

The **Democracy.org** mission statement is to promote education for democratic citizenship, create and strengthen learning organizations, assist organizations and individuals to make and act on decisions based on ethical principals, and promote character education and service learning. The website provides hundreds of links for grant seekers and resources for nonprofit organizations. <http://www.democracy.org>.

From **Corning Foundation Grants**: The Corning Foundation, established in 1952, develops and administers projects in support of educational, cultural, and community organizations. Over the years, the foundation has contributed more than \$83 million through its grant programs. Each year, the foundation fulfills approximately 225 grants totaling some \$2,250,000. Corning's areas of involvement have included community service programs

for students, curriculum enrichment, student scholarships, facility improvement, and instructional technology projects for the classroom. All requests for support must be made in writing. Application deadline: ongoing. http://www.corning.com/inside_corning/foundation.asp.

Fundsnet Online Services is a comprehensive website dedicated to providing nonprofit organizations, colleges, and Universities with information on financial resources available on the Internet. Web: www.fundsnet-services.com/.

From **Samples of Successful Grant Proposals**: SchoolGrants receives many requests from people wishing to see examples of successful grant proposals. Several generous grant-writers have shared successful proposals they've written. These samples are provided for your use as examples of what a successful proposal is all about. You can use the samples to learn what a good needs statement contains, to see what goals and objectives are and how the activities relate to those goals objectives, and to see how an evaluation plan is designed. Web: www.schoolgrants.org/proposal_samples.htm.

In A Box

Ritalin

Ritalin Psychosis A five year study found that 9% of children treated with methylphenidate(Ritalin) at a Canadian clinic for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder(ADHD) developed psychotic symptoms. - *Dr. Peter R. Breggin, Center for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology*

Vitamin R Ritalin has become a recreational drug for pre-teens and teens. "Vitamin R," or "R-Ball," offsets alcohol's depressant qualities allowing kids to stay out later and drink more. Federal drug enforcers say Ritalin is on the list of ten most commonly stolen controlled pharmaceuticals. The pills are ground into a powder and inhaled or injected.

Medication Regulation Within three days of a story that ran in the *New York Post* about a mother who was suing her son's school for forcing him to take

behavior modifying medication Brooklyn assemblyman Felix Ortiz's office received calls from 45 parents. Many of them were afraid they were going to loose custody of their children if they did not agree to drug their children. Mr. Ortiz is sponsoring a bill that would control the use of medications like Ritalin in school.

Being There With Jerry Mintz

MAIL AND COMMUNICATIONS

Edited by Carol Morley

MAIL AND COMMUNICATIONS

Jerry writes: On the 21st of September we went to the **Modern School Reunion** at Rutgers University. For those who do not know of the Modern School, it was a trailblazing democratic school stated by Francisco Ferrer in Spain in the early 1900's. After Ferrer was killed by Spanish authorities in 1909, schools were started in his name all over the world. The Modern School was one which was started in the USA, first in New York City, and then to a community set up in Stelton (now Edison) New Jersey. The last Modern School closed in 1958, but these alumni have been having reunions every year for the past 30 years! Attendees have been as old as 105!

On this occasion the Modern School alumni were interacting with presenters who were graduates of Summerhill, Albany Free School, the Met, Goddard College, and the Organic School in Fairhope, AL. The latter is the oldest, continuously operating alternative school I know, having started in 1907.

The sparks flew! Some people were excited that they movement was continuing in other forms, but some complained that free schools today are too insular, not actively working at changing the world to be a better place, not willing to risk getting their head bashed in a little, as these aged former union workers had done! I told them about some of the work that Summerhill students have been doing lately to promote children's rights in England, at the UN and in Europe.

From **The Staff-Run System**, by Frederick Martin, Co-clerk, Arthur Morgan School's Celo Education Notes (May 2002): AMS's staff-run-by-consensus management system began in the early 1970s and has seen the school through 25 years of growth. Experiential education begins with two basic conditions. First, students get to change and affect their environment: to experiment with the school around them. Second, students meet a consistency and structure that provides accurate consequences to their actions; their experiments will have valid results. The staff-run system allows Arthur Morgan School to provide openness to innovation along with structure. Authority is distributed yet coordinated; every teacher has the power to commit the school's resources to projects, yet they still work together within the bounds of the community. With a structure in which all staff have some authority, the students have many routes through which to attempt changes. As the staff work together with the students on the various projects that they are spearheading, even the most timid or disorganized student can be encouraged through small steps of growth. Web: www.arthurmorganschool.org.

Grants of up to \$2,000 are available to K-12 teachers from the Teaching Tolerance project of the **Southern Poverty Law Center**, a nonprofit group that fights discrimination. The grants are awarded for activities promoting diversity, peacemaking, community service, or other aspects of tolerance education. Requests should include a typed, 500-word description of the activity and the proposed budget. Application deadline: ongoing. <http://www.teachingtolerance.org>.

The Spring 2002 issue of **Communities: Journal of Cooperative Living** focuses on the question of what children learn in community. It includes an article by Chris Mercogliano about the Albany Free School called “We Care About Each Other Fiercely,” “My Tribal Childhood” by Kristina Jansen, “A Place in the Tribe” by Daniel Greenberg, “In an Atmosphere of Trust and Connection” by Ron Miller, and “Learning at Greenbriar,” by our own Jerry Mintz, among others. The magazine also has an events calendar, a classified section, a directories listing, and book reviews. It’s available from Communities, Rt 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563.

The **Puget Sound Community School** Spring 2002 Newsletter is now online. Although a newsletter can only provide a sampling of the rich diversity of activities that take place at the school, you can still read staff member Dave's Harrison account of the Hiroshima Flame Peace Walk, and staff member Deb's Schaack humorous view as an archeologist digging through her desk. Website: www.pscs.org/newsletters/spring02/.

From **The Power of Continuous Classroom Assessment**: Research suggests that the classroom assessments teachers use day in and day out provide one of the most powerful tools available for improving student achievement. Studies also have found that more demanding, intellectually challenging classroom assignments are linked with higher-quality student work. Lynn Olsen reports in Education Week on how Nebraska has embraced flexibility in assessment and created a bottom-up assessment approach that most districts only dream of. Web: www.edweek.com/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=37assess.h21.

A new report by the **University of Minnesota's Center for School Change** concludes that growth of the alternative programs has had a positive influence on the state's public education system even though they sparked controversy when first created. But oversight of these schools is lacking, according to the report. The study calls on the Legislature to take a closer look at the state's alternative schools, examining contract procedures, student and faculty placement policies, and school district monitoring of learning and financial management. Web: www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/.

From the UK: **Pupils of 7 Will Assess Their Own Teachers**, By Liz Lightfoot, Education Correspondent, The Daily Telegraph: Children as young as seven will be consulted about the performance of their teachers

under a plan to place schools under a legal duty to consult pupils on all aspects of classroom life.

From **Getting Testy Over Tests**: A surefire way to commit political suicide a few months ago was to oppose more school testing. The name of the landmark education bill President Bush signed in January – the No Child Left Behind Act – reflected the prevailing mood: to resist standardized tests was to desert kids. The legislation, which mandates annual testing in Grades 3 through 8, passed overwhelmingly. But a change is afoot – the sacred cow of school testing is getting tested itself. The stepped-up criticism of the law and its requirements is to be expected, says U.S. Department of Education Under Secretary Eugene Hickok. “Implementation is always more painful than rhetoric,” he says. “But there will be no backing off.” Washington sounds defiant, and so do some educators and politicians in the states. Looks like the fight is on. Web: www.time.com/time/magazine/notebook/0,9485,1101020610,00.html.

A Chinese Menu Approach to Education New York City has turned eighty schools into learning centers where children and families are free to select from a large menu of activities. The Beacon Centers, as the program is called, offer Judo, chess, GED test preparation, open gym, parenting discussion groups. Furthermore kids get involved in community service and adults volunteer at the centers. The Beacons are open after school, weekends and during summer vacation. There are no fees and you don't have to be a citizen of the U.S. The only requirement is that you be a resident of New York City.

The first 10 Beacons were established in 1991 by mayor David Dinkins, who felt strongly that a sense of ownership by the kids and adults was critical to the success of the Beacon Program. The Beacons receive core support from the NYC Department of Youth Service with support from the Youth Development Institute of the Fund of the City of New York. The Beacon Program has been so successful that the Youth Development Institute was awarded a grant in 1995 to enable Minneapolis, Oakland, Savannah and Denver to create similar programs. The governments of South Africa and Ireland have also shown interest in the Beacons.

For more information on the Beacon Program go to the Fund for the City of New York's website: www.fcny.org.

A new publication called **The Whistleblowers** is available from Education Now. It is a collection of the philosophies, beliefs, and educational

approaches of 12 outstanding individuals, including A.S. Neill, Rudolf Steiner, Mary Leue, and John Holt. Education Now Books, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ. Tel/Fax: 0115 925 7261.

From **High Stakes, Rigidity & Indifference: Middle School Dropout Rates Increase** in the Boston Herald: The number of Boston middle schoolers dropping out has skyrocketed during the last five years, sparking fears the city's tough promotion policy is pushing students out of the system. Education researcher Anne Wheelock, who has analyzed the numbers, said the increase corresponds to the sharp hike in the number of students retained in grade because of the district's tougher stances on promotion and truancy. "These numbers are as bad as I've seen in a very long time," said Wheelock. "There is no excuse for having any 16-year-olds in middle school at all, but this is a crisis Boston creates through a combination of high stakes testing policies, rigid responses to kids at risk and indifference to the most vulnerable kids."

Private Schools Should Flee State Testing Requirements, by Carolan & Keating, Newsday, 6/04/02: Two of Long Island's religious schools, Lutheran High School in Brookville and Trinity Lutheran School in Hicksville, have decided to abandon New York State testing standards. To some, this may seem a dangerous move, but it's actually a healthy development.... Experience in both the public and private schools recently has shown that the Regents exams require too much time to drill, simply to raise scores on these tests. The underlying message: The tests detract from real education, according to differing standards of value.... We wonder why more private school educators don't detach themselves from state control. After all, these are often the same educators who criticize the government system for its hostility to religious values and parental control. Since these private schools have the tools of accountability already in place, and send their students to very good colleges and universities, perhaps they could help their case for educational reform if they did not humble themselves so much before the state. Web: www.newsday.com.

We are pleased to announce the "premiere showing" of the new **Paths of Learning website**. We invite you to browse our website, link to our website, and use it as "The Resource for Resources" in learning about new possibilities in education. We aim to inspire others to see the possibilities of learning options far beyond the outdated rewards-and-punishment models that continue to dominate mainstream education. If this is your mission too,

help us out by letting others know about these resources that exist for facilitating change. Pass this message on to your friends—students, teachers, parents, community organizers, or anyone who could benefit from learning more about creative ways for impacting change in education.

The site includes access to Path's magazines and publications, an education clearinghouse, an online library, and a section devoted to connecting you with others with similar interests. Email: robin@pathsoflearning.net. Web: www.PathsOfLearning.net.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Rose Herbert was born in Philadelphia July 8, 1938, daughter of Morris Rasumny and Margaret Boyden. Betsy attended Goddard College, noted for its experimental approach to education. At Goddard, Betsy's ventures into student teaching sparked a lifetime of involvement in early childhood education. In 1966 she met Nick Herbert, who was studying Physics at Stanford. Nick and Betsy moved to Boulder Creek, California where they lived together for more than 30 years, married, and raised their son, Kholá. With Stella Fein, Roberta McPherson and their children, Betsy formed a homeschooling group, which eventually expanded to form South Street Centre through which many hundreds of parents and kids were able to realize a vision of community-based, child-centered learning. Betsy was an active member of the California Home School Association, the American Association of Educators in Private Practice and the State Commission on Community Service. She participated in the Santa Cruz Cultural Committee and the Ethnic Arts Network and helped produce the children's programs at the Boulder Creek Library. In 1994, Betsy was awarded the Hammer-Marcum Award. At California State's newest campus in Monterey, Betsy worked as a consultant to their Service Learning Program. Betsy also taught dance workshops and was a founding member of Bruce Lee's Company of Strangers - dancing (April 2000) in their last full-length performance "The White Room" at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz. Betsy's central passion was the search for new ways of living. Her favorite motto: "Don't just say it, do it!" She died (of breast cancer) surrounded by friends on August 18, 2002. A celebration of Betsy's life will take place at Camp Joy Gardens in Boulder Creek on Sunday afternoon, Oct 20. Details to be announced.

"The Free School" a documentary by first time filmmaker Mika Buser-Ferris is the recipient of this year's Louisiana Filmmaker Award. This film documents The New Orleans Free School's 30 year evolution from a private experimental 'hippie' school with 29 students in 1971 to an alternative

public elementary school presently serving over 300 predominately low-income minority students.

In the early days students decided what to do for themselves, even if that meant doing nothing at all. After years of financial strain, the school was faced with the inevitability of closure or becoming part of the establishment, joining the New Orleans Public School System in 1973. Although financially supported by the system the Free School was left on its own and was highlighted as one of the few examples of a “choice school” being provided by the city of New Orleans.

In the 80’s the country moved in to a new era of conservatism headed by the call of President Reagan for an educational return “back to basics.” For the Free School this began a decade long period of constant friction with the School Board. The film recounts the struggles of teachers, parents and supporters of the school in their battle to defend the school’s underlying philosophy and save the school from attempted closure. Today The New Orleans Free School is one of the only public schools called a “free school.”

For more information/stills/screening copy contact: Producer-Mika Buser-Ferris Phone:504-723-3756 [E-mail-MPBF1@aol.com](mailto:MPBF1@aol.com) (AERO also has copies available on video for \$25)

What’s next for Goddard: In its first 30 years, Goddard College was devoted to the vision of creating a college where the theories of John Dewey could be actualized. Under the direction of Tim Pitkin, many exciting minds created a new forum for higher education. They brought together a union of experimental colleges which supported each other and collaborated in month long gatherings of faculty and administrators to share and refine ideas, and propose new avenues for higher education; not the least of which was Goddard’s development of adult degree programs based on the Dewey philosophy. Goddard became a leader in the field of low residency adult degree programs. The Union Graduate School was conceived at Goddard. Many, if not all, colleges and universities have now adopted adult degree programs with some varying degrees of success. Thus, Goddard, a small liberal arts college tucked in the mountains of Central Vermont made significant contributions in changing the face of higher education in this country. Meanwhile, the campus program has sustained a living model of democratic education that continues to attract forward-looking traditional-age students. Always sensitive to the changing educational needs of both traditional and non-traditional aged students, Goddard College is now ready to transform itself into a new model of 21st Century learning.

We plan to revitalize Goddard's original mission, aligning its traditional focus on democracy with the current global solidarity movement and progressive forces locally, nationally and internationally. We plan to create a new union of experimenting organizations and colleges already involved, at varying levels, in the search for those solutions. Students will be encouraged to be involved with this union of organizations, as resources and for internships and field studies. They will be involved in the planning, publicity and operation of all meetings. Connections with schools and peace organizations devoted to social responsibility in other countries will provide on site and hands on supervised experience. This union of organizations will lead directly to the creation of a new degree offered both on- and off-campus in global responsibility and peace.

While we slept, Goddard College died. It has been hard to get accurate information, but apparently the board decided to close the undergraduate program because: A. The accrediting organizations suddenly required the college to have a large endowment, and B. 90 students was not enough to maintain an on-campus program. They will keep the distance learning going. There is a group interested in somehow resurrecting the on campus program. Jerry.

Widening Gap Between Internet-Savvy Students and Their Schools: A new report says that the “most Internet-savvy (students) – complain that their teachers don’t use the Internet in class or create assignments that exploit great Web material.” Students report that the single greatest barrier to Internet use at school is the quality of access to the Internet – they say it’s too slow and often there's too much censorship. They complained about filtering software, saying it prevented them from reaching legitimate educational materials. The students said they wanted to use the Internet for more of their schoolwork, but teachers too often lacked the imagination to use it for anything other than mundane tasks. Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Internet & American Life Project, says, “Many (students) believe they may have to raise their voices to force schools to change to accommodate them better. And their voices should be added to policy discussions. Educators have a choice: Either they need to adapt or they will be dragged into a new learning environment.” Rather than being beaten down by the technology, teachers must use it, use it, use it, and use it again to do what school is supposed to be about – learning about life and the world around us. Web: www.csmonitor.com/2002/0815/p25s01-cogn.htm.

EmpowerMind, founded by Kimberly Kassner, an interactive and experiential workshop helping individuals discover how they learn through their strengths. It is completely “out of the box” teaching. Web: <http://www.empowermind.com/>. Tel: (415) 459-3159. Email: kassner@aol.com.

From **More Jewish Day Schools Open As Parents Reconsider Values**, by Heidi J. Shrager, Wall Street Journal: Jewish communities around the U.S. are creating new day schools even faster than they can be built.

Traditionally, most Jewish schools have been affiliated with Orthodox Judaism, the country's smallest Jewish denomination, with stricter religious teachings. But in recent years, non-Orthodox schools have flourished. In 1965, there were 24; today, there are more than 170. By comparison, the total number of private schools has increased by a much slower 53% from 1965 to 2000, the National Center for Education Statistics shows. Non-Orthodox Jewish high schools in particular have blossomed in the past decade, nearly tripling since 1990 from 10 to 27, with 10 more set to open by 2003. In the past, Jewish families typically sent their children to secular schools, sometimes adding Jewish part-time school or summer camp. But increasingly, Jewish parents feel that they, and consequently their children, are losing the meaning of their traditions. Some communities think Jewish day schools—especially high schools—are the answer. To help quash the preconception that Jewish day schools are cocoons shielding children from mainstream culture, learning would be centered on “social justice” in and out of the Jewish world, and secular and Jewish curriculum would be integrated as much as possible. Despite their increasing success, the Jewish day schools still face major hurdles, particularly the costly high schools. Enrollment tends to shrink with each successive grade, as families start to crave diversity and are less likely to take a chance on a new school. Finding qualified staff with the combination of Judaic knowledge plus teaching or administrative credentials is another problem. <http://www.wsj.com>.

Vouchers: Next Stop State Courts On June 27 the U.S. Supreme court voted 5-4 in favor of the Cleveland voucher program. The plan has been contested since it was established in 1995. Writing for the majority Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist said the state-enacted Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program - “is entirely neutral with respect to religion. It provides benefits directly to a wide spectrum of individuals, defined only by financial need and residence in a particular school district. It permits such individuals to exercise genuine choice among options public and private,

secular and religious.” Noble Prize winning economist, Milton Friedman, who devised a universal system of education vouchers in 1955 stated the decision tore down a major roadblock. “We are more and more approaching the tipping point.” The Cleveland plan was challenged soon after enactment by the ACLU, People for the American Way and teacher’s unions. Robert H. Chanin, general counsel of NEA stated when the ruling was announced, “This does not end the legal battle. It simply means we no longer have the establishment clause (of the First Amendment) in our arsenal.” The fight is likely to move to the states where 37 state constitutions do not permit state aid to go to religious schools.

Public Wants Vouchers: Terry M. Moe has released the results of a survey of 4,700 Americans concerning their attitudes on vouchers in a book entitled “Schools, Vouchers and the American Public,” published by Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank. 60% of those who responded said they were in favor of a system in which every child would be given a voucher to attend a public, private or parochial school at government expense. 32% were opposed, 7% were undecided. (Percentages are rounded in the report.) Parents were more supportive than non-parents. Blacks and Hispanics were more supportive than whites. Those in favor, favor a voucher system in which private schools’ curricula, spending and teacher qualifications are regulated.

Full Tuition Vouchers The state of Florida has made 350,000 students who have been identified as disabled eligible for vouchers. McKay vouchers allow parents who are unhappy with the public school in their district to send their children to any other public or private school. The vouchers cover tuition up to what the state is spending in the families’ current school district.

Teaching To The Test: Parents are concerned that “with standardized tests, teachers will end up teaching to the test instead of making sure real learning takes place” according to a 2002 Public Agenda poll. They have a good reason to be worried. An Education Week study discovered teachers spend a “great deal” or “somewhat” of their time instructing students in test-taking skills. (53% use state practice tests and 49% use commercial test preparation materials.) It turns out elementary and high school standardized tests don't even help with college entrance exams. Researchers found that in 18 states that used high-stakes tests (Amrein & Berliner, 2002) SAT and ACT scores

have been going down in more than half the states since the tests were put in place.

No Wallet Left Untouched: Do you ever wonder just how the testing and textbook publishing giants are profiting from Bush's "Every Child Better Watch Their Behind" act. Here's how it works. McGraw-Hill manufactures the California Achievement Tests. They then hire lobbyists to use the results of the tests to pressure state legislators to adopt Open Court and Reading Mastering textbooks. Who produces those textbooks? McGraw-Hill! McGraw-Hill, Houghton-Mifflin, Harcourt General, NCS Pearson and Educational Testing Service all contributed to Bush's campaign.

Senator Dodd "As for this testing idea, I am frightened to death... If we are going to test every child every year from third grade through 8th grade, I know what's going to happen. We are going to turn our schools into test centers instead of education centers." The American Montessori Society 2002 Rambusch Lecture

A Laboratory for Democracy, by Scott Willis: "No responsible educator would advocate teaching chemistry without a laboratory. No good chemistry teacher would assign her students textbook readings, then furnish them with chemicals and test tubes and say, 'You've read about it—now experiment.' Obviously, that would be a scenario for disaster. Yet U.S. educators may be doing something analogous when teaching students about democracy and the First Amendment, said Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center. 'Freedom takes practice,' Haynes said. 'We can teach about the elements of freedom; we can talk about them; we can tell students how the government works or ought to work—but unless they have a laboratory experience, it is dangerous. Freedom can't be taught out of a book. It has to be lived; it has to be practiced.' That desire to give students a laboratory experience in freedom sparked the creation of the First Amendment Schools Project, which is cosponsored by ASCD and the First Amendment Center. This initiative is designed to transform how schools model and teach the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The project serves as a national resource for all schools—K–12, public and private—that want to affirm First Amendment principles and put them into action in their school communities." For more information about the First Amendment Schools Project, contact ASCD's Mike Wildasin at 1-703-575-5475 or email: mwildasi@ascd.org, or the First Amendment Center's Sam Chaltain at 1-703-284-2808. Web: www.firstamendmentschools.org/.

From **Taught to Remove All Thought**, by Lynn Stratton, St. Petersburg Times, July 7, 2002: I'm about to become a college dropout for the second time in my life. The first time, I was a freshman in New York City during the last years of the Vietnam War. I decided I didn't want to be a part of what we called "the system." This time, I'm not a student but an instructor. Here's the problem: In our zeal for numbers, for measuring our kids so we can report that they really can write because they've passed a test, we're focusing on the forest but forgetting the trees. Writing is putting ideas on paper.... expressing what we think. But to make kids pass our standardized tests, we force them to see writing as simply a formula, as anything but what it really is. We forget that we're not talking about words and sentences and paragraphs; we're talking about ideas. Ideas can't be measured; they can't be quantified. Our children, our teenagers, are victims of the Stockholm syndrome; they've begun identifying with their captors. Our schools have brainwashed them into believing that writing – that thinking – is simply a matter of numbers. Our young people have had the thinking beaten out of them. But all this has been going on for years. So why am I quitting now? Because it's about to get much worse. Now that we're to have one seamless educational system, pre-kindergarten through graduate school, the practices entrenched in our schools will become entrenched in our colleges. It's happening already. The students who have been trained to write this way are now teachers who teach writing this way. More and more, I encounter college writing instructors who insist on the formula: five paragraphs, no more. Be careful not to have too many. Only three ideas allowed. And they can't stop writing that way. Brainwashing does that. Now, imagine these students, your children, afraid to write, to put their ideas on paper. Imagine them trying to fight for what they believe in – if they're brave enough to believe in anything at all. Imagine them in business. In medicine. In law. In politics. I no longer can fight this system, the one that tries to deaden our kids, to make them afraid to think. The first time I dropped out of college, I was afraid the system would kill my ideas and make me less human. I didn't want any part of it. This time, the system is different, but the result will be the same. I don't want any part of this system, either. – Lynn Stratton has taught writing at the University of South Florida for 13 years. She lives in St. Petersburg.

New School Counters MCAS-Based Mentality, by Anand Vaishnav, Boston Globe, 8/26/02: Barbara Tilson, a suburban mother of two and former piano teacher, is not a radical 'banner waver.' But watching the

standards-and-testing movement creep to the center of her children's classrooms, this public school parent chose a different educational path: home schooling. Next month, Tilson will send her children several days a week to the Mystic River Learning Center in Medford, where there will be no desks, no rules tacked to the wall, and certainly no tests. It's a new outlet for home-schoolers whose parents need help, as well as a refuge for those who say Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System and grade-by-grade standards have squeezed the innovation and creativity out of public schools. The center's founder is Lynette Culverhouse, an Arlington mother and former teacher in England who is well-known in anti-MCAS circles. Her ideas - teachers as facilitators rather than lecturers, students who learn best by reading and studying what they want, exploration instead of regurgitation - are not new. The Mystic River Learning Center is another piece of what some call the 'unschooling' movement: putting young minds in charge of what they learn, at their own clip.

State Board of Education Chairman James A. Peyser, a steadfast MCAS supporter, applauded the broadening of choices in education in ventures like Culverhouse's. And he acknowledged that some schools may have "overreacted" to tailoring their lessons to the tough MCAS test. But he wondered if efforts like Culverhouse's are an overreaction of a different sort, and questioned whom they really help. Most of her students, after all, will come to her more advanced than the peers they left in public schools. "By far the greater focus of the whole discussion is those schools and districts where students are not even becoming competent in basic academic skills," Peyser said. "And this notion that we need to provide them with a more creative and flexible environment in order to improve performance is belied by every observation and every bit of research that I've ever seen. We have to raise expectations for those students, not remove them entirely."

From **Test Case: Hard Lessons from the TAAS**, by Jake Bernstein: The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills is the latest iteration of the state's standardized test, the cornerstone of the 'Texas Miracle,' an education policy that reportedly helped put the compassion in Compassionate Conservatism. By relentlessly focusing on testing and holding school officials responsible for the resulting scores, this system claims to elevate learning, particularly for previously underserved minority and low-income students. The new test is reported to be much harder than its predecessor, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). This year, third-graders who are unable to pass the reading portion of the TAKS will be held back. Many educators and parents are braced for trouble.

The Texas Education Agency cannot afford to let too many students fail. It would cost the state hundreds of millions in extra expenses at a time when legislators face an estimated \$7-billion budget shortfall. A massive failure could threaten the credibility of the new system just as it becomes established. Imagine tens of thousands of angry parents, each with a failed child, questioning the education revolution underway in Texas. They might discover that the much-hyped ‘Texas Miracle’ has done wonders for many constituencies, but it has abused and defrauded the children trapped inside it.

A true measure of TAAS achievement might best be found in the words of Texas college freshmen. When English professors at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi asked first-year composition students to write about the TAAS, the response was overwhelmingly negative....70 percent listed few or no redeeming qualities for the test. These writers are the testing system’s theoretical winners, students who passed and graduated from high school. They describe the test as “meaningless,” “horrible,” and a “waste of time.” Together the essays paint a picture of schools where ever-expanding TAAS practice forced out real curriculum and education came second to the manufacture of high test scores.

As districts frantically try to elevate their scores, they divert scarce instructional dollars from important resources. Laboratory supplies, library research, independent projects, science experiments, oral histories, long-term writing assignments, lengthier books, and new books disappear. Limited moneys instead go for test-prep materials and test drills. The result is education-deficient children and wealthy testing companies.

The business model of education, where ‘kids’ are ‘products,’ might not be very healthy for either children or society. “It beats a child down,” believes Deborah Diffily, former teacher and current SMU professor. “It takes away a fascination for the subject and a love of learning. It takes away a wonderful curiosity children have. It supports memorization, not real thinking.” It also produces a class of students who will be perfect employees for a low-wage economy. They will lack training in critical thinking and be unprepared to find knowledge in the information age. It’s not a good recipe for a vibrant democracy. *Observer intern Emily Pyle contributed to this story.* Printed from <http://www.texasobserver.org>.

All But One Company Left Behind, by Chris Hawke, EducationNews: Six months after giving public school principals a chance to propose a new literacy program for their schools, education officials in Albany have decided to reward millions of dollars in contracts to a company with close

ties to the Bush administration. As part of his No Child Left Behind education campaign, President George W. Bush last year doled out \$328 million for states to invest in reading programs for their poorest schools. New York State put its \$82 million toward 251 schools, and told them that as long as the curriculum followed strict federal guidelines, educators in each school district could come up with a program and choose local partners best suited for their schools. Many of the schools' leaders did just that, spending hundreds of hours crafting proposals and submitting them to the state. But in July, they were told the state Department of Education had made its own decision: The grants the schools get will total half of the \$500,000 many of them had hoped for. What is left would be needed for teacher training. And a chunk of the contract—about \$10 million—will go to Voyager Expanded Learning, a Dallas-based for-profit company with connections to Bush. According to reports in the Dallas Morning News, Bush received generous donations from Voyager's founder and investors while he was governor, when the company was bidding for a contract to run after-school programs in the Texas schools. In 1998, company founder Randy Best reportedly gave Bush \$10,400, while company investors gave another \$35,000. And just this March, Bush's former Texas Education Commissioner, Jim Nelson, took a job at Voyager. And on top of that, some city educators don't like the company's services. The Education Department stands by its decision: "The feds were quite clear, they wanted a single program," agency spokesman Tom Dunn. "They wanted people to address the reading crisis with one specific set of tools."

Helping Kids Regain Wonder, Wild Quest Education Project: The best human learning is always born of interest and need. When an individual is learning about something he or she really cares about, or really needs to know, they tend to learn quickly and retain information, at least shorter term, well. A neat example of this is kids working on getting a driver's license. The same kids who tell me with very serious faces that they "cannot learn from books as that type of learning is not within their learning style", who will turn up their noses at Hemingway, Richter, and Crane, will voluntarily form study groups with friends and pore for hours over every detail of the driest literature ever written; the State Driver's Manual. These kids are not only interested in getting their licenses, they feel a need to get them as a rite of passage, to be part of their peer group, to become an adult.

What do you wonder about? On Wild Quest wilderness courses, we engage kids in the process of defining something they wonder about, and help them to focus on their own inquiry questions, even if they never

entirely find out the answer! Kids use a process somewhat similar to scientific method, but with opportunity for greater flexibility and creativity.

Being part of a small learning community that is focused on developing and exploring questions is very exciting to kids. They leave the video games behind! There is nothing in the Inquiry process that is limited by age. Younger students and adults can all practice inquiry based learning. For more information about Wild Quest courses, curriculum, and opportunities, visit us at www.wildquest.org. *Chris Balch*

From **Private Groups in Pittsburgh Halt Millions in School Aid**, by Stephanie Strom, NY Times, 07/16/02: In a stunning and rare example of philanthropy publicly flexing its muscles, three foundations have precipitated a crisis in the Pittsburgh public school system. The Heinz Endowments, the Grable Foundation and the Pittsburgh Foundation have indefinitely suspended their payments for programs in the Pittsburgh schools, citing a declining standard of fiscal management and a breakdown in governance. They are withholding more than \$3M that would have supported a literacy program, math and science curriculum revisions, after-school programs, chess clubs and other projects in the coming school year. The heads of the three foundations wrote: "The board is divided, the administration is embattled, key personnel are leaving or are under attack, and morale appears to be devastatingly low." The foundations' grants represent a tiny fraction of the Pittsburgh public schools' budget, but because federal and other sources of income often depend on the school district's ability to match them in the private sector, the impact will be much larger, said John Thompson, the district superintendent. Other smaller foundations in the Pittsburgh area, like the Hillman Foundation, have said they, too, are withholding support for the school system. While foundations often stop or suspend grants, they almost never do so publicly, and the three foundations have wrestled with their decision. But concerns grew about the school system, which serves 38,000 students and has until now largely escaped the problems suffered by most urban school districts. The foundations were concerned about the district's inability or unwillingness to provide reports about budgets, test results and other matters that would allow them to evaluate the effectiveness of their grants.

HOME EDUCATION NEWS

North Star (previously Pathfinder Center) is now located in a beautiful new space at 104 Russell Street (Route 9), Hadley, MA. After six years in our location in Amherst, the staff and Board of Directors have decided to move our office to Hadley. The combined impact of changing our name and location this summer creates a feeling of rebirth and optimism. North Star has helped hundreds of teenagers make the transition from schooling to unschooling. North Star provides services for families and activities for teens which help make teen unschooling a practical choice for any interested family. How to reach us: Mail: North Star, 104 Russell St., Hadley, MA 01035. Tel: (413) 582-0193, 582-0262. Web: www.northstarteens.org. E-mail: ken@northstarteens.org.

From **World Vision**: It was only five years ago when then President Bill Clinton used his weekly radio address to urge state governments to add community service as a condition for high school graduation. For many of the nation's teens, this "mandatory volunteering" has since extinguished the joy and satisfaction inherent in service by turning volunteer work into just another on a long list of non-negotiable duties to perform. Fortunately this is not the case for homeschooled children and teens. While their academic achievements are well documented, a less touted secret of this learning lifestyle is the large amount of time it frees up for non-academic activities. For many home-schooling youth, volunteerism ranks high on their interesting-things-to-do lists, and the world is so full of good deeds that need doing it won't be hard for your children to find those that inspire and touch their hearts forever. Web: <http://worldvision.homeschool.com>.

From **Online Lending Library Revolutionizes the Homeschool Experience**: Frustrated by the lack of pertinent homeschool-related materials at local libraries and other resource centers, a Georgetown couple recently decided to launch a major lending library specifically targeted to the needs of homeschool families. "It is often difficult to find relevant materials to either supplement or enhance homeschool curricula," says owner, JoAnn Nolte, a mother of four homeschooled children. "The other problem relates to the vast array of materials out there, but a limited ability to preview resources to make sure they are right for your unique homeschool situation."

TheHomeSchoolSource.com, an inexpensive membership-based program, offers members the ability to try various resources before making a commitment to purchase them. New titles are being added to the site regularly. Further, TheHomeSchoolSource.com offers visitors many other online resources. Discussion boards are provided for many homeschool-

related topics. Swap boards are provided for visitors to buy or sell used curriculum and other resources. Additionally, the site provides an online calendar where local and national homeschool event coordinators can post announcements about upcoming events. To contact Mrs. Nolte, call (512) 869-5856 or email info@thehomeschoolsource.com.

Bound to be Free: Home Education as a Positive Alternative to Paying the Hidden Costs of ‘Free’ Education, by Jan Fortune-Wood. Excerpts from a review by Chris Shute published in Education Now, Summer 2002: Dr. Fortune-Wood knows, and deploys with skill, quotations from many of the best-known writers on the theory of non-school education to underpin the central idea of this book – that schooling is, for most youngsters, the worst possible way to do education. Dr. Fortune-Wood asserts that by prescribing more or less everything a child will have to do from five years old to sixteen, schooling disables the vibrant mechanism for efficient, rapid and thorough learning which is the mind of a young human being. Schools cannot respond to what children’s minds do naturally when faced with new sights and sounds. To do so would mean dethroning the teacher, ditching the timetable and the curriculum, and creating a free-flowing, unpredictable, learner-managed environment in which authority no longer had any controlling role, beyond that of keeping the learners safe... It can only happen when parents take the dizzying step of taking their children out of the system. This book cuts a swath through all the settled assumptions which rule our national culture of education. The book is available from Educational Heretics Press, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham, NG9 3FQ UK.

California Dept. of Education Slams Homeschooling; “Outside the law,” by William Holzer: The California Department of Education is once again trying to stop the fastest growing educational movement in the country. According to a new letter that is circulating through California school districts, “Parents who home school their children are operating outside the law.” In a recent letter by Deputy Superintendent Joanne Mendoza, homeschooling is described as “not an authorized exemption from mandatory public school attendance.”

Homeschooling has drawn increasing attention in America with homeschoolers going 1-2-3 in recent National Spelling Bees, as well as entering prestigious colleges like Harvard and Yale. It’s widely believed that the number of homeschoolers in America is between 700,000 and 1.2 million, with many studies showing homeschoolers scoring higher than their

public school peers in academic tests. Not everyone is happy. The National Education Association (NEA) – in their 2000-2001 resolutions – states that the NEA “believes that home schooling programs cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience.”

The homeschooling community in California is prepared for action, lead by organizations such as the California Homeschool Network (CHN). Despite attempts to stop homeschooling by the school district, it’s unlikely that junior colleges will stop admitting homeschooled students. Homeschoolers are extremely good students and unlikely to dropout of classes. Colleges do not run as much risk of refunding money to students that are unlikely to quit. Web: <http://www.cpinews.net/archives/2002-q3/ca-dept-edu.slams.homeschooling/index.htm>.

Homeschoolers Fight For Diversity: The Home School Legal Defense Association was founded in 1983 by Michael Farris. It has come under fire because members of HSLDA have gained control of inclusive homeschooling support groups (groups that are open to all homeschoolers) and required members to sign fundamentalist Christian statements of faith. The HSLDA is in favor of corporal punishment and against gay rights and the UN. **The National Home Education Network** opened for membership in November 1999 and was incorporated in May 2000 partially in reaction to the HSDLA. The NHEN was formed when homeschooling families discovered their common need for a national homeschool organization free from special interests. Their mission in part states, “Because we believe there is strength in a diverse network of homeschoolers we support the freedom of all individual families to choose home education and to direct such education.” The National Home Education Network’s website is: nhen.org. Their fax # is (413) 581-1463

Distance Learning: Many homeschoolers are beginning to ask themselves, “Why go to college? It’s really just an extension of the K-12 school system” The fact is for many homeschoolers college is unnecessary. However, some employers will only hire college graduates (though most don’t ever ask to see a degree or transcript). Long distance learning makes it possible to earn a degree at your own pace right at home. It is quite common for colleges to award degrees for work done wholly over the internet or through the mail. Homeschoolers who have been hired with the help of a long distance degree find that employers are impressed with the self-motivation, responsibility and organization it takes to earn a degree by this method. Some homeschoolers complete their study for a distance learning degree in as little

as six months. They compress the typical four year program by studying full-time(college schedules are traditionally part-time), eliminating summer breaks and employing speed-reading and memory skills. These accelerated distance learning degrees are also recognized by employers. For more information on distance learning see: *Bear's Guide to Earning Degrees by Distance Learning*, John & Mariah Bear, Ten Speed Press, ISBN 1-58008-202-5 and *Accelerated Distance Learning*, Brad Voeller.

Home School Backlash by Ronald J. Pestritto: The state of California is busy attacking that great enemy of civilization: home schooling. This renewed assault on home provides an important lesson about the greed and ideology that drives the public school establishment, and especially the unions that control it. The public education establishment - dominated by teachers' unions - claims to have the best interest of schoolchildren in mind. If this is so, then its hostility to home schooling must stem from a belief that a public education is of better quality than one provided by home schooling. But even the most ardent defenders of the public school establishment find it difficult to make this argument with any seriousness.

A recent national study revealed that home-schooled children were far superior to their cohorts in academic subjects across the board. In standardized tests of reading, language, math, listening, science, social studies, and study skills, home-schoolers posted average scores ranging from the 80th percentile to the 87th percentile - in contrast to the national average represented by the 50th percentile. So if it is not about ensuring the quality of education, why does the public education establishment loathe home schooling? It boils down to dollars and ideology. The more students they lose to private education, the fewer dollars public school systems have to spend. This is why the massive deficit in California's education budget helps to explain the present assault on home schooling.

But just as much as money, it is ideology that drives the public school establishment and its masters in the teachers' unions. The liberal ideology that pervades public school education is relativistic and secular — it seeks to undermine any moral distinction that children might be inclined to make between right and wrong. By contrast, the values of the typical home-schooler are those of the traditional family, and home-schoolers consequently produce young men and women who stand as a well educated resistance to the dominant liberal ideology of those controlling the public school establishment. The establishment and its unions know this, and they want to take away your ability and right to instill in your children the moral and intellectual principles that you hold dear. Their assumption is simple: it

is the state that owns children, and the upbringing and education of children is contingent upon the state's supervision and approval. Home-schoolers represent one of the last bastions of independent thinking from this state-driven ideology, and so they can expect the assaults on them to continue and intensify. Web: www.claremont.org/writings/precepts/20020830pestritto.html.

Public Education vs. Homeschoolers, by David Limbaugh: When you read about the state of California's latest assaults against its homeschoolers, don't just dismiss it as another left-coast phenomenon that doesn't affect you. This is bigger than California and involves more than education. education. This episode is a chilling reminder of the arrogance of certain elitists who apparently believe they should be able, with the full power of the state, to impose their will on families with respect to education.

One major thing obviously driving the educrats is money. Home-school advocates say the state's education department has a \$23 billion deficit. According to CPI News, these school districts receive funds based on the number of students attending public school – roughly \$4,500 per student a year. It's pretty simple math, even for the New-New Math public educrats: the more homeschoolers, the less money for them. We should also recognize that the struggle between homeschoolers and their statist opponents is grounded as much on philosophical differences as the issue of educational quality. The establishment wants to retain control over what goes into children's heads. In far too many cases, it teaches whole-language reading instead of phonics, multiculturalism – which often means the evils of Western Civilization, political correctness, “diversity” and “tolerance,” weird math and a distorted, anti-American view of American history. Its byword should be “getting away from the basics.”

But this struggle against homeschooling isn't unique to California – it is happening to greater or lesser degrees throughout the United States and will increase in direct proportion to the inevitable success of homeschooling. And while it may not seem directly to affect those who don't have school-age children or grandchildren, it should concern every American. I'm not just talking about the broad-based detriment to our society that will result from inferior education. It's more than that.

The nature and quality of our education will have a great bearing on whether we remain free and prosperous. How can America remain free when its public education establishment is largely committed to teaching students that the very values and systems that have led to this country's unparalleled tradition of freedom and prosperity are evil, exploitive and oppressive?

No matter how much money we throw at public education, it will not improve significantly until educators get away from psychobabble and indoctrination, and return to the basics. But that will not happen so long as the establishment is allowed to retain its unaccountable monopoly.

The establishment knows this, which is why it is desperately seeking to limit competition on all fronts, including school choice and homeschooling. In the meantime, it will continue to spread disinformation about the alternatives and do everything it can to obstruct their development. Web: www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=28779.

Montessori

Changes at the American Montessori Society The American Montessori Society has created a Public Policy task force chaired by Judi Bauerlein. “We are at the investigation stages of what a larger public policy role might mean for AMS,” says Connie Murphy, AMS board president. “We are working to understand how associations go about taking public stands.” Eileen Roper Ast AMS’s newly appointed Executive Director is reaching out to other Montessori associations, “There has been too much niche marketing. I am really excited about all Montessori organizations working together. It has never been more important to join forces to keep Montessori alive, and to introduce it to a new generation of teachers, my hope is to bring Montessori to its rightful place in education in the 21st century.” Eileen Roper Ast earned a teaching credential from the Association Montessori International affiliated Washington Montessori Institute. She was previously Director of The New York Times Company Magazine Group. - *Public School Montessorian*

PUBLIC ALTERNATIVES

From **Alternative Schooling Shows Dramatic Growth**, By John Welsh, Pioneer Press: A report by the University of Minnesota’s Center for School Change concludes that growth of the alternative programs has had a positive influence on the state’s public education system. but researchers said there was a void of basic information about the programs that would allow parents to participate, as well as detailed information that would allow the programs to be better evaluated. “Families want more information about

schools,” said the center's director, Joe Nathan. The programs studied were open enrollment, post-secondary options, charter schools and the alternative high schools created for students who were not succeeding in their regular schools. Another issue is how well students are being served by the alternative programs. Researchers said they heard repeated stories of districts ‘pushing’ students into the alternative programs right before statewide testing periods in order to avoid having a struggling student’s score count against the school. “You have to be careful about anecdotes, but we need to find out what’s going on,” Nathan said. John Welsh can be reached at jwelsh@pioneerpress.com or (651) 228-5432. The report, “What Really Happened: Minnesota's Experience with Statewide Public School Choice Programs,” is available at www.centerforschoolchange.org.

Teaching Without a Degree In “The Secretary’s Annual Report on Teacher Quality” released in June, Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, came out in favor of alternative routes to certification. School systems have been experimenting with waiving the college degree requirement for some time. Studies find that teachers certified through alternative routes are less likely to move on to other jobs. Alternative certification is very attractive to minorities seeking teaching positions.

According to Rural Policy Matters (June 2002) a recent study finds that: **Vermont School Choice Experiment May Negatively Affect Rural Schools and Communities.** Seven high schools started a pilot open-enrollment program that allowed up to 10 students in each school to transfer to another high school of their choice. After four years, 60 surveys were completed which found that 76% of the students migrated from small schools to larger schools, 67% moved toward a school in the center of the region rather than laterally or out to a more distant school, and tended to choose schools in higher income areas. No gains in academics or in other areas were attributed to the program. The study concludes that such school choice programs have the potential to negatively affect the viability of many small, rural schools and communities. Web: www.ruraledu.org.

Reducing the Cost of Your Small School: “**Lowering the Overhead by Raising the Roof,**” published by the Rural School and Community Trust and written by Barbara Lawrence, provides a total of 13 strategies for reducing costs including the importance of good maintenance and siting and using renovation instead of new construction. The title of the book comes from the story of the community of Isleford, Cranberry Isle, Maine which

had a small school built in 1913 and had a problem attracting teachers because of a housing shortage. They converted the attic into an apartment and offered it at less-than-market rate. The current teacher and his family have been in residence for several years, and the comfortable apartment is a real benefit, making living on the island an attractive choice for them. “Lowering the Overhead” emphasizes understanding the resistance to small schools that many administrators and legislators may have and the importance of examining and questioning state policies. The book includes an extensive list of resources. To order the book send a check payable to “Rural School and Community Trust” to: Rural Trust, 1825 K street NW, Ste 703, Washington, DC 20006. - Rural Policy Matters

Arthur Andersen May Survive - The Learning Center, That Is, by Ianthe Jeanne Dugan, Wall Street Journal, 06/20/02: In a small annex of an old high school, next to a defunct Navy base, Arthur Andersen is struggling to thrive. No, not that Arthur Andersen. This is the Arthur Andersen Community Learning Center, which the accounting firm launched in 1996, answering former President Bush’s call for businesses to get involved in education. After six years of plotting, it unveiled a school that would lump 12- to 18-year-old ‘learners’ in one big room, writing their own rules and curriculum, with the help of ‘facilitators’ – the new term for teachers. “I felt I was the keeper of the soul of Arthur Andersen,” says Morton Egol, the retired Andersen partner who led the project to get the school off the ground. “And I felt the school of the future would do that. It was intended to portray a firm committed to the public interest.” Now, as the accounting firm rapidly dissolves, this tiny high school may well wind up being the last holder of the Arthur Andersen corporate name.

Andersen wanted to create a new academic system that would generate the self-directed employees needed by the Information Age, rather than more cogs of the Industrial Age. Some citizens were stunned when Alameda Unified School District ordered Encinal High School to move its shop classes out of a low-slung five-room building. Andersen worked on it quietly, earning its project the nickname “The Secret School.”

It trained teachers and had three Andersen employees there helping to model the place after the accounting firm’s operations. The 160 students have a workload and a deadline, but no traditional daily classes. Core subjects, such as English, math and science, are covered in seminars and projects of the students’ own design. Students can elect to do some work from home, or take electives through a local community college. At the suggestion of Andersen’s Mr. Egol, the kids wrote their own constitution

and formed a judicial committee. Students write each other up when they witness violations. The school is generating some above-average students. It proudly sent one off to Stanford this year.

Mr. Egol, who still personally donates time and money to the school, fears that ‘enemies’ could use the accounting firm’s plight against its offspring high school—though he won't say how, fearing he’ll “give them ideas.” And some parents worry that colleges will have second thoughts about accepting Arthur Andersen students. Groans one student: “Everyone's been asking us—do they teach you shredding?” Web: <http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1024528220497175320.djm,00.html>.

Life Beyond High School Diplomas As reported in The Time-Picayune, New Orleans: The Louisiana state school board has mandated programs for high school students who are unable to pass the states high stakes LEAP and graduate exit exams. Although they will not earn a regular high school diploma students in these programs can get help preparing for a GED, earn credits towards a degree from a vocational-technical college or get on-the-job training from local businesses. Participation in these programs is voluntary.

From **At 12th St. Academy, Resistance to Being Closed Down**, by Anemona Hartocollis, New York Times, 06/26/02: The 12th Street Academy is a small alternative school in the East Village with only 139 students in 7th and 8th grade. This fall it is scheduled to begin shutting down by not being allowed to accept any new students. New York State and Harold O. Levy, the city’s schools chancellor, say that the school is failing its students, and judging by the test scores, it would be hard to argue: only 3 percent of its eighth graders met state standards in English in 2001, down from 11 percent in 1999. To the partisans of the 12th Street Academy, the decision to close it raises questions about how a school should be judged – whether primarily by test scores or by more intangible factors, like the quality of relationships between teachers and students, the enthusiasm of students for learning, and how well students fare after graduating. By those measures, they say, the academy has in its six years of operation scored high.

The academy has also been caught up in a sort of class warfare that has erupted in the district. The battle pits the old-line white leftist families and working-class Hispanic families against an influx of more affluent, mainly white families. The old-timers say that while they are dismayed by the low academic achievement in their schools, they are against what they characterize as elitist solutions like programs for gifted students. A recent

state inspection faulted the academy for being undersupplied [and] frowned on the “relaxed climate” of the school.

To the school’s supporters, the state report and Mr. Levy’s reaction to it suggest a misunderstanding of the nature of small alternative schools generally, and this one in particular. The 12th Street Academy was created to be a place where students could cultivate intimate, informal relationships with their teachers, and where they would learn through exploration and their own research, rather than through convention textbooks.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Levy Shuts Failing Charter School, by Carl Campanile: Schools Chancellor Harold Levy has shut down an East Harlem charter school for disastrous performance and mismanagement – the first charter to be closed in New York state. Levy said he pulled the plug on the Reach Charter School on East 106th Street for violating most of the terms of its contract. It had 145 students in grades 2 through 8. The chancellor’s office found a litany of problems at Reach that included: Only three of 26 fourth-graders passed the state’s standardized English exam. A large portion of Reach’s budget was earmarked for rent and renovations on its century-old building, where unsafe conditions were found. Inadequate funds were set aside for textbooks and supplies. There were too many uncertified teachers who didn't receive proper training. Supervisors failed to monitor classroom instruction. “I have determined that the school failed to implement the program outlined in its application,” Levy said in a June 28 letter to Phillip Morrow, president of Reach's board of directors. “Reach has not demonstrated improved student learning. Reach’s test data indicate that it is one of the lowest performing in the city; and Reach has not provided good stewardship of its operations and finances.” Reach's executive director, Natalie Cuchel, disputed the findings as “inaccurate,” and said the biggest problem is that the charter school was underfunded by the state, getting 40 percent less per student than other public schools. Cuchel noted that 30 percent of the enrollment consisted of special education students who need extra help. She also blamed the Board of Ed for the low test scores because she had students for only one or two years. Web: www.nypost.com/news/regionalnews/51732.htm.

Freedom of Choice A poll of California registered voters commissioned this spring by the California Network of Educational Charters found that 69% of those polled thought it was very important to give parents the power to choose which public school they sent their children to. 72% believed it is very important for teachers to have more flexibility in the classroom and 58% thought that school curriculum should be determined by local school districts and communities, not the state.

Vouchers vs. Charter Schools Ember Reichgott Junge, former DFL state senator from Minnesota feels “Charter school laws stimulate real education reform. Vouchers merely fund an existing system of private and religious schools.” Vouchers really fall flat in her eyes when it comes to access...”Private schools may select their students, public charter schools must serve all students on a first-come first serve basis.”

Board Doesn't Support Charter School, by Sandra Tan, Lackawanna, PA, News, 8/30/02: Lackawanna’s new Global Concepts Charter School may have plenty of parent support, but public school officials have continued to rage against what it views as an unproven educational experiment that is undermining the school district’s financial health and the education of its children. District administrators - with the backing of the School Board - had refused to hand over the first mandated payment to the charter school. District officials incorrectly stated that the charter school did not have a certificate of occupancy and could not legally operate. But the school was issued a temporary certificate on Monday and expects to receive its permanent certificate today. School Board President John Makeyenko also shared a letter he recently sent to the State Board of Regents asking that the charter school be investigated for building code violations. The district’s actions are the latest assault on the charter school, which has been blamed for contributing to the district’s financial crisis, for forcing larger elementary class sizes, and for wreaking havoc with the district’s planning and scheduling. Charter School Principal Kathy Dimitrievski insists the school will open as planned and has all appropriate paperwork. Superintendent Paul Hashem said the district didn’t learn until Thursday that the school has a certificate of occupancy, and he instructed his staff to send over the charter school’s first of six payments. He also said the district is meeting the charter school’s transportation, special education and school lunch needs. But that doesn’t mean he's happy about it. “Everything in the law bends to the charter school, whether it’s the building, the grounds, anything in regards to safety, certification requirements,” Hashem said. He sharply criticized the state for

allowing charter schools to function without many of the restraints and restrictions imposed on regular public schools. “We've got public schools under all kinds of directions, all kinds of mandates,” he said. “We have public schools that have high-need, high-poverty students. And the state is saying, ‘We’re going to bend over backwards for the charter school but maintain all the rules and regulations for the public schools no matter what.’ That’s not fair.”

Blacks Want Charter Schools A recent poll conducted by the Black America’s Political Action Committee of 1,000 registered voters found that 63% of Blacks would like to take their children out of public schools and put them in charter or private schools. Of those polled, 46% liked the idea of charter schools operated by local residents.

After three long, hard-fought years **New West Charter School** (In California) may close before it opens. New West has been forced to overcome conditions that are unreasonable, and standards that are higher than other charter standards. People at LAUSD, at LACOE (Los Angeles County Office of Education) and at the SBE (State Board of Education) have been warning us every step of the way that we would never open. Finding a site has been one obstacle. Over the past few months, we have been negotiating and preparing several possible ‘commercial facilities’ for our school site. During this time we had been working with City officials, doing everything they told us to do with a promise from them that if we did it their way, we would complete all the red tape in time to open. It finally became apparent that permits and approvals were not going to work out in time for us to meet the State imposed deadline. The other obstacle has been that New West has to be admitted into a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). The LAUSD SELPA, the only one we are geographically eligible to join, has repeatedly blocked our admission. These two elements are serious catch 22s. They negatively impact all charter schools, and will continue to impact efforts by New West to open by September 2003. And even though we were promised help in both of these areas by the State Board of Ed and some of our local politicians, in the end, no one was there to help us when we needed it. Despite all this adversity, we are vowing to fight on and try to open the following year. New West Charter continues to be plagued by destructive forces in the press and in the political arena.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS & COMMUNICATIONS

CANADA

A new Holistic Independent School called **Spirit Sparks-Centre for Joyful Learning**'s mission is to "perpetually create a fun, loving, and holistic learning environment that honours and nurtures children's minds, bodies and spirits as they freely explore and express themselves through their unique gifts and talents." A few of the attributes of Spirit Sparks are child-centered curriculum, limited class size, focus on spirituality (non-denominational), passionate teachers, active parent involvement, and students participation in evaluation. We have published a Special Report "Dangerous Trends in

Education," which you will find at www.nurturemychild.com. You can also visit www.spiritsparks.com for more details. Marisa Ferrera, 21 Ascot Avenue, 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario. Tel: (416) 916-0057. Email: marisa@spiritsparks.com.

In Nova Scotia **The South Shore Alternate School** was started in 1995 by a group from the then Lunenburg County District School Board, under the leadership of Trudy Johnson. Start-up funds came from the financial remnants of the canceled "Stay-In-School" program. The school exists for the benefit of students in the system for whom there is no existing program. The school has sixteen seats and three full-time staff who act as teachers, administrator and counselor. The students may stay for two academic years after which they may return to a traditional high school to graduate. The applicants must be minimum sixteen-years-old, have completed grade nine, and have found some disaffection or dissonance with their previous school. Contact: 75 High Street, Bridgewater, NS B4V 1V8. Email: [email:SSAS@swrsb.ednet.ns.ca](mailto:SSAS@swrsb.ednet.ns.ca).

ISRAEL

The **Democratic School** in Modi'in is almost at the end of its 3rd year. A couple of months ago the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that at least for this year, 7th and 8th graders are part of the school. We won an important series of battles, but the war isn't over. Last month, a committee appointed by the Minister of Education to examine the whole issue of "alternative schools" handed in its report. The most important thing is that the committee did not say "no" to alternative education. However, and as one would expect, the committee set forth several criteria that alternative schools must meet, including a curriculum that the Ministry approves and the commitment to

accept children who chose to learn at a particular school, rather than selecting students. Our school can easily meet most criteria. Actually, we believe that in light of the committee's report, the Ministry has already decided to give our school formal recognition (which would be followed by budgets), and now they just need a paper saying that the school meets their criteria. Avishai Antonovsky. Email: msavish@msec.huji.ac.il.

JAPAN

Int'l School Students, Dropouts Get University Break: International school graduates as well as some 110,000 Japanese students who drop out of high school annually will soon be qualified to sit for university entrance examinations, officials said Tuesday. Previously, only high school graduates, those who finish primary and secondary education abroad, and those who pass special qualification tests were able to apply to universities. Therefore, high school dropouts and those who graduate from international schools and Korean high schools in Japan are not qualified for universities. But officials of the Education Ministry have now decided to alter the directive to the effect that anyone over 18 years old is able to enter universities when they are deemed qualified by each university's own screening. Up until now, because of the old directive, hundreds of international school graduates, some 1,000 Korean high school graduates and 110,000 Japanese high school dropouts have had to pass special qualification tests before applying to universities in Japan. The change in directive is good news especially for high school dropouts because it will drastically clear them from the burden of the special qualification tests. Private and local government-run universities have already begun admitting international school graduates, but state-run universities have required them to pass qualification tests first. (Mainichi Shimbun, July 2, 2002)
<http://mdn.mainichi.co.jp/news/20020702p2a00m0dm013000c.html>.

A record 139,000 elementary and junior **high school students were absent** from school for more than 30 days in the 2001 school year simply because they didn't want to go, officials said Friday. The number of truant students who refuse to go to school has increased annually for the last 10 years since the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology began polling them in fiscal 1991. Reflecting how seriously the results of the 2001 survey are being taken, the ministry will form a council of experts to discuss measures to prompt students to attend classes. The number of students absent for more than 30 days in 2001 was 3.3 percent up from the previous year, the officials said. The ministry poll found that 27,000 elementary

school students refused to attend classes for more than 30 days in fiscal 2001, as did 112,000 junior high school students. When surveying motives for truancy, problems such as trouble joining group activities and apathy toward study topped the list among elementary school children. But for junior high school students, bullying and poor scholastic performance topped the list of truancy motives. (Mainichi Shimbun, Aug. 9, 2002) <http://mdn.mainichi.co.jp/news/20020809p2a00m0fp029000c.html>.

ROMANIA

In July 2001 an order of the **Ministry of Education prohibited a large number of textbooks** which had already been authorized by the special commission having this legal attribution. This decision aroused severe criticism in public opinion and protests on the part of the editors exposed to huge financial losses and worried about the perspectives of their trade. Outraged protests came also from schoolteachers who considered the decision of the Ministry an abuse against the right to choose the best fitting textbook within the existing certified offer. In spite of all this, the Ministry refused to revise its decision. In January 2002 the Ministry officially announced the new procedure of authorizing textbooks, which was even worse than the arbitrary restrictions previously imposed on the system. As the new procedure was put into practice, the results confirmed even the worst expectations. The next session of authorizing textbooks submitted new incongruous results. For example, for Chemistry, only one textbook was authorized according to the procedure established by the Ministry, which means a restoration of the unique textbook system practiced during the communist regime. The authorized textbook belonged to one of the privileged publishing houses. A law is being prepared in order to transfer the whole textbook production for public education to a single publishing house. Only substantial international support may stop the present Ministry and the Government from turning the whole textbook production in Romania into a monopoly of the present political power and its clients, regardless of the disastrous consequences this enterprise will have for the educational system. *Claudiu Istrate.*

An internationally-funded court challenge is facing the Scottish Executive if it goes ahead with contentious **new controls for parents who have their children educated at home**. The action by parents will be raised on human rights grounds unless proposed new draft guidelines governing how they teach their children are scrapped. The parents are upset at a proposal that councils use census information, birth registers, health visitor records, and

nursery enrolments to track down children not attending schools and 'hound' families. There are believed to be up to 5000 school-age children out with Scotland's state education system, which has a pupil roll of around 745,000. Scotland's leading home education pressure group, the Schoolhouse Home Education Association, claims some parents are prepared to go to prison over the issue. Two independent lawyers have already advised Scottish home educators that the document is flawed and would be open to legal challenge under human rights legislation which protects minority groups from discrimination. The executive, which said it had to provide all children with adequate protection in terms of their educational welfare, claimed the draft guidance did not in any way pose a threat to home education. A spokesperson maintained it was intended to improve relations between home educating families and councils by providing clear advice on acceptable practice and by promoting a consistent approach across Scotland. Web: theherald.co.uk.

SOUTH AFRICA

Blue Crane Learning Centre will be located on 12 acres on the Indian Ocean in South East Africa. We have 6 pupils already and are looking for 20 for the first year, rising to no more than 40 in following years. The learning institute is just 1/5th of the whole project. There is going to be a holistic medical centre, a riding school with large provision for disabled people, a permaculture farm and a housing development that with use ecological building practice and materials. I think it's going to be a really exciting place to be as a teenager wanting a 'higher' non-coercive education! I am looking for 20 or so teenagers, 16 yrs and over, who would like to be at the Blue Crane for at least the next 4 years of their lives. I think in that time the institute will have created them lifelong work as well as lifelong learning. Malc Dow. Email: malcdow@0800dial.com. Web: www.bluecrane.docspages.com.

THAILAND

November 2002 - February 2003: **Natural Building in Thailand**. You are welcome to join in any or all of the earthen building projects that are happening in Thailand this winter, whether you are an experienced builder or not. Starting this November, hundreds of people will be coming together from different parts of the world to work with a widespread people's movement of villagers, grassroots activists, students and others. Since last winter's collaboration between Kleiwerks Natural Building (USA), Spirit in Education Movement and Wongsanit Ashram (Thailand), earthen building in

Thailand has spread like wildfire. This year there are a number of exciting projects in the works, including the building of a whole village. The materials and techniques we will be working with throughout include adobe, cob, earthen plasters and paints, bamboo, thatch, stone and other readily available natural materials. There will be 3 Interfaith Solidarity Forest Walks, organized by the Hilltribe People of Northern Thailand and Spirit in Education Movement. There's also opportunity to participate in classes and make side trips, visiting different parts of Thailand, including national parks, meditation retreat centers, Thai massage and Thai cooking schools, islands, cities and village communities. For more information, contact Kleiwerks Natural Building, c/o Janell Kapoor, 80 1/2 Cumberland Ave, Asheville, NC 28801. Email: janell@kleiwerks.com. Web: www.kleiwerks.com.

UKRAINE

I got a phone call from Oleg Belin of the **Stork Family School** in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. He told me that they have won the international contest to be the host school of the next UNESCO schools conference. It will be in January 2003, from the 10th to the 13th. UNESCO will cover expenses for the school. Each UNESCO school will send one teacher and one student. More information to follow. *Jerry*.

UNITED KINGDOM

Summerhill School was this summer awaiting feedback from its first inspection since winning a bitter legal battle for survival. Inspectors, who visited the school in June, were forced to fit in with the independent school's controversial, radical ethos. The school, where lessons are famously not compulsory, has become the first in the country where inspectors are legally required to listen to pupils' views following an agreement with the Department for Education and Skills. Under the agreement, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) team also had to be accompanied by an education expert of the school's choice. Although the deal applies only to Summerhill, OFSTED is also planning to give pupils in mainstream state schools a greater say in inspections by including questionnaires for children. In March 2000 Summerhill extracted a legally binding agreement from the DFES: any future inspection had to take into account the aims of Summerhill and 'the pupils' voice should be fully represented in any evaluation of the quality of education". *See the article about Summerhill's inspectors by John Potter, in this issue.*

At a meeting of the Summerhill community, Michael Newman, who is on the Executive Committee of the **Children's Rights Alliance of England** (CRAE) and the External Affairs Officer to Summerhill, proposed that the school join CRAE. Michael explained to the meeting that CRAE is the largest and most important organisation fighting for children's rights in England. By joining CRAE the school will be supporting this fight, and it will allow students to get involved more directly with the organisation and its projects. To see what is happening in children's rights in England, see the CRAE website: <http://www.crights.org.uk/>.

From the **Federation of Small Businesses** magazine, re survey 'lifting the barriers to growth' - the 'largest survey of its kind, with over 1900 responses from Scottish Businesses and over 18,500 responses UK-wide': Scottish business owners were more satisfied with the attitude, literacy, numeracy and availability of the workforce than anywhere else in the UK. Key employment attribute were identified as attitude and Character (79%) followed by experience (64%) and industry qualifications (41%). University qualifications were thought to be important by only 9%. The survey shows a direct positive relationship between business uptake of training and firm performance. Web: www.fsb.org.uk.

Notschool.net is a research project run by Ultralab at Anglia Polytechnic University which looks at ways of re-engaging young people in education when all else has failed. Young people learn at their own pace at a time that suits them. They become part of an online learning community which is supportive and has an ethos of self respect and value. There is no criticism or blame. It started as a project of the last resort, but because of its enormous success, it is now regarded as one of a range of alternatives which local education authorities may choose to offer to young people. Jean Johnson, Director, www.Notschool.net.

In its Summer 2002 issue, **Human Scale Education News** reports that "One size does not fit all – it's official!". Estelle Morris, Secretary of State for Education, announced that the 'one size fits all' comprehensive is to go. It is to be replaced by a complex hierarchy of schools. However different these schools might be they will all suffer from the same pressures of size – they are too big. Ted Sizer of the Coalition of Essential Schools in the USA states that one of the founding principles of the Coalition is that no teacher should teach more than 80 students in the course of a week. This is possible. HSE's proposal for a Model Human Scale Comprehensive School argues for

fewer teachers teaching fewer children based on a restructuring of the school into small units and a reintegrating of the curriculum. This has met with considerable interest from some Education Authorities and individual headteachers. The government is actively encouraging different approaches, It has a new Innovation Unit committed to new ideas from below. It is in such grassroots initiatives that innovation and diversity can flourish and we could even see a return to progressive or alternative models of education.
Mary Tasker. Web: www.hse.org.uk.

Professor **Tim Brighouse** was quoted in the Home Educators Liberation Paper, April 2002, and in Education Now no. 36 as saying: “Our national curriculum of 1988, even as it has been modified, is more nationally prescriptive than any other state and more so than the Stalinist regimes of the USSR.”

TEACHERS JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS

Michael Reber, Assistant Professor of English at Kanazawa Institute of Technology in Japan and a doctoral student at The International University Asia-Pacific Centers who has studied under the Tsunesaburo Makiguchi scholar Dayle M. Bethel, will graduate with his doctorate in Education and Institutional Transformation this fall. He is looking for an opportunity to serve as an Assistant Principal/Teacher at an alternative school. His CV and current research interests can be viewed at <http://www2.kanazawa-it.ac.jp/englishd/reber/index.htm>. He can be contacted at Kanazawa Institute of Technology, 7-1 Ohgigaoka, Nonoichi-machi, Ishikawa-ken 921-850, JAPAN, Ph: 81-762-48-9754 or Fax: 81-762-94-6701 or e-mail: reber@neptune.kanazawa-it.ac.jp.

Rachel Kacprzyk Guidance Counselor with Massachusetts certification, 28 years old, M.Ed. plus 3 additional credits. Seeking high school, middle school, or college admissions position in Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, or Midwestern US. College/career counseling, creative problem solving, motivation, college applications, alternatives to college, basic SAT tutoring, teaching entrepreneurship, dormitory supervision. Strength/experience working with and advocating for urban students and other underserved populations. Also have experience working in a college student

affairs office. Please email rachelmichellek@yahoo.com to see my complete résumé.

The Little School, a child-centered school located in Bellevue, WA, built on the concept of emergent curriculum, is in need of several Teaching Assistants to work 3 hours per day beginning in September. Hourly rate is \$10.75. Knowledge of child development, anti-bias and child-sensitive approach helpful. E-mail letter of interest, resume and 3 references to: margaretf@thelittleschool.org. Web: www.thelittleschool.org.

Rachel Kacprzyk Guidance Counselor with Massachusetts certification, 28 years old, M.Ed. plus 3 additional credits. Seeking high school, middle school, or college admissions position in Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, or Midwestern US. College/career counseling, creative problem solving, motivation, college applications, alternatives to college, basic SAT tutoring, teaching entrepreneurship, dormitory supervision. Strength/experience working with and advocating for urban students and other underserved populations. Also have experience working in a college student affairs office. Please email rachelmichellek@yahoo.com to see my complete résumé.

I'm looking for a suitable position in an educational institute with a non-coercive, informal, need-based and holistic outlook to education. I have completed schooling and am undergoing a degree program in an Indian distance education University. I have been working for a school for the past 2 years engaging a range of students from 4-18 years of age. In the school I guide students in English, fundamental Science and Computers. I speak and write English fairly well and speak two other Indian languages fluently (Hindi and Tamil). I have a deep interest in environmental studies and also have some knowledge of organic farming and appropriate technology. I have skills in administration, management and marketing as well. I am fluent with the use of computers and can drive two-wheelers and four-wheelers. Please send your enquiries to r_arunning@yahoo.com or to **R. Arun Kumar**, P.O. Box, 57, Kodaikanal-624 101, India.

A Teacher/Counselor is needed for **The Community School's** alternative residential high school program. Includes overnight. Send resume to dora@cschool.acadia.net, or P.O.Box 555, Camden, ME 04843. Our website is www.thecommunityschool.com.

Little River Community School in New York is seeking an intern teacher for the 2002/2003 school year. Little River is an alternative school with 15 students ages 5-18. The intern will have full teaching responsibilities in exchange for training, room, board and stipend. Contact Steve Molnar at molteng@northnet.org or (315) 379-9474

Bright Futures International Charter School has part-time openings in our elementary school located in North Palm Beach, FL, including: P.E. and Aftercare. Please fax resume and cover letter to 561-776-0975.

Business Manager Needed The Pine Hill Waldorf School in Wilton, NH is looking for a full-time Business Manager. We serve children Nursery through Grade 8. The ideal candidate for this position will have excellent verbal, written and computer skills and be able to work with families concerning all school financial matters. The Business Manager plans, organizes, coordinates and performs activities of the business office, with the assistance of a part-time bookkeeper. Additionally, the Business Manager needs to be able to:-work effectively with Board members, parents & colleagues-plan, prepare, present and maintain school operating budget-produce analytical reports and financial communications-manage multiple funds-prepare for year-end review/audit-utilize Blackbaud Accounting, Excel, Word and other computer applications. Benefits include:-90% tuition remission for children in grades nursery through 12th -50% of health insurance -retirement plan,-creative work environment in a 30 year-old Waldorf school. We are on the web at <http://www.pinehill.org> Please apply in writing to David Barham, Staffing Committee Chair, Pine Hill Waldorf School, PO Box 668, Wilton, NH 03086

Centennial High School in Ft. Collins, CO has an opening for a principal. Centennial is a well established and community supported public alternative high school with a staff of 25 faculty and support personnel. We seek new leadership toward becoming an "authentic" alternative. Please call Poudre School District for Application packet at (970) 482-7420.

Carbondale New School in Carbondale, Illinois provides quality education for children from Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade in a safe and nurturing environment. Our teachers teach through pre-selected themes in multi-age classrooms. If interested, please check with Linda Rohling for possible openings. (618) 457-4765

UCP Child Development Centers, an innovative school in Orlando, FL, children birth to five, with disabilities seeks teachers/assistants (ESE, Early Childhood) and EI Center director. FT Benefits: insurance, sick/personal, continuing ed, discounted childcare, and vacation varies. Fax: 407-852 3301 - EEO/DFWP

Liberty School is looking for a person or couple to be faculty of our 13th year program—**The Liberty School of Homesteading and Community**. We will begin next June. We have a beautiful 22-acre farm on Cape Rosier, Maine, and need someone with gardening and construction experience. The school will provide room and board plus medical insurance and a living expense but not a conventional salary. We need someone who can start in the near future and help get the farm ready to accommodate 8 to 10 students. If you are interested or know a person or couple who might be perfect, contact me. Arnold Greenberg. Web: <http://www.liberty-school.org/>. P.O. Box 857, South Street, Blue Hill, ME 04614. Tel: (207)-374-2886. Fax: (207)-374-5918.

The **New Bedford Global Learning Charter School** is looking for a Principal to start immediately. It will start as a grades 6-8 school with 250 students and grow into a 6-12 school. It is a Horace Mann Charter School which means that it is being established with the approval of the New Bedford school system but will be free of most system and teacher association rules. The school is dedicated to being a school that personalizes learning for its students and will do this in innovative ways, especially involving students in much learning in the community. Contact Liz Little, Global Learning Group, Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02458.

Golden Independent School is a private progressive elementary school opening Fall 2003 in Golden, Colorado. Inspired by the works of Dewey and Piaget and modeled on successful progressive schools across the nation, we will provide a child-centered, teacher-guided, parent-involved experiential learning environment with a well-balanced, integrated curriculum. We are seeking 4 full-time lead teachers and 3 part-time assistant teachers to staff our mixed-age classes. We are also seeking a Music and Productions teacher. The key to our success will be finding committed, creative teachers who have significant experience in a progressive school environment, especially for our upper grades. Teachers who wish to join the volunteer Founders' group during the 2002-03 school year to participate in creating the

school would be most appreciated. Some paid consulting work (curriculum design and professional development) will be available. Please contact Founding Director Dr. Erika Sueker at (303) 279-3708 or email Erika@goldenindependent.org.

CONFERENCES

October 9-13: **14th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference**, San Diego, CA, Contact: Education Alliance, 831-425-0299

October 11-13: EnCompass and Global Integral Research will present **Growing Healthy Selves, Families & Communities**, a dynamic experiential conference that will explore the synergistic interplay of consciousness, ecology and education in Nevada City, CA. This unique conference is for anyone interested in how our consciousness reflects and influences our ecological, social and personal worlds. Registration is limited. Housing is available. For more information and to register, visit www.EnCompass-NLR.org/conf/ghsfc or call Mary Whittlesey at (800) 200-1107 ext. 228. For more information about Global Integral Research, visit www.gircorp.org/. EnCompass, 11011 Tyler Foote Rd., Nevada City, CA 95959 USA Tel: (530) 292-1000. Fax: (530) 292-1209.

October 11-13: **American Montessori Society Fall Regional Seminar**, Theme: "Every Child a Masterpiece", St. Louis, MO, Contact: Susie Shelton-Dodge/Anastasia Newell, 636-458-4540

October 12: **A Changing Landscape: Educating Our Children in Public School, in Private Schools, or at Home**, Russell Sage College, Albany, NY. A forum for parents to gain information and be inspired by workshops and panels. Sponsored by the Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education, PO Box 59, East Chatham, NY 12060-0059. Tel: (518) 392-6900. Web: www.croton.com/allpie/.

October 18-19: **Teach our Children Well – Democracy's Promise**, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. Keynote speaker will be Susan Ohanian, author of *One Size Fits Few*, *Caught in the Middle*, *What Happened to Recess*, and *Why are Our Children Struggling in Schools?* Tel: (740) 593-4531. Email:

democracy@ohiou.edu. Institute for Democracy in Education, McCracken Hall, College of Education, Ohio Univ., Athens OH 45701.

November 3-5: **International Montessori Council and Annual Assembly**, Montessori Academy for Peace, Clearwater Beach, FL

November 8-10: **International Association of Montessori Educators**, Las Vegas, NV

May 14-16, 2003: **1st International Scientific Conference: Mind and Heart in Holistic Education**, Association "Education for the Future", Institute of Philosophy at the University of Gdansk and SEAL (GB), University of Gdansk, Poland. Call for presenters/speakers; anyone interested please contact Organizing Committee, Association "Education for the Future," 03-548 Warsaw, P.O. Box. 62, Poland. Email: syneredu@free.ngo.pl or ewa.bialek@it.com.pl.

The Education Revolution

Aerogramme

John Holt and the New World Order
A Selection from Ron Miller's New Book

Small is Beautiful
American alternatives as seen from abroad

Summerhill School and the Inspectors
Correspondence with the British Government

John Holt and the New World Order By Ron Miller

This article comes to us from: Free Schools, Free People, Education and Democracy After the 1960s by Ron Miller, published by SUNY (State University of New York Press), 2002

“Anyone who works for a just, peaceful, humane and decent world for all people, a world without needless suffering, exploitation, degradation, or cruelty, is my ally.” *John Holt*¹

John Holt was one of the key figures in the free school movement. His writings suggested to thousands of readers that American education was seriously flawed, and his efforts gave many groups the inspiration or contacts they needed to launch or sustain alternative schools. Moreover, Holt was a sensitive, inquisitive observer and social critic whose journey from fifth grade teacher to free school activist to homeschooling advocate reveals a great deal about the whirlwind course of events during the 1960s and early 1970s. Holt was an accurate barometer, as well as shaper, of the rapidly evolving radical educational ideology of the time. In addition, Holt provided a coherent analysis of schools, teaching and learning that is at least as relevant to the problems of the present time as the work of many other, more widely recognized theorists. Holt’s work deserves a closer look because it has been almost completely ignored by mainstream educational scholarship. If it is useful to reappraise, after twenty years of neglect, the cultural critique raised by the free school movement, then it is useful as well to consider Holt’s important contribution to that critique.²

Biographical sketch

Born in 1923, John Holt was educated at Exeter Academy and an Ivy League university which, throughout his public career, he refused to name. He later reflected that this elite education had deprived him of the opportunity to learn practical skills. Holt was a generation older than the

student dissidents of the 1960s, and his response to the events of that decade was moderated by experience and maturity. In temperament and lifestyle he has been described by associates as being “conservative.” Nevertheless, he had developed an unusually acute social conscience during the years of cold war culture, and “he was sometimes more profoundly radical than somebody who had the trappings of the sixties’ culture.”³ He had served as a submarine officer during World War Two, but was horrified by the introduction of the atomic bomb. In a letter written shortly after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 22-year-old Holt demonstrated the humanitarian concern that would later characterize his educational thought. “We have been threatened a long time that the day would come when man would have to change his ways or be eliminated from this planet. The day is here and he has not started to change yet.”⁴

Holt attempted to facilitate this change by joining the World Federalists (an organization promoting the notably unAmerican notion of world government) in 1946, and working as an organizer and lecturer for this group until 1952. He then turned to education, becoming a teacher at a private progressive school in Colorado between 1953 and 1957, and at similar schools in the Boston area between 1957 and 1967. Significantly, he claimed that “Schools were always a means to an end for me. I had to work in schools in order to answer my questions on learning and children’s intelligence. But I never identified myself as a *schoolteacher*.” Although Holt had not received training in education (or, perhaps, because of this fact), he proved to be an uncommonly gifted observer of children’s diverse styles of learning and development. Working with a colleague, Bill Hull, Holt began documenting his observations and came to the conclusion that routine school procedures primarily worked against, rather than with, children’s natural ways of learning. He realized early on that his perspective challenged conventional wisdom. In 1963 he wrote that “The questions that concern me, in the words of a member of the Harvard School of Education, [are] ‘not respectable.’ Neither are my views on intelligence, or the enormous intellectual potential of all children, or almost anything that I know of.” According to Susannah Sheffer, Holt was fired from one of the progressive schools where he taught for suggesting innovations that were simply too radical. In 1964, Holt published his emerging critique in *How Children Fail*, and very soon found himself “catapulted into public life.” According to one friend, “Mounds of mail flooded in. Papers were in piles all over his apartment floor. . . . People hungered to talk to him, ask him questions, tell him how they felt about themselves and their kids. He traveled thousands of miles in those days. . . and he made hundreds of good friends.”⁵

Because he was “one of the first to see through educational jargon and theory and to write about what life in school was really like for children and teachers,” Holt received letters from parents discouraged or even distraught about their children’s experiences in school throughout his career.⁶ In addition, he tapped into an emerging undercurrent of discontent with

American education. Although his critique did not acknowledge the sociological analysis of Paul Goodman or C. Wright Mills, or the political critique of the Port Huron Statement, Holt's book appeared during a pregnant moment in the rise of cultural dissent in the 1960s. 1964 witnessed Freedom Summer and the Free Speech Movement, and the cause of civil rights had moved to the forefront of the national agenda. With a rising awareness of the possibilities of "freedom," the time was ripe to revisit educational questions that had been raised by progressive educators earlier in the century but suppressed by cold war ideology in the 1950s. Holt did not refer to the progressive education tradition; his observations were based entirely on his personal experiences in teaching. Nevertheless, Holt's objections to conventional education echoed those of Francis Parker and John Dewey seventy years earlier. Like them, he was interested in learning as an organic process, and came to see that schooling failed to recognize or nourish this process.

At first Holt did not speak to radical dissidents, but to liberal parents and idealistic teachers. In 1965 he published articles in mainstream publications such as *Life*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Redbook*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *New York Times* magazine, and *PTA Magazine*. Over the next few years he spoke to hundreds of groups and gatherings, published more articles and books, and found himself involved in a grassroots movement that sought to rebuild American education on entirely new premises. Because of his extensive traveling and correspondence, as well as his bold critique of conventional educational practices, Holt became the key link in the emerging network of free schools. During the height of political and cultural struggle in the U.S., between about 1968 and 1972, Holt became more explicit about the political dimension of his educational critique. According to Sheffer, "The more that America and society in general seemed to be going in wrong directions in so many ways, the more it began to seem absurd to him to worry only about classrooms." A pacifist since the end of World War Two, Holt was deeply troubled by the war in Vietnam, which he called "obscene," and like thousands of young people, he was radicalized by the American government's foray into imperialism. For several years he refused to pay taxes, and he actively supported draft resisters. (Bill Ayers recalls that Holt even helped him when he was a fugitive with the Weather Underground.) Yet his focus remained on education. He wrote at one point that he felt "the work I do in education is more valuable, even in terms of ending war, than any witness I might make in going to jail." By the early 1970s this work involved questioning the institution of schooling as such, and until his death in 1985 Holt was primarily concerned with supporting families who attempted to educate their children outside of school altogether. Indeed, the moral vision and tireless effort that had placed Holt at center of the free school movement now made him a national spokesman and catalyst for the rise of the homeschooling movement. He continued to travel, speaking to groups of parents and educators. He continued to reach a wide audience, appearing as well on

television talk shows. His newsletter *Growing Without Schooling*, and his organization Holt Associates, provided encouragement and resources to thousands of “unschooling” families and have continued to do so in the years since his death.⁷

Holt was not a scholar or theorist, but a moralist and reformer. His views arose primarily in response to his own experiences rather than to intellectual influences. Although he was an avid reader and wrote numerous book reviews, he rarely credited other authors with shaping his ideas. He did, in fact, acknowledge that J. H. van den Berg's *The Changing Nature of Man*, a critique of scientism, had “stimulated and advanced my thinking,” which I take as evidence that he *would* have given credit to others had they similarly influenced him. Holt occasionally quoted authorities when they supported his thinking, but he rarely cited them as sources for it. Remarkably, he told one reviewer in 1969 that he had not even read John Dewey. It is safe to say, then, that Holt’s view of education did not spring from a philosophical analysis of pedagogical ideas but directly from his experience and deeply felt response to the moral and cultural challenges of his time. In the published collection of his letters Holt frequently revealed profound distress over the failure of modern society to uphold what he felt were decent and humane values; on more than one occasion, according to the biographical narrative in this book, Holt openly broke into sobs when he reflected on modern culture’s inhumanity and wasteful destruction of the beauty of the natural world. In various passages of his writing he qualified his predictions or hopes for the future by saying “if civilization survives” or “if we have a future.” He keenly felt the possibility that humanity in the twentieth century was on the verge of terrible catastrophe, and his educational critique must be appreciated in this context. Holt exemplified what David Purpel has called the educator's responsibility to be a “prophetic voice” in a suffering world.⁸

A moral response to a technocratic culture

John Holt was an inquisitive and open minded observer of American society. He did not adopt a theoretical position and attempt to develop or defend it, but spoke out for human dignity and freedom wherever he saw these threatened by social and political forces. He was not an ideologue and endorsed no “-ism” - indeed, very much like Dewey he explicitly warned against the quest for ideological purity and “over-abstractness,” as he put it. “Life, people, change, even Richard Nixon, are more complicated than the labels we stick on them.” Further, he wrote, “the worst thing that can happen to any great pioneer of human thought is for his ideas to fall into the hands of disciples and worshippers, who take the living, restless, ever-changing thought of their master and try to carve it into imperishable granite. . . The words may remain, but the spirit is soon lost.”⁹ These comments convey the

very essence of Holt's moral vision. Similar to Paul Goodman, Norman O. Brown and other intellectual parents of the counterculture, Holt advocated an *organic* worldview - an appreciation for the living, dynamic, evolving, interacting and responsive nature of reality. He valued spontaneity, complexity, process, and connectedness, and saw that "over-abstractness" was the epistemological core of a technocratic culture. Holt's moral vision celebrated life. It is no accident that his educational philosophy celebrated, not the abstract curriculum or the routines of schooling, but the living child.

Holt's own intellectual development was "living, restless, ever-changing." Peter Marin wrote that "what always impresses me about John Holt is how he himself learns. He is less interested in his own positions than in coming to terms with the best of what is being said and thought about schooling - and his real passion is for passing those ideas along to others, in putting them to work."¹⁰ Still, Holt did hold several fundamental principles such as the dignity and value of human existence and faith in the human capacity to learn. He was passionately concerned with freedom and believed that it was being seriously eroded by the impersonality of large organizations and the forms of surveillance and control practiced in social institutions, particularly schools. Of course, Holt's ideas did have ideological implications, but it is a mistake to classify Holt's thought according to any fixed philosophical position (such as "libertarian" or "individualist") for this will not capture the moral sensibility of Holt's response to the cultural crisis of the 1960s. Free school ideology raised complex questions about the relationship between education and democracy, and it is too simplistic to count defenders of public schools progressive democrats and label "deschoolers" like Holt conservatives or classical liberals.

Throughout Holt's career one can see a driving concern for the need of each person to find a meaningful, fulfilling sense of identity in a mass society that makes this difficult. That is, Holt was primarily concerned with what I have been calling "authenticity." Unlike the student intellectuals in the New Left, Holt did not seem to be influenced by existentialism or the literature of social critique that began to develop in the late 1950s--at least, he never acknowledged such influence. Nevertheless, he seemed attuned to the post-war technological and economic transformation that had led Friedenberg and Goodman, among others, to observe that young people were losing opportunities to establish their place in the world through meaningful work. In a 1961 letter (a year after the publication of *Growing Up Absurd*), he pointed out that automation was producing unemployment, and claimed it was unjust that a wealthy society could not offer decent work to people. "I am more often than not gloomy about the state of our country," he wrote. "There is something dinosaurish about a society that cannot adapt, or that can only adapt slowly and ponderously, to new conditions."¹¹

This letter reveals not only the focus of Holt's critique, but also the fact that his mood was so contrary to the optimism of the Kennedy era. Holt was already disillusioned with American institutions and was supportive of

grassroots efforts to change them. He wrote that the “American disease, a belief in unlimited progress, unlimited growth, unlimited greed... has largely corrupted whatever good there may have been in this society”; indeed, he argued that the modern economy “has lost all touch with reality, with human nature and human needs” and criticized the national obsession with economic growth because it “dehumanizes and trivializes people” and contributes to environmental degradation. He was, in fact, concerned with conservation and sustainability well before the environmental movement was popular. Beyond this, he was passionately opposed to racism and segregation and outraged by what he saw as a gross imbalance between the wealthy and the poor. He supported union efforts and legislation to improve working conditions, and social change movements such as women’s liberation. He worked actively in the 1972 presidential campaign of George McGovern and he wrote that “the rebellion of the young is one of the most hopeful and constructive phenomena of our times.” In a remarkable essay in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1970 that stirred up an angry response from readers, Holt described how campus protests at Berkeley were subjected to repeated police violence, even though they were raising concerns that were, to him, perfectly legitimate. “To our students and young, who cannot tolerate our society as it is, we only offer more and more of what they can’t stand. Bigger, noisier, dirtier cities, more war, more exploitation, more corruption, more cruelty, more ugliness, more depersonalization, and at the end of it, the virtual certainty that if the world is not destroyed by war it will be made uninhabitable by the waste products of an ever larger gross national product.” Above all, because he valued life so passionately, he was a pacifist. “Since 1946, when I left the submarine service of the U.S. Navy, I have been involved or concerned, in one way or another, with the movement to bring nuclear weapons under control and to establish world peace - certainly the most urgent issue of our time.” To label Holt as an ideological conservative simply because he is associated with the homeschooling movement is clearly a misreading of his life’s work!¹²

Like Paul Goodman and the New Left, Holt sought a thorough renewal of culture that would be as concerned with personal wholeness and authenticity as with social justice. Like them, Holt understood that technocracy was the cultural/epistemological source of the most serious social and cultural problems. “All of these [modern] societies are basically alike,” he declared. “They all want the same things, they all worship the same gods: science, bigness, efficiency, growth, progress. . . I think that any society which is based on the notion of progress, growth, change, development, newer, bigger, higher, faster, better is almost inevitably going to move toward Fascism because, in a nutshell, it arouses so many more hopes than it satisfies.” Holt went on to describe a book he was considering writing (though he never completed it) on “Progress: The Road to Fascism.” He said that he would be writing “about a society of much smaller scale institutions, smaller scale tools with very drastic limits on the uses of energy and growth. Now, I’m not at all optimistic about the possibility of developing such a

society, but the only kinds of social change that seem fundamentally important to me seem to be in those directions.”¹³

In response to the growth of a bureaucratically managed mass society, Holt did not so much seek to reform social institutions as to circumvent and thus deflate them. Very much in the tradition of Thoreau, he argued that “one can do a great deal to change a bad social system or arrangement by refusing to take part in it.” He saw himself as a “de-centralist” who “leaned in the direction of anarchism,” but he did not follow a prescribed ideological position. He insisted that conventional political agendas were “mostly irrelevant” to the cultural crisis of his time.¹⁴ Holt was one of the earliest of the de-centralist critics of technocracy whose ideas have come to be associated with movements such as “social ecology” and “constructive postmodernism.” In addition to Goodman and Roszak, these critics include such diverse thinkers as E.F. Schumacher, Murray Bookchin, John Cobb, Herman Daly, Jeremy Rifkin, Charlene Spretnak, Wendell Berry, and others. Of course there are numerous differences in the ideas of these writers, but they all agree in opposing centralized political and economic power that rests on scientific-technological management of natural and human resources. As a pioneer in this genre, Holt may appear to be unconnected to the literature that has appeared during the past twenty years, yet in retrospect it is evident that his response to technocracy was very closely aligned to the ideas of such thinkers, for they too have envisioned “a society of much smaller scale institutions, smaller scale tools with very drastic limits on the uses of energy and growth.”

Of course, Holt was primarily concerned about human growth and learning, a focus that distinguished his writings from most of these other social critics, but more than many learning theorists, he examined the cultural context of human development. Holt was an important educational thinker, in part, because he explored the relationship between social institutions and personal development. “Perhaps my deepest interest could be described as ‘How can we adults work to create a more decent, humane, conserving, peaceful, just, etc. community, nation, world, and how can we make it possible for children to join us in this work...?’ Except insofar as we find answers to *those* questions, there is very little we can do under the name of ‘education’ to help young people grow up into whole, intelligent, sensitive, resourceful, competent, etc. human beings.”¹⁵ Throughout his work, as in this passage, Holt emphasized the *connection* between the social and the individual, between the political and the existential. Human beings could not grow whole in a fragmented or violent culture, but at the same time a decent culture would only emerge when people personally experienced meaning and fulfillment.

What distinguished Holt’s position from a more social democratic (what we would today call “progressive”) critique was his insistence that reform of social institutions alone was not sufficient for cultural renewal. The source of violence, hatred, and exploitation, he argued, is not in institutions as such but in the psychological reality people experience as they live in society. As

Michael Lerner (a Berkeley activist in the 1960s) has argued more recently, the conventional Left's focus on legislative and institutional reform has neglected the existential dimension of *meaning*, leaving people desperate for experiences of belonging, community, and moral commitment, which the political Right has gladly provided. Lerner maintains that "the quest for meaning is the central hunger in advanced industrial societies," and by "meaning" he specifically means a satisfying connection between the individual and the larger world, a sense of worthwhile purpose. The need for meaning, for connection to something larger than oneself, "plays the central role in shaping human reality," and much of the "violence, destructiveness, and other irrational behavior" of modern life "is produced by the frustration of a deep yearning for connection with others, a pessimism about one's ability to ever get one's needs met, and a deep shame about one's own imagined failures."¹⁶

Holt's social vision represented, in Lerner's terms, a "politics of meaning," one that directly addressed this existential dimension. Holt insisted that social problems and violent conflict were closely associated with personal feelings of inadequacy, alienation, and resentment. In one particularly explicit passage he claimed that "efforts for peace are doomed to fail unless we understand that the root causes of war are not economic conflicts or language barriers or cultural differences but men - the kind of men who must have and will find scapegoats, legitimate targets for the disappointment, envy, fear, rage, and hatred that accumulates in their daily lives. ...The fundamental educational problem of our time is to find ways to help children grow into adults who have no wish to do harm." He similarly argued that "whatever makes men feel less free, even if it does not take away any particular right or liberty, lessens and threatens the freedom of all of us." Many people mistrusted freedom, he said, and opposed both antiwar protesters and free schools, not simply for rational ideological reasons, but because they themselves did not feel free and resented others exhibiting such autonomous and spontaneous behavior. He suggested that racism and inequality would diminish only when young people learned to grow into caring adults who did not hate themselves or their work.¹⁷

This emphasis on the personal, emotional dimension of social reality was a consistent emphasis in Holt's writing, to the end of his life. "People are best able, and perhaps only able, to cross the many barriers of race, class, custom, and belief that divide them when they are able to share experiences *that make them feel good*. Only from these do they get a stronger sense of their own, and therefore other people's, uniqueness, dignity, and worth." In this passage and throughout his work, Holt was speaking about existential authenticity - the individual person's assurance that his or her life is meaningful and fulfilling. When people "feel good" - by which Holt did not mean hedonistic pleasure but the experience of one's life as integrated, whole, and guided by worthy values and aspirations - then they can participate freely and constructively in social and public life. "One of the most urgent social tasks of our time is to rebuild, both in our festering cities

and our deserted countrysides, communities where people feel, 'I belong; this is my place; I have something to say about what happens; I can help and count on others to help me; I can do something to make this a better place to live.'" Holt recognized, as did the students who adopted the Port Huron Statement, that *participatory* democracy demands more than opportunities to vote or write letters to a newspaper. As Dewey had argued, genuine democracy can only take place within a genuine community, a group of persons who feel themselves joined by common purposes and meanings, and who therefore feel that they belong. Social institutions, particularly education, must strive to nourish experiences of belonging, authenticity, and worth for a just and peaceful world to be possible, because when the inherent human need for meaning and connection is frustrated, people are likely to vent their disappointment or hatred through violence or the sublimated violence of political and ideological oppression.¹⁸

The search for authenticity in the countercultural ideology of the 1960s, expressed so clearly in Holt's writings, was a search for meaning and connection that Holt and other dissidents felt was lacking in a technocratic culture, in which people were increasingly defined according to their functional roles in an impersonal economic system. Nevertheless, Holt's perspective was not merely psychological or individualistic. Unlike A.S. Neill, he explicitly recognized that "much of our task is political." Holt did not prescribe education, even deschooled education, as a solution to poverty. He specifically stated that society needs to "make a fairer distribution of the world's resources, make a serious attack on poverty" and ridiculed the standard liberal assumption that education in itself could help impoverished people: "We promise poor kids that if they will do what we want, there are goodies waiting for them out there. They know that these promises are false." Answering a correspondent who had specifically asked how he defined his political views, especially in light of Kozol's critique of the romantic free school wing, Holt wrote in 1978, "I am not on some 'individualist' side as opposed to 'community development' side. Such differences as I might have with Jonathan Kozol do not revolve around the issue of whether community development or political actions are important, but about what *kinds* of community development or political action are likely to produce useful and lasting results." Holt meant that political action which fails to address the psychological domain of meaning and hopes and moral values are unlikely to succeed - but he did not mean that we could *only* attend to the existential.¹⁹

Holt recognized that very real political forces were at work, and he found them frightening. He believed that the cultural worship of progress and growth was inevitably leading to fascism, and during the height of social conflict between 1967 and 1972, he quite frequently expressed his fear that a "headlong movement towards Fascism" was taking place in American society. "Either we become a genuinely integrated society," he wrote, "...or we will become a genuinely, whole-heartedly, unashamedly racist society, like that of Nazi Germany or present South Africa - with perhaps our own

Final Solution waiting at the end.” Writing to A.S. Neill in September, 1968 about the George Wallace presidential campaign, Holt said that “a sickness is growing terribly rapidly here that may wipe out the world.” In *What Do I Do Monday?* Holt explicitly suggested that the alienation bred by authoritarian education could well “prepare the ground for some native American brand of Fascism, which now seems uncomfortably close,” and in a letter to Paul Goodman in 1970, he wrote “I keep looking for and hoping to find evidence that [Americans] are not as callous and greedy and cruel and envious as I fear they are, and I keep getting disappointed. . . . [W]hat scares me is the amount of Fascism in people’s spirit. It is the government that so many of our fellow citizens would get if they could that scares me - and I fear we are moving in that direction.” He wrote to Ivan Illich in 1972, “I think if U.S. society collapses, it will collapse into some kind of fascism, some sort of violence-worshipping totalitarian government. . . . I’m terribly afraid of fascism for my country.”²⁰

What is the reader to make of these dire warnings? Fear of fascism was common in the counterculture - during this time many young radicals called the U.S. “Amerika,” the Germanic spelling apparently implying some sort of Teutonic/Nazi infiltration of American culture. It must, indeed, have been terrifying to face the military draft, the forceful suppression of antiwar protests, and the “conservative restoration” in American politics after 1968, and highly discouraging to realize that Richard Nixon’s “silent majority” soundly rejected the dream of cultural renewal. For Holt, who was alienated from the social/political mainstream throughout the decade, the realization that substantive social change would not take place was a tremendous disappointment, as he indicated in a letter to George McGovern after the 1972 election.²¹ How could ideals such as peace, justice, personal freedom and authenticity, so vibrantly and courageously articulated by civil rights and student activists, be so decisively repudiated? Some formidable cultural force, more than simply a resistance to change, must have been opposed to these ideals. Holt called this opposition fascism, and like Wilhelm Reich he viewed it as a deadly political ideology resting on a mass psychological condition bred by frustration of the need for meaning.

In retrospect, America's democratic heritage was not in imminent danger of collapsing into a Nazi-style culture of repression and violence, and Holt’s “prophetic voice” might have overstated the situation. However, in the years since, critics of technocracy have commented that the continuing centralization of economic power and mass media influence, combined with covert government activity and the popular appeal of fundamentalist religious values, are indeed leading toward a “soft fascism” that relies on the hegemony of consumerist values, rather than overt state power, to ensure the maintenance of an efficient social machine managed by a privileged elite. Holt foresaw the coming of the New World Order, and he did not like what he saw.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. John Holt, letter in *Communications on Alternatives* #5, Spring, 1972.
2. Richard S. Hootman, in an unpublished dissertation, reviewed Holt's writings and gave a fairly thorough summary of each of Holt's books. (See "The Romantic Critics of the Sixties: John Holt and Company" Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1976.) However, his analysis lacked historical perspective and presented Holt's ideas and proposals without adequately situating them in their cultural or intellectual context. In this study I draw upon Holt's numerous writings more selectively: Rather than attempt a comprehensive review I identify core themes that demonstrate Holt's relationship to radical politics and free school ideology. Also, I use material from Holt's letters and several obscure writings to which Hootman did not have access.
3. Interview with Susannah Sheffer, December 8, 1997.
4. John Holt, *A Life Worth Living: Selected Letters of John Holt*, ed. Susannah Sheffer (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 17.
5. John Holt quoted in Mel Allen, "The Education of John Holt" reprint from *Yankee Magazine*, December, 1981, 6; *A Life Worth Living*, 27; Sheffer interview; Peggy Hughes, "From the First 'Holt Associate'" *Growing Without Schooling* #48, 1985.
6. Susannah Sheffer, in Holt, *A Life Worth Living*, 3, 231.
7. Sheffer interview; *A Life Worth Living*, 56-7.
8. John Holt, *Sharing Treasures: Book Reviews by John Holt*, ed. Patrick Farenga and Jane Prest Holcomb (Cambridge, MA: Holt Associates, 1990), 55; *A Life Worth Living*, 219, 276; David E. Purpel, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education: A Curriculum for Justice and Compassion in Education* (Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1989). Hootman (see note 2) pointed out Holt's tendency to cite other sources mainly to support his own ideas.
9. John Holt, letter of March 1, 1972, NSE papers; John Holt, untitled chapter in Harold Hart, ed., *Summerhill: For and Against* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1970), 97.
10. Peter Marin, review of *Freedom and Beyond* by John Holt, *Learning* November, 1972, 90.
11. *A Life Worth Living*, 24.
12. *A Life Worth Living*, 128, 105; John Holt, *Freedom and Beyond* (New York: Dutton, 1972; reprint, Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann, 1995), 155, 138, 146; John Holt, *The Underachieving School* (New York: Pitman, 1969), 201; John Holt, "The Radicalizing of a Guest

- Teacher at Berkeley” *New York Times Magazine*, February 22, 1970, 65; *Sharing Treasures*, 58.
13. John Holt, quoted in Dave Lehman, untitled interview with Holt, *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* #113, March 15, 1974.
 14. *A Life Worth Living*, 42, 235; interview with Patrick Farenga, December 8, 1997.
 15. *A Life Worth Living*, 232.
 16. Michael Lerner, *The Politics of Meaning* (Reading, MA; Addison Wesley, 1996), 28, 29, 7, 8.
 17. John Holt, “Education and Peace” *Peace News* (London), August 26, 1966, 5; *The Underachieving School*, 130; *Freedom and Beyond*, 14, 236.
 18. John Holt, *Teach Your Own: A Hopeful Path for Education* (New York: Dell, 1981), 37; *Sharing Treasures*, 12.
 19. *Freedom and Beyond*, 164; *The Underachieving School*, 115; John Holt, *What Do I Do Monday?* (New York: Dutton, 1970; reprint, Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann, 1995), 56; *A Life Worth Living*, 221.
 20. *The Underachieving School*, 109; *A Life Worth Living*, 39; *What Do I Do Monday?*, 82; *A Life Worth Living*, 66, 112.
 21. *A Life Worth Living*, 131.

ASSA

The School for Individual Development

By David French

Here is a fascinating description of a home-grown alternative school in Poland. The author, David French, made use of Monika Figiel’s book; Szkoły Autorskie w Polsce in writing this piece.

If you are familiar with central European state education systems you will know that a school without compulsory attendance, bells or grades, and in which students create their own path through their educational development, is very different from the norm. ASSA – an abbreviation of *Autorska Szkoła Samorozwoju* (the School for Individual Development) is something of a phenomenon in Poland, and I suspect, beyond Poland too.

(If a school in Poland is called “autorska” it means that it is run according to the particular pedagogical vision of one individual – the school's “author.” This person has to supply the Ministry of Education with

an exhaustive prospectus for the school, beginning with the philosophical foundations and working through how this is to be realised in practice in minute detail.)

The school, based in Wroclaw, was founded by Daniel Manelski and Darek Luczak in 1990. Daniel Manelski is a passionate defender of an individual's right to realise their own potential, he is an educational visionary, and a distinguished figure on the Polish alternative educational scene. Now in his seventies, his is a colourful life story which includes a spell in prison and a period of several years self-imposed solitude in a house in the Beskid mountains of southern Poland.

As head teacher of a Wroclaw high school Manelski had been bending or breaking the accepted rules for running schools in Poland, doing away with the bell between lessons and with the system of grades – a major source of anxiety for all school children. After lessons Manelski and Luczak (then a student at the school) would meet to work out their ideas for the foundation of a radically new school. It was to be based on their own philosophies and convictions and on the experience they had gained from being part of a school which respected the pupils and honoured their individuality and freedom of choice, against the backdrop of a public education system which denied them.

When Manelski was still a teacher he began to see that school is not, in fact, necessary; that it is a system which humiliates, deprives students of their dignity, coerces and incapacitates them. He began to doubt whether the only way was state-run compulsion. Later, when working as a high school headmaster he began to negate everything about school as he found it. This negation meant identifying the main principles of the system and then doing away with them. The main principle he found was the system of rewards and punishments, in other words; behaviourism. After some time he completely did away with discipline in his school. Students could come and go as they wanted, testing was abandoned.

And suddenly it was as if school had disappeared

The school Manelski and Luczak conceived was due to open in December 1981. However, the day after having received official approval from the Polish Ministry of Education the State of Martial Law was announced in Poland, the backlash to the freedoms that the Solidarity trade union had wrested from the Communist government. Daniel Manelski found himself arrested and then imprisoned for several months. He had to wait almost a decade before the opportunity to open the school arose again. It was officially opened in 1990 and has Ministry of Education accreditation to award the Polish high school leaving certificate.

I visited ASSA in June 2002, on graduation day (it's a 16-19 secondary school). The school is housed in a low building with wheelchair access – rare in Poland. Inside, classrooms open off both sides of a corridor which runs through the whole building. On the numerous notice boards lining the walls there are announcements of extra-curricular activities and information about when teachers will be available to examine students wanting to gain credits for subjects. The graduation ceremony was quite different from what I'd seen at other Polish schools. Instead of formal blouses and skirts or suits the students were dressed in a whole variety of styles, including combat clothes and basketball gear (as well as one of two students in the traditional black and white). The absence of uniformity at this school – literally and metaphorically – impressed itself on me.

Students can attempt to be credited for a subject as many times as they wish. The humiliating procedure of being kept back to repeat a year does not exist in ASSA. Students can join the school at any time during the school year. The school has a number of physically disabled students

The head teacher, Ula Krzewska-Horbowy, told me that new students often go through the same process after a few months of being at the school. After weeks and months of spending more time at home than at *ASSA* and being relatively passive it begins to dawn on them that nothing is going to happen unless they make it happen themselves. They see that responsibility for their future (educational and otherwise) lies in their hands. This fundamental psychological realisation transforms into the motivation that starts to drive them positively towards their own development. During my conversation with Ula she had to leave the room briefly to talk to a student who had just graduated. She explained afterwards that he had been fighting to overcome a drug habit during his final year and hoped he would manage to keep up the fight after leaving the school.

According to Darek Luczak three types of students attend the school: failures, emigrants and mariners. The first category are young people who have achieved little or no success in any other schools they've been to, people with very low self-esteem, passive, with learned helplessness. For them ASSA is the last chance. Coming to the school is not a positive choice, but rather the end of the road. The next group are those students who were unable to feel comfortable in school, to find their place, as it were. They looked for a school that they would fit into but only found an unbending, autocratic system. The final group, by far the smallest, but in a sense the group for which the school was founded according to Manelski's original conception, are those who know precisely what they want from life at that particular stage of their intellectual and personal development. They choose

ASSA consciously as the place that will best help them to realise their own personal goals.

ASSA is linked closely to the Towarzystwo Dzialan dla Samorozwoju (the Association for Individual Development), where educators, academics and people sympathetic to the philosophy of ASSA take part in workshops and publish books and other informational materials about the school.

I was surprised to discover that few people come to see how ASSA functions and learn about its ways. I had expected it to be like other radical alternatives to state schools like Summerhill or Sudbury Valley, with a steady stream of visitors through its doors, but no. In fact ASSA doesn't have a good reputation in Wroclaw. People know it as a school which attracts students with a record of failure or an inability to adapt to the state system.

As I write this I've just completed my first week teaching English in a Polish junior high school. I just wanted to describe two incidents that typify what you can see every day in most Polish schools and what ASSA works against. A teacher had pinned a sheet of paper on a public notice board with a list of names and scores from a placement test that the new first-years had just written. Then there was a student in my class taking the same placement test. I knew her from her last school and also knew that she would be sure to get one of the highest scores and qualify for the better of the two groups without too much trouble. Nevertheless she was visibly stressed and anxiously asked me how many points she would need to get into the top stream, worried that she might not make the grade and end up in the weaker group. In ASSA, Daniel Manelski and Darek Luczak aimed to create an environment where students wouldn't have to go through this type of humiliating experience and where competition between students, and the stress that goes with it, has no place.

I have been immensely impressed by what I saw at ASSA and what I've read about the school. It's a place which doesn't turn anyone away, a school where an individual won't be humiliated or pushed around by an inflexible, inhumane system. Students can make choices and take control of their own education.

In A Box

Here are some quotations from ASSA's promotional literature translated from Polish.

“Without compulsory attendance at lessons, no grades or end-of-term classification, you start to develop a sense of responsibility for yourself and others; the awareness of the need for individual development and the skills of decision-making, planning and independent learning.”

“Discover the motivation to learn inside yourself – no-one is going to force you to learn.”

“At ASSA you aren't left to yourself – you choose a teacher or tutor who you trust, who you like and who you can rely on in any situation, not just in school.”

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Small is Beautiful Lessons from America

By Fiona Carnie

How does American alternative education look from across the pond? This sighting was made by Fiona Carnie, who has been at the helm of Britain's Human Scale Education for many years. Our article is from the section on “Alternative approaches in the state system” included in Fiona's excellent new book, which is just coming out now. Her book is called: Alternative Approaches to Education, A guide for parents and teachers RoutledgeFalmer, London and New York. 2003

“I cannot teach well a student whom I do not know.”

Professor Ted Sizer, *Horace's Hope* 1996

There are many different kinds of schools and learning alternatives across America. Some are publicly funded, others are privately run and financed and some are a combination of the two.

The American Almanac of Education Choices lists the alternatives available in each state of which there are 49 for example in Alabama and 99 in Wisconsin whilst over 800 are listed for California. These include Steiner and Montessori schools, Amish schools, Carden Schools, Comer schools, free schools, holistic schools and many more individual initiatives such as the School for the physical City, the School Without Walls, the School of the Future and the School within a School. In addition it is estimated that over two million American children are now educated at home.

A whole host of publicly funded alternatives have been established; of these magnet schools and charter schools are perhaps the most well known in the UK. Magnet schools (which were first started in the 1970s) are schools based on a specific theme or curricular focus and their aim, in many instances, has been to attract students from all sectors of a community to overcome problems of segregation. The charter school movement, a more recent initiative which began in the 1990s, was conceived to encourage educational innovation by freeing schools from state education laws. The state grants a charter or contract to a group of organisers – mostly groups of educators and parents – who design and run the school. These schools are public insofar as they cannot be selective or sectarian, cannot charge fees and are accountable for their results. They are funded on the same basis as normal state schools and are required to produce measurable gains in student achievement or else they must close. Well over 50 per cent of states have now passed charter legislation and more are considering the idea.

As the legislation differs from state to state, so too does the provision; but across the US there is a groundswell of desire for new approaches as increasing numbers of parents and teachers become concerned about the capacity of traditional schools to meet the needs of young people.

Events such as the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999 have made many question the safety of huge high schools. Schools of 3-4,000 are not uncommon in America, and if these schools cannot vouch for the safety of their students parents are going to be less and less inclined to send their children. Whilst every parent wants their child to do well, even more important is the question of their physical safety and well-being. The issue of school size is thus becoming a political concern in America.

Research

An extensive body of research (compiled by the Small Schools Workshop based in Chicago) about the effectiveness of smaller schools has been amassed over the past 20 years. This research has found that in small schools:

- **Children** have better attendance rates and higher test scores
- They are more likely to participate in after-school activities and are less likely to be truants, gang members or substance abusers
- They feel more connected to and positive about their schools
- **Teachers** form closer bonds with students and with each other and are more committed to the school
- They also tend to be more innovative with the curriculum
- **Parents** are more involved with the school.

Furthermore the research indicates that small schools are more cost effective than large schools and that their benefits are more marked for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Whilst any such research is dismissed out of hand by the UK government which is fearful of the financial implications, it is driving policy in a growing number of American states. In Providence, the new schools superintendent has instructed all high schools to convert themselves into smaller, more personalised learning communities. In Chicago over 150 small high schools have been opened since 1990 and many more are in the pipeline. In the bay area of San Francisco parents have been so outraged by the quality of their local schools that they have precipitated major reforms in the area involving the creation of new small schools and the transformation of existing large schools into smaller learning communities. Other areas including Philadelphia, Washington State, Denver and Los Angeles are all moving in a similar direction. Radical reforms in New York have been underway for a number of years and have yielded significant improvements to the education system there.

It has to be stressed that it is not small schools per se that are important, because there can be bad small schools, but rather what smaller scale learning communities make possible in terms of teaching and learning. In America there is, as yet, no national curriculum so there is far greater freedom for teachers to use innovative approaches to teaching and learning – and this is the major factor underpinning the success of smaller schools.

Much of the work which is directed towards creating more personalised learning opportunities for students is being done in association with the coalition for Essential Schools (CES). The Coalition is a school/university partnership that works across America to redesign American schools for better student learning and achievement. It was founded in 1985 by Professor Ted Sizer and is based on a set of principles which schools can sign up to (*See box*). Over 1000 schools have interacted with the coalition

since it was set up and it has become an important force for change in American education.

The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation has been a major sponsor for many of these developments. Furthermore the federal government, through the US Department of Education, has recently announced a new initiative called the Small Learning Communities Program. This provides funds to encourage large schools to undertake the planning, implementation and expansion of small learning communities through research-based restructuring. Over \$40 million has been allocated to this programme already and grants have been awarded to 350 schools across the US with a further 200 expected imminently.

A number of different models for reform based on small structures have merged, and three of these models will be discussed below.

The small school model

Central Park East School

In recent years many new publicly-funded small schools have been established and it is increasingly recognised that where there is a need for new school places, particularly in urban areas, these are best provided within smaller schools. One well-established small school which has provided a model for many newer initiatives is the Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) in East Harlem, New York.

CPESS was founded in 1985 and caters for around 450 students aged 13-18 (grades 7-12). About 90 per cent of the students are from ethnic minorities, 50 per cent receive free school meals and around 20 per cent are recognised as having special educational needs. Whilst the graduation rate from high school is around 55 per cent in traditional New York schools, CPESS graduates around 90 per cent of its students. A similar percentage of students proceed on to college.

Whilst the school is proud of these achievements its main aims are to ensure that students learn to use their minds well, that they become passionate about their work, they feel cared for and they learn to care for others. Much emphasis is placed on creating a community and fostering a sense of responsibility. The school is divided into houses of eighty and students remain in their house, with the same four or five teachers for two years. Each student has an individual advisor who can offer personal as well as academic support and regular time is made for advisory sessions.

In order to encourage students to use their minds well five key questions underpin the work in every subject and every lesson. Students are encouraged to consider what they are reading or hearing in terms of whose perspective it is from; they have to look at the evidence and assess its reliability; they must consider the connections between things, events and

people; assess what the alternatives are, look for the underlying meaning and discuss why things matter and to whom.

There is a core curriculum which is divided into humanities and maths/science; teachers belong to a humanities team or a maths and science team. Instead of being divided into subjects the curriculum is organised around key questions such as “What is justice?” “Who is an American?” or “Can energy disappear?” with the aim of drawing out links between subjects. Lessons are arranged in two-hour blocks. Teachers have a maximum load of forty students in any one year so that they can get to know them well. In addition to their school work all students undertake some form of community service.

The school fosters a culture of enquiry and students are encouraged to ask questions, discuss and challenge received opinion. Through discussion, the subjects which are being studied are linked back to the students’ own lives. The role of the teacher is one of supporter, facilitator and coach. Staff encourage students to take responsibility for assessing, revising and expanding their work.

Assessment is based on performance rather than tests, and at the end of each year students present their work in ‘exhibitions’ which can consist of reports, essays, experiments, art work, drama presentations and videos. To graduate from the school students have to produce a number of portfolios in a range of subject areas and be able to discuss their work in depth with the graduation committee.

Schools within a school

Mountlake Terrace High School

The success of small schools has encouraged many large schools to look at ways of converting themselves into a number of smaller learning communities on the same site. This is a relatively recent development in America, and as the process takes a number of years there are few schools that have completed the transition. The research is therefore limited. However the interest in this whole-school reform is evidenced by a conference on this theme which took place in Seattle in Autumn 2001 and attracted around 2000 participants.

Mountlake Terrace High School, in Washington State on the West Coast, is one school which has taken this route. The process of change started with the school asking itself some fundamental questions:

- What do we want for our school?
- What is our vision of teaching and learning?
- How do we get there?
- How do we develop consensus for the development?

This dialogue led members of the school community to the recognition of the need for smaller and more personal structures. Their aim now is to create, from their large comprehensive school of 1850 students, a number of small, friendly learning communities (SLCs) where every student is known and encouraged, where teachers and students may develop productive relationships and where the quality of the teaching and learning environment is the primary concern. They are working to ensure that each small learning community is equitable and that *all* students can realise their maximum potential and become independent life-long learners.

It is the concern for all children that is driving much of this kind of reform. Schools like Mountlake Terrace High, which have looked hard at their statistics – statistics about how many children are failing and which children they are – have found that these figures themselves provide the impetus for change. To ensure a more equitable education and a more equitable society the needs of these particular children must be addressed and this can best be achieved within smaller schools where they can be known, supported and ultimately helped to succeed.

Responsibility is to be devolved from the center and each of the small learning communities will make their own decisions concerning budget, staffing, timetabling, assessment and pedagogy. An important feature is thus to give back to teachers a real voice in the making of decisions which affect them. Moreover parents and members of the local community as well as students are to be closely involved in the design, implementation and development of each SLC. A likely outcome is that each SLC will be different and will have its own intellectual focus.

The school recognises that this is a hugely complex and lengthy process, but is convinced of the need for this kind of change. Having seen other large schools implement a range of reform programs with varying degrees of success they have realised that scale is the critical issue.

A campus for small schools The Julia Richman Education Complex

In 1993 the New York City Education Board closed Julia Richman, a large, failing high school and in its place, over a period of several years, established a campus of small learning communities. The campus consists of six autonomous schools, each of which has its own budget, teachers, curriculum and timetables. It also houses a crèche and play group for children of teenage parents, a health clinic, a professional development center for teachers and an arts center. Each of the schools has its own separate space on the campus but shares facilities such as a library, café, auditorium, pottery studio, theatre, art gallery, gym and swimming pool.

This initiative grew out of a recognition that students and teachers need a sense of belonging to a community, and that this is not possible in a large school. It gained the support of the New York Education Board which was increasingly concerned about violence in its schools. The use of scanners and security guards seemed unable to prevent young people smuggling weapons into schools and the situation in many ways was getting out of control. At the same time research was showing the success of many small schools in New York which were graduating a far larger proportion of their students than traditional high schools.

The Center for Collaborative Education (the New York branch of the Coalition of Essential Schools), aware of the challenge involved in turning round a large, failing school, came up with a different solution. It proposed an experiment which entailed closing such a school and using the site to house a number of new smaller schools which children and parents could choose from. In this way they envisaged that the negative attitudes surrounding the failing school would be dispersed.

The Julia Richman School was selected as a trial and the experiment went ahead. Initially the new smaller schools were set up in different buildings in the surrounding area, whilst the large school was gradually emptied of students who had enrolled and who were allowed to graduate. This took place over a four year period. When the building was finally empty the six smaller schools, serving children from the same areas as previously served by the large school, were moved on to the campus into the original school buildings, which had been divided up to accommodate them. The schools are all very different and include a performing arts school, a school for immigrants who have only been in the country for a short while, two other high schools and an elementary school. The sixth school, the Urban Academy, is a small school which had already been in existence for some years and which was asked to go in to the project as the anchor school to provide experience.

One condition of the project was that none of the schools should have more than 300 students. The buildings are organised so that students do not have to pass through schools other than their own as they go about their business. In this way teachers know all the students that they come into contact with and vice versa. If someone is in the wrong place it is identified immediately.

To avoid competition and confrontation between the different schools some campus-wide activities are organised – for example there are athletics teams and choirs which draw students from each of the schools.

The Urban Academy, as an example of these schools, shares many of the values and practices of Central Park East Secondary School, which is described above. Classes are generally multi-aged, which is seen as a real advantage because older students can support younger students and introduce them to the culture of the school. One of the main means of learning is through discussion and seminars. Classes are often based around questions to which there are no definitive answers, and through discussion

students explore their own views and come to know what their peers think. An important rule at the school is that you can attack other people's *ideas* but not attack them personally.

The hub of the school is the office in which all teachers have a desk. Students are allowed into the office and therefore see teachers working, discussing and interacting. This is seen as important, particularly for children from dysfunctional homes where such activities may be rare. Students get to know their teachers as real people and this has a huge impact on relationships at the school.

It is clear that the Urban Academy, like the other small schools on the campus, operates very differently from a large school and it is their size that makes this possible. Their academic success – around 94 per cent of students proceed to university and do well there – is only one indicator of their achievements, all of which are attributed by staff to the effectiveness of their approach.

Looking forward

The movement towards smaller structures in education is gathering momentum across America, particularly in urban areas where the problems are greatest and where the gains seem to be the most significant. The argument in favor of economies of scale in education has been turned round and recast in terms of penalties of scale. These penalties, which include the isolation, alienation and disaffection of ever increasing numbers of young people, have massive long term social consequences and are too high a price to pay. If smaller learning communities can be shown to improve social inclusion – and the indications are that they can – the economic advantages of mass, factory schooling will fast lose their attraction. Such long term and big picture thinking is something that contemporary Britain would be foolish to ignore.

For information

Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools
Website: www.essentialschools.org.

Coalition of Essential Schools
Website: www.essentialschools.org

Small Schools Project
Website: www.smallschoolsproject.org

Small Schools Workshop
Website: www.smallschoolsworkshop.org

Further reading

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In A Box

The common principles for the Coalition of Essential Schools Schools strive to:

- 1 Teach students to use their minds well
- 2 Emphasise depth of learning over breadth
- 3 Apply their goals to all students
- 4 Personalise teaching and learning
- 5 Embrace the metaphor 'student as worker' rather than teacher as 'deliverer'

- 6 Require students to demonstrate mastery through an ‘exhibition’ of their knowledge and skills
- 7 Stress a tone of decency and trust
- 8 Consider teachers as generalists committed to the entire school
- 9 Develop budgets that reflect CES priorities, for example by setting a student load of eighty pupils or less for each teacher
- 10 Model democratic and equitable practices.

Movin’ On Down – And In The Beginnings of The Free School

By Mary Leue

The year before The Free School of Albany first opened it’s doors Mary Leue prepared the ground. This process is described in the following extract, taken from Chapter 34 of Mary Leue’s autobiography which is a work in progress available for viewing on her website:

Returning in the early fall of 1969 to the prospect of Albany’s awful city schools triggered protests and importunings from Mark for the right to be taught at home. Although he had been relatively accepting of his previous two years there, his fifth-grade class was affecting him mainly as a mix of boredom, anonymity and curricular oppression on the part of his teacher, who was fixated on long division, both for homework and the following morning’s class work every day. From his (mostly lower-middle-class) classmates, Mark had become the target of bullying and racist intolerance, his best friend being Billy Wooding, who was black - evidently being lumped in with Billy and his little brother Andy as a fitting object for their persecution.

I had read *Summerhill* before we went to England, and had even corresponded with Neill once or twice, and had developed a wish to start a free school in Albany. The first symptoms of Mark's acute unhappiness did not appear right away, as my husband Bill recorded in his diary:

Wednesday, September third

Overcast, cool, slow rain this evening.

Mark started the fifth grade this morning. Mary went with him to see that he got properly readmitted. There seemed to be no trouble about accepting his year in England. His teacher is Mrs. Reuss. Mary was favorably impressed with her. Mark says that she runs a closely disciplined class. He came home at eleven-thirty with homework to do and more supplies that Mary had to dash right out and get for him. She also bought him a sort of dispatch case in which to carry them.

But that good beginning did not continue.

Monday, October sixth

Quite warm today.

Mark made a big fuss about going to school today, says that he is terrified of the teacher and of some of the other pupils, who give him a hard time. Mary wants to transfer him to PS 19, which is located way down on New Scotland. He would have to take two buses to get there. Mark Gordon [Mark's other good friend] and Greg Staley [the son of a colleague of Bill's] go there and claim that it is better. I fear that his going-to-school trauma will just be increased by such a transfer. I feel that Mary has been stimulating this reaction of his and that it is more a symptom of his underlying emotional difficulties than a principal cause of his troubles. He finally went off to school around quarter after nine.

One of Mary's current projects is to start a "free school." She went down to the Education Department (State) this afternoon and got herself a certificate of temporary qualification as a teacher at the secondary level. She wants to visit schools being run in conjunction with the Unitarian churches in Syracuse and Buffalo.

I reproduce a few paragraphs of the story I wrote later about the origin of The Free School offering more details of this exploration of my options as a school founder:

I decided to ask for advice at this point, and went to see a friend of mine whom I trusted as having an enlightened view of children's education, she being the religious education director of the local Unitarian Church where I had taught Sunday School for a number of years. Her advice was to have a talk with an educational filmmaker in Newton, Massachusetts, Alan Leitman, who was running a resource center for early childhood education and whose films dealt with the development of successful alternative education programs in various places, notably the experiments in

Philadelphia associated with the Parkway Program, but on an elementary level.

I made some phone calls and then went on my travels. Alan received me warmly, and gave me several suggestions. One was that I first ask a local newspaper to do a feature on our little school, and then that I rent a few films depicting the kind of school I was interested in creating and show them in community places, in order to attract the kinds of families who would want our kind of school for their kids. He also suggested that I visit a few “free schools” in the New York state and New England regions, to see how they actually look in action.

He warned me to start small, learn my “trade” at every stage of the process before moving to a larger operation, and in general, to ensure that the enterprise was sound at every step of the way; that we really knew our business and were accomplishing what we set out to do, not just playing kid games. That advice still governs everything we do.

So, I began that very day, visiting Jonathan Kozol’s Roxbury Community School on the way home, and three others over the following few days, one in Buffalo, one in Syracuse, and a third in New York City - the Fifteenth Street School.

Bill’s journal continues the saga of those tumultuous days:

The New York Times says that there were at least two hundred and fifty thousand people present at the demonstration in Washington [The “storming of the Pentagon” anti-war demonstration which Bill and I, and also Peter and Tom, attended, with their college student groups] yesterday.

Monday, November seventeenth

Mark refused to go to school again this morning. After asking me for my stupid opinion and condemning it as not only stupid, rigid, and conformal but as also utterly unfeeling, Mary decided to take him out of school and tutor him herself. She had called up the Board of Ed. last week and says that she was told that she can do this and needs only his textbooks. The enterprise needs also a consistency of effort on both their parts and a certain objectivity which they do not have in their relationship. These are my contentions, and, of course, Mary has theoretical objections to both of them. Mark will be her trial balloon for her new school. ...

I don't think that I have been quite fair to Mark; haven't specified his complaints against the school. He says that he has been getting beat up every day by some of the over-age slow learners, of which the school has many.

He feels that he has been singled out as an object of ridicule and scorn by the teachers and principal, this helping to make him a target. This has been mostly because of his long hair. The tormentors, he says, also hate him because he isn't stupid. His teacher assigns too much stupid and repetitive homework and is invariably boring and stupid in her classroom instruction. The program is meager and uninspiring. Well, he has some valid points there. On the other side, of course, one can claim that he is going to have to continue to live in a stupid world full of stupid people, something which I've never learned to do very well myself. I guess I'll just have to wait and see how it comes out.

Tuesday, November eighteenth

Quite mild today.

Mary continued Mark's education, says that he is making rapid progress, shows a great deal of enthusiasm and initiative. They launched several new projects. Mary bought another bird feeder (the old one got lost), and Mark put in a solid hour of bird-watching, identifying them with a book we have.

Mary got Mark some art supplies and he painted another one of his volcanoes as a birthday present for Peter. When he asked me how I liked it, I replied that he seemed a little hung-up on volcanoes, which was not a good response.

Mrs. Laperche, the school nurse at PS 27, called up this morning to inquire about Mark. She was also the school nurse at PS 16, so has known Mark for some time. Mary explained the reasons for Mark's "withdrawal" to her, and she was not unsympathetic.

About two weeks after Mark and I got started on our tutorial venture, I had run into a friend (Betty Ahr, the mother of a family of six kids, whose father Art had been our older boys' shop and crafts teacher at Milne, and had inspired them to express their creativity) with six children in another of Albany's 'finest' public schools. When she heard what I had done, she begged me to take on her three youngest, who she said were acting as though their lives were on the line every morning when going-to-school time came around, and whom she usually ended up having to accompany there. One of my chief worries had been that Mark would feel isolated from his friends, and this sounded great, so I agreed at once, and we were in the school business!

The first thing I had to do was to establish the legality of keeping Mark at home, and the principal of his school left me no doubt on this issue, calling

me to warn me of legal action against me the very day the school nurse ascertained from me that Mark was indeed not sick but had withdrawn from school. Being in the state capital, I decided to make some phone calls to find out for myself if this was actually the case, since I was a teacher.

I was fortunate indeed to find a man in the curriculum department of the state department of education who assured me that my action was legal, and who offered to give “state guidelines” to anyone from the local school board who hassled me. This, again, was fortunate, because the very next day I received a call from the head of the bureau of “attendance and guidance,” (the truant officer, a Mr. Joseph Markham), who began an impassioned harangue warning me of the terrible things that were about to occur to me should I refuse to bring Mark back at once, but calmed right down when I gave him the name of the man from ‘State Ed.’

Shortly after this, he called back and apologized for his previous manner, assuring me that what I was doing was fine, and that he would be happy to give me any help he could if I should run into any problems. And, actually, during all the years of the existence of our school, Joe Markham has been our liaison with the superintendent of schools, has given us a lot of help in various times of trouble including a brush with the county health department, and has been not only respectful of our operation but really sympathetic with our purpose, since his chief clientele comes from the same ‘population’ most of ours do, and he knows the problems that can arise.

Back to Bill’s journal:

Tuesday, December second

...Mary's enthusiastic invitation to the Ahrs is being taken up immediately - the three youngest Ahr children are to be dropped off here shortly after eight tomorrow morning. Mark is furious. He was enjoying Mary's exclusive attention. I guess I'll be getting to the office somewhat earlier in the future.

Wednesday, the third

Mary’s school got going this morning, a little late, but quite successfully, according to her. She showed me examples this evening of the great progress made by the Ahr children - Jo Amie (5th. grade), Artie (3rd. grade), and Nanny (first grade). She thinks that she’ll soon have them all doing fifth grade arithmetic. Their paintings made today adorn the walls of our family room.

And I, stick-in-the-mud that I am, am angry about them using our sofa cushions for gym mats, and about Mark's taking an expensive fireplace implement, a brass-handled brush, out to his tree house and leaving it there.

Mary is having trouble with the emotional relations among her [school] children, especially with Nanny, the youngest Ahr child. She has been getting them to talk out the problem and to try to settle it and regulate themselves. Mark is sort of acting up too, She took them all to the State Museum this afternoon, is taking them back tomorrow to be allowed to enter the Iroquois house, a privilege reserved for "school groups." She parked the bug in a place reserved for school buses and received a five dollar ticket.

Thursday, December eleventh

Rain, followed by still quite mild but windy weather.

The children made colorful signs saying "Free School" which they pasted in the windows of the bug, and Mary took them back down to the State Museum this afternoon and parked again in the school bus area. This time the car was not ticketed.

My account of the second half of the school year of 1969-70 is much more cheerful than Bill's account might suggest:

... The school year we spent at my home went swimmingly. We all loved the experience, and since it was the year of the student strikes and the Cambodia crisis, as well as the initiation of "Earth Day," it was a very exciting time to be "free" of school - and for me, to be actually conducting my own little "unschool," planning and carrying out my own design of curriculum, which included a lot of projects like picking up twelve trash bags of cans, bottles and other garbage thrown down an embankment by the side of a public road near the house (on Earth Day); helping at a day care center set up for the children of university strikers and others; putting on home-written plays; learning to develop film and making our own movies; cooking and baking, and generally enjoying ourselves a great deal while learning the three R's.

Early in June, 1970, we took a vote and decided to go on with the school the following year, even though the other three were moving during the summer, and so, we would be back to a population of one.

A week later an article appeared in the newspaper which included large pictures of the five of us gathered (untypically) around our round dining room table surrounded by books and papers. It also mentioned that I would be showing three films [following Alan Leitman's valuable suggestion!] on

“free school” education, at the Unitarian Church and at the university, which I did the following week to crowded rooms of fascinated adults whose appetite for information about this new “thing” seemed boundless. Out of these three exposures to the public, I found a group of four families interested in sending us their children and in working as a group to help us find a suitable building and at least one other teacher for the seven kids who would be involved.

Suddenly, providentially and wholly unexpectedly, a friend of my older sons gave me a call and asked if he could drop over to chat. Puzzled, I agreed, and lo, what he wanted to talk about was his wish to quit high school teaching (where his best friend had been recently fired for refusing to shave off his beard) and come to teach with me at our fledgling school, now christened “The Free School” by my four students. I agreed enthusiastically, and introduced him to our little group of parents at the next strategy meeting. They were equally delighted.

By mid-June our little school was out for the summer. One other mother and I set out in earnest to find a building where we could hold forth, and right away, the first snags began to appear. There were no buildings to be had that we could afford which would give us what I knew to be an absolute necessity as a school site - one large room for gatherings, roughhouse, and general togetherness, plus enough additional space for activity rooms, eating, a lab, at least one good bathroom, an office, a good-sized kitchen, and play space outside. We literally searched for weeks, surveying the entire region - even including the top floor of a factory building which would have been ideal as a huge area on which we could erect our own partitions at will, the owners of which had been playing with offering it to the city for a municipally-funded day care center. At the last minute, they said no, after learning that we would be privately funded at a rate far below what they had been hoping to get from the city! Like Tom Lehrer’s “old dope peddler,” they had wanted to “do well by doing good.”

We began desperately asking churches for space in their Sunday School quarters, were refused by at least three church boards and suddenly, were offered the rental of an entire church building for \$100 a month by a black minister whose congregation had bought a fine stone church across town and were moving out. This was a frame building in a state of great neglect but essential soundness, and we grabbed for it frantically and with great relief, because, by this time it was nearing the end of the summer and we had not yet even begun to prepare the space for the school. After a hasty consultation with our parent group, and with the reality of our financial straits before our faces, we all agreed on this building, which was in the inner city. The price

was right, the size was ideal, and our appetite for renovation was boundless, none of us having done any!

Immediately, we all set out to put it into usable shape. Working virtually around the clock, sharing coffee and sandwiches far into the night, we worked to cover up the grime with new paint, even going so far as to paint floor-to-ceiling blackboards in several rooms, scrubbing whatever we could not paint, attaching as a fire escape an iron staircase we found at a wrecking company to an upstairs door which had opened onto thin air, for a reason none of us ever fathomed. By the time school started, we had already grown to love this place, funky as it was, but indisputably ours!

Summerhill School and the Inspectors Correspondence with the British Government

John Potter

Summerhill School, the oldest children's democracy in the world was founded by A.S.Neill in 1921 and is now run by his daughter Zoe Readhead. During the period 1990 to 1999, Summerhill was inspected every year by the HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) and OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education). Following a full inspection in March 1999 the following letter was sent by Zoe Readhead, Principal of Summerhill School, to various parents, friends and supporters of the school:

13 March 1999

Today was a sad day for Progressive Education and Parental Choice in this country. We received the 'headlines' of our report from the recent invasion of eight school inspectors. It looks very likely that the Secretary of State for Education will be issuing the school with a Notice of Complaint, which will, if we cannot fulfil its demands, lead to the closure of Summerhill.

Although they have said otherwise in the press, the government staunchly refuses to accept the Summerhill philosophy at all. They seem unable to believe in the fact that children can have control over their own lives. Non-compulsory lessons have long been a criticism - but this time

they have used them to condemn the school's teaching standards. It is not what we offer that is at fault, but what is *delivered to the children* due to the fact that they do not attend consistently. It seems that the New Labour regime over 'standards' has finally brought the conflict to a head.

Considering that many Summerhillians are already deeply traumatised by the schools they have attended prior to coming here and that almost all our pupils take GCSEs before they leave, it is hard to see how Summerhill is disadvantaging its pupils. This is particularly disappointing after all the hard work we have done since the last threat in 1997. In July '98 we had a visit which certainly gave us no indication of what would happen this time.

It goes without saying that Summerhill cannot have compulsory lessons unless the community votes on it. This could be a short-term solution to buy some time, but would not be a long-term option.

Of course we are all gutted. It is difficult to even digest what our future problems are going to be, let alone make any plans - but it is still early days. We can go to appeal and there is some possibility that we could have a case in the European Court of Human Rights about the parents' right to choose. At present we are looking into it, but the prospect of spending the next 7 or 8 years fighting a legal battle is not a bright one, not to mention where the money would come from to pay for it!

As long term friends of the school, I thought you would like to know this latest news. For the moment there is nothing particular to do. We do not want to go public until we actually get a NOC in case Blunkett has a moment of sanity and decides to do a U-turn on the report.

More than ever before, Summerhill's future is seriously under threat. It will be a bad day for Education throughout the world if it has to close.

Yours sadly,
Zoe

The following correspondence then took place between myself and representatives of the British government.

To: The Rt Hon David Blunkett MP,
Secretary of State for Education and Employment,
Sanctuary Buildings,
Great Smith Street,
Westminster,
London SW1P 3BT.

2nd June 1999.

Dear Mr. Blunkett,

It is with great disappointment, but no real surprise, that I have heard reports of the harassment once more of Summerhill School in Leiston, Suffolk by the Ministry of Education.

I am an associate professor at Kogakkan University in Japan where I research education and in particular the educational philosophies of important pioneers such as A.S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill. I am myself a British national and was privileged to have been a member of the Summerhill staff for a brief period from 1980 to 1982 when I was able to see at first hand the workings of this remarkable school.

In 1993 the first school in Japan inspired by the example of Neill and Summerhill was granted full recognition by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The school - Kinokuni Children's Village - has been the subject of great interest from the authorities, parents, teachers, educationalists and the media. It has been such a success that a second school along the same lines had to be opened last year in another part of Japan, and a debate about the need to change the rigid, traditional methods of schooling is under way.

It is ironic that at a time when Japanese education is at last starting to come to terms with the immense problems it faces and is beginning to open up to the ideas of Neill and others, these very same ideas are seen as a 'trendy' hangover from the 1960s and 70s by people in power in the UK who really should know better.

To persecute a school that parents and children have freely chosen and that no one is obliged to attend, because of "inadequate academic standards" or whatever is the latest fault-finding, is shameful and also misses the point. Summerhill's aim has never been an academic one. Neill's philosophy has instead stressed the prime importance of the emotions over the intellect and the need for happiness and the right of the child to live out its own childhood. To paraphrase Neill himself, a school should be judged not by its exam successes but by the faces of its pupils. I am sure that there are many who would dismiss this talk of happiness as idealistic or unrealistic. But it has worked for over 75 years at Summerhill in the face of its many detractors.

Clearly it is the so-called 'trendy progressives' who hold the key to success in the 21st century as the old methods have so clearly failed. It is a great shame that the British are in danger of getting rid of the beacon of light

that has been Summerhill throughout much of this century. Perhaps they don't realize just how important Summerhill's existence is to the rest of the world. I have attended many educational conferences and have met people involved in education from all corners of the world. The name of Summerhill is continually evoked as an example of an idea which has become an inspiration for many people and a demonstration that freedom works - and continues to work. In Japan the ideas of Neill and others have finally begun to be noticed by the Ministry of Education who have planned some changes to schools in the future which will incorporate some of these elements. Of course, Japanese parents have known for some time of the importance of children enjoying their childhood but the British would seem to be some way behind in advocating any right to happiness at all for their children.

I would like to express the strongest protest at any threat to Summerhill's continued existence. I am enclosing a copy of an article, "A.S. Neill's Influence on Alternatives in Education," which I hope sheds light on the importance of Neill's philosophy as put into practice at Summerhill, as it seems to have been largely ignored or misinterpreted by the British government.

Yours sincerely,
John Potter

To: Mr John Potter,
Department of Social Welfare,
Nabari Campus,
Kogakkan University,
Japan.

24 June 1999

Dear Mr Potter,

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 1999 addressed to the Secretary of State regarding Summerhill School. I have been asked to reply as independent schools fall within my area of responsibility.

It may be helpful if I explain the basic framework within which independent schools must operate. Independent schools providing full-time education for five or more pupils of compulsory school age must register with the Department. Once registered they must reach and maintain minimum standards laid down in the Education Act 1996. These relate to premises, accommodation, staffing and instruction. Independent boarding schools must also safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils. These same minimum standards, to which children are entitled by law, apply to all types of independent schools regardless of their educational philosophy. They are there to protect children and to prepare them adequately for further and higher education and for adult and working life.

Schools which fail to maintain the minimum standards, or to take steps to reach them, may be served with a Notice of Complaint requiring the weaknesses to be remedied within a given timescale. Failure to do so may result in a school being de-registered and forced to close since it is illegal to operate an unregistered school. However, our aim is always to persuade the schools themselves to make the necessary improvements wherever possible.

The HMI report published on 27 May detailed serious failings in standards at Summerhill School. Similar concerns have been highlighted previously and Summerhill has promised to take remedial action but then failed to carry it out. Last year OFSTED had found signs that Summerhill was starting to make serious plans to tackle weaknesses but the inspection this spring showed that no progress had been made and that areas of serious weakness still exist. The Secretary of State has now served a Notice of Complaint on Summerhill under Section 469 of the Education Act 1996. This spells out in detail the failings, the specific actions required by the school to put them right and the timescale for doing so. Summerhill has a right of appeal to an Independent Schools Tribunal if it disputes these.

This is not an attack on parental choice or the freedom of the independent sector, and we are not requiring Summerhill to abandon its educational philosophy and force children to attend all lessons or to follow particular educational courses. The school must, however, ensure that pupils pursue a broad and balanced curriculum (whether in lessons or in private study) monitor their progress and secure acceptable levels of achievement. It must also tackle accommodation shortcomings. I hope that Summerhill will accept that these are reasonable expectations in the interests of children, and will now work to carry them out.

Yours sincerely
Terry Hegarty
Independent Schools Registration Team
Pupil Support and Independent Schools Division

To: Terry Hegarty,
Independent Schools Registration Team,
Pupil Support and Independent Schools Division,
Department for Education and Employment,
Mowden Hall,
Staindrop Road,
Darlington DL3 9BG.

4th July 1999.

Re: Summerhill School

Dear Mr. Hegarty,

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate your taking the time to deal with my points and I note your answers with interest.

However, I feel I must write once more to make my position clearer as it seems that the explanation and clarification of the situation regarding the threat to Summerhill School has failed to answer adequately my original points.

You state that under the Education Act 1996, Summerhill is required to address "standards" and that these concern both "accommodation shortcomings" and matters of instruction. I am, of course, unable to speak for the school regarding its current accommodation arrangements, but I would like to comment on some things concerning the education of its pupils as I believe that important matters have once again been interpreted to suit those opposed to Summerhill's philosophy.

It seems to me that the crucial issue is dealt with in the final paragraph of your letter. You say that you are "not requiring Summerhill to abandon its educational philosophy and force children to attend all lessons..." This implies that children must be forced to attend *some* lessons - certainly enough to reach the so-called "acceptable levels of achievement" you

mention. Anyone familiar with A.S. Neill's writings throughout this century will know that a fundamental tenet of his philosophy is the right of children to learn only what they want to learn and only when they themselves are ready to do so. Therefore, attendance of lessons at Summerhill has always been completely voluntary and must remain so if a vital part of Neill's philosophy is not to be abandoned.

Your letter talks of a broad-based curriculum and of securing acceptable levels of achievement. First, the situation regarding pupils at Summerhill is extremely unusual as it is an international school. I understand that only about half its pupils are usually British, the remainder coming from a variety of other countries including Japan. The Japanese pupils at Summerhill generally speak no English on their arrival at the school. Therefore it is obvious that there will be wide differences in classroom achievement given the varied nature of its intake, quite apart from the fact that attendance at lessons is voluntary. The remarkable thing really is how well-balanced, both emotionally and intellectually, the many Japanese Summerhillians I have met in Japan have turned out.

But much more important than this point is that your "acceptable levels of achievement" seems to refer only to academic subjects and learning. As my earlier letter stated, the criterion of success at Summerhill is happiness, and the emotions are placed at a higher level of importance than the intellect (even if classroom 'learning' can be said to be related to intellectual development). Therefore, if any measurement is to be made it should be of happiness or the emotions. I wonder what tests of happiness the Department for Education and Employment has devised? Summerhill does not accept that education is about some contingent future that must somehow be prepared for in a way that 'experts' or politicians decide is best for children. Nevertheless it continues to be judged by these standards. I think that you are paying lip service to the idea of freedom of choice and that children themselves are perfectly well aware of what it is their own best interests. All this is dressed up by you as being for the 'protection' of children.

It is indeed ironic that Neill's Japanese translator, Shinichiro Hori, has since 1993 been running an independent school in Japan modelled on Summerhill where lessons are completely voluntary and where total freedom is given to pupils to organize the curriculum themselves. This school has not only been a great success but has been supported financially by the Japanese Ministry of Education, and is the subject of great interest among educationalists. All this in rigid, formal Japan. It is a pity that the Department for Education and Employment in Britain is unable to be more

flexible - or at least if they must judge, to try and judge Summerhill by its own standards and not someone else's.

Finally, another quote from Neill made many years ago which I sincerely hope is *not* prophetic:

“The DES has left me very much alone and will probably do so until I die. What will happen then I cannot guess. I prophesy that when I am gone the DES will make demands that will kill the principles of Summerhill - for example, making lessons compulsory; this would knock the basis out of Summerhill's freedom. Some Secretary of State may say, ‘We tolerated that school until the old man died but we cannot go on allowing a school in which children can play all day without learning lessons.’”

Yours sincerely,

John Potter

To: John Potter
Re: Summerhill School
26 July 1999

Dear Prof. Potter,

Thank you for your letter and e-mail of 4 July in response to my letter of 24 June 1999. I thought it might be helpful to address the points you raise and also give some background regarding Summerhill and independent schools in general.

There is a duty to ensure that independent schools reach and maintain standards laid down in the Education Act 1996. The inspection identified problems of attendance at lessons, of progress not being properly assessed and poor teaching in a quarter of lessons observed. The inspection reached its conclusions on that basis, following which a notice of complaint was served.

The Notice of Complaint does not require the school to change its ethos. It is about ensuring that pupils pursue a broad and balanced curriculum. This may be through lessons or private study and their progress should be

monitored effectively to ensure that acceptable levels of achievement are attained.

There is no intention of attacking parental choice or the freedom of the independent schools sector. The inspection by HMI identified serious weaknesses which need to be addressed. The key issue for HMI was to protect children's entitlement to minimum standards of education and welfare.

Yours sincerely,
Terry Hegarty
Independent Schools - Registration Team
Pupil Support and Independent Schools Division

To: Terry Hegarty
Re: Summerhill School
28 July 1999

Dear Mr. Hegarty,

I appreciate your finding the time to write to me again concerning my letter of the 4th July. However, I feel I really cannot let you get away with repeating almost word for word the same argument from your original letter of the 24th June, as your email does not genuinely address the points raised in my letter at all.

To take up one contradiction from your email. You state (again) that the Notice of Complaint "does not require the school to change its ethos." But this is exactly what it does require it to do. If you have read any of A.S.Neill's books, or were at all familiar with the ethos of Summerhill School, it would be obvious that the right to stay away from lessons - for years if you want to - is exactly what Summerhill is all about. Learning is never restricted to lessons or private study or even to such things as a "broad and balanced curriculum." It takes place all the time, but not necessarily in terms of 'curriculum'. Summerhill is like a big family and the Summerhill children have the freedom to decide when, if, how and what they will learn, and this learning takes place in many forms which may have little or nothing to do with what goes on in the classroom. The Notice of Complaint, typically, only mentions academic progress which is the least important

aspect of a Summerhill education. No mention of happiness or the emotions is to be found anywhere.

I fully understand that many people do not like or cannot accept the freedom for children which exists at Summerhill, but the school is not asking for your approval of its philosophy, merely for the right to continue to provide a happy education for those who want it. It also deserves the right to be assessed on its own terms and not judged by standards that are alien to it. (After all, a school in the State system that meets your criteria but fails to produce happy children will not be served with a Notice of Complaint).

You say that this is not an attack on parental choice. Well, of course it is. But what is worse is that it is an attack on children's entitlement to a happy life at a school they and their parents have chosen.

Just another quote from Neill to finish with as this gets to the core of the matter better than I can:

“The function of a child is to live his own life - not the life that his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows what is best.”

Yours sincerely,
John Potter,
Kogakkan University,
Japan

A letter of protest to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, received the following response:

To: John Potter
Re: Summerhill School
20 August 1999

Dear Professor Potter,

Thank you for your letter of 14 July addressed to the Prime Minister about Summerhill School. Your letter has been passed on to me to reply.

The position remains as outlined by my colleague Mr Hegarty, in his letter of 24 June.

The Secretary of State has served a Notice of Complaint on Summerhill under Section 469 of the Education Act 1996. This spells out in detail the

failings, the specific actions required by the school to put them right and the timescale for doing so. Summerhill has appealed against the Notice of Complaint and the case will in due course be considered by an Independent Schools Tribunal.

This is not an attack on parental choice or the freedom of the independent sector, and we are not requiring Summerhill to abandon its educational philosophy and force children to attend all lessons or follow particular educational courses. But we do expect Summerhill to provide safe accommodation and protect children's welfare; to ensure that pupils pursue a broad and balanced curriculum whether in lessons or in private study; to monitor their progress; and to secure acceptable levels of achievement. I hope that Summerhill will accept that those are reasonable expectations in the interests of children, and will now work to carry them out.

Yours sincerely
Janice Halliday
Independent Schools Registration Team

Just over a year from Zoe Readhead's initial letter, Summerhill's appeal against the Notice of Complaint to the Independent Schools Tribunal was heard in court. This was after a long and concerted campaign by the school and its supporters in which politicians and the media were lobbied, as in the above correspondence, and considerable sums of money were raised in order to pay the large legal fees which ensued from fighting the case. From Japan alone, more than 3,000 signatures of protest were collected and an amount of 5 million yen was donated to the Save Summerhill campaign. Although prepared to take their case on to the European Court of Human Rights in the event of the appeal failing, there was eventually no need to do this. After just three days of the hearing an agreement was reached on the 23rd March 2000. Despite government attempts in the media to obscure the outcome it is clear that this agreement effectively found in favor of Summerhill School and completely vindicated its right to follow its own path. In her lectures in Japan during November 2000, Zoe Readhead summarized the outcome as follows:

“The case was to have lasted ten days but on the third day the government approached our team and asked for a settlement. Their case was basically falling apart. They had only one witness on the stand for the whole three days most of the time being cross-examined by Geoffrey Robertson QC who represented us in court.

“We reached an agreement out of court, which has given us much more than the Tribunal itself could have given us. Among other things this agreement recognizes that Summerhill has the right to follow A.S. Neill’s philosophy. There will also be an expert appointed by the school to liaise with the Department for Education and Employment to seek resolutions to any future problems regarding inspections. The views of the school meeting (and therefore the children) will be taken into account in future inspections, and the pupils’ voices will be fully represented in any evaluation at Summerhill. The freedom of children to attend lessons or not in accordance with Neill’s philosophy is acknowledged and the number of children attending lessons will not influence any judgment of the school’s performance as it has in the past. The case has, of course, set a precedent that will be useful to other alternative schools and home-schoolers all over the world.”

The judgment of the Independent Schools Tribunal includes a nine point Statement of Intent. From this Statement, points 1 and 8 are particularly relevant in view of the above correspondence:

1. The Respondent (*The Secretary of State for Education and Employment*) recognises that this independent school, based as it is on the writings and systems of A.S. Neill, has a right to its own philosophy. He also recognises that any inspection of Summerhill should take into account Summerhill’s aims as an international free school.

8. The Respondent and the Appellant (*Zoe Readhead, Proprietor of Summerhill School*) agree the following:

- a) The views of the school as expressed in the Meeting and submitted to the Inspectors at the time of the inspection and the aims of the school will be taken fully into account on that inspection;
- b) The views expressed in the current reports of Professors Stronach, Thomas, Cunningham will be taken into account;
- c) The pupils voice should be fully represented in any evaluation of the quality of education at Summerhill;
- d) Learning is not confined to lessons and inspections must consider the full breadth of learning at Summerhill;
- e) The freedom of children to attend classroom lessons or not in accordance with Neill's philosophy is acknowledged;

f) Levels of attendance at lessons should not form the only basis for judgments of the suitability and efficiency of instruction and education at Summerhill.

Full details of the court case and its verdict can be viewed on Summerhill's internet website at: <http://www.s-hill.demon.co.uk>

An independent report on Summerhill was also conducted by a team headed by Professor Ian Cunningham of the Centre for Self-Managed Learning. This took 17 days and was in response to the OFSTED inspection. The results may be viewed at: www.selfmanagedlearning.org

Interview with Pat Edwards

By Dana Bennis

Pat Edwards is the director of Tamariki School in new Zealandl. She graciously accepted to do this interview long-distance via email.

Dana: Can you describe Tamariki School, its general philosophy and approach?

Pat: It is a primary school for 5-to-13 year olds.

Dana: How many kids are there and what ages?

Pat: Currently we have 52, and the maximum allowed is 60. We did have 60 kids for about 6 years but the roll has dropped a bit in the last year.

Dana: What has your involvement with the school been?

Pat: I was among the founding parents, started working at the school in 1968 when it had been going for a year, and became principal about 1978.

Dana: How does Tamariki address school governance?

Pat: We became a state funded school in 1990 and have to comply with government regulations for governance. These state that the school is run by an elected Board of Trustees, and all our Board of Trustees is currently drawn from the parents, three elected members, two appointed by the

Society (the body of parents, who own the school) a staff member, and the principal. We would happily have a child on it if they wanted, and two have attended and found it terminally boring. However ex-pupils on reaching adolescence become more interested and we have had two represent the student bodies at their respective high schools. The Board is basically responsible for handling the government's money in accordance with regulations.

The school community makes its rules in whole school meeting. At the moment attendance at these is not compulsory and about 70 - 80% of children attend routinely. These may be called at any time by anyone who wants them.

Dana: Are there any issues the meeting cannot address?

Pat: Teachers have an overriding vote for safety. Otherwise no.

Dana: Do kids have to attend classes?

Pat: No.

Dana: What is a typical day like?

Pat: Kids arrive from 8.30 on, some not till 11 or so, which can be difficult as we are supposed to know where they all are. They drift in, check out friends and what is happening. On the whole most of the older ones go into the classroom, do some language and maths, things that they have organized with the teacher as being things they either wish to do or have identified as needing to do for high school. Classes are very informal and conversational, there will usually be several kids who are not participating but just like to be there while it is going on and will be doing quiet things of their own. Others will get some sort of game or play activity going on in other rooms.

There are two rooms set up for younger children but they are used by mixed age groups, painting, playing board games, or with blocks, magic cards, lego etc, etc. Outside, even in the rain there will be a group of mainly younger boys playing some interminable cops and robbers game. Kids will be using the sand pit, building huts, cooking food, digging roads on the dirt heap, skateboarding, riding bikes, practising dances, listening to music, and talking, talking, talking. In the afternoons there are often such things as special art classes, clay work, sports instruction, science experiments, drama.

At any time there may be a meeting either a whole school one for some booking matter or to make or change a rule, or a small one where a kid has broken a rule and affected another kid through this. The kids instituted what they call the request system 35 years ago and it still works well. After they have made a rule they can then legally request a kid to operate in terms of

that rule, and if the kid does not comply they call a small meeting to sort the matter out.

Dana: That is very interesting. At The Free School our most important rule is the “Stop Rule.” If someone is doing something to you that you do not like and you feel may escalate into a larger problem, you can say: “STOP,” and the other person has to listen. A violation of the stop rule is taken very seriously at our meetings. The request system seems pretty similar.

Pat: The first rule kids ever made was that when you said stop people had to stop. Six months on they found that kids might say stop but their body language and expression said keep going, so they invented the request system at one of the most interesting meetings I have ever been at.

Dana: How did the school start?

Pat: A group of parents, teachers and members of a Society interested in preventative mental health got together at the beginning of 1966 to share their concerns and look at the possibility of starting a school on Summerhill lines. We opened in September 1967. The emphasis on giving kids a real childhood has remained.

Dana: How does Summerhill influence the school?

Pat: We are different of course, because we are in a different country with a different history, we are not a boarding school, and we seek to help parents grow as well as children, but Summerhill is nonetheless a great influence. I was at the conference there in 1999 and I thought their 14 year olds were just superb and wished with all my heart that we had older kids here.

Dana: How has the public and the education system in New Zealand reacted to Tamariki?

Pat: Initially they thought we were crazy, that children would not learn unless they were made to, that there were probably licentious encounters at every turn. Now we are almost respectable, especially as so many of the kids do well at high school, are so mature, and impress other people as adults so much that they send their kids here so they can have the same sort of experience. We are still regarded as extremely radical, but doing some good for some kids.

The educational establishment varies. Those who know their research think we are on the right track. The traditionalists think we short change children and don't equip them well enough for the big world.

Dana: Do you offer scholarships to students?

Pat: No. Our charges are now not much, about \$15 (US) a week, and parents mostly manage that.

Dana: Do you know how graduates have fared after leaving Tamariki?

Pat: Usual mixture. Some went to university and got degrees, many have taken on a wide variety of experiences - some have been very settled from the beginning of their adult life. Most are in jobs they like and do well at, all the ones I know continue to learn and grow. Because they still have up to five more years school after they leave here things can be quite hard, even the best high school is very much more controlling than Tamariki and by 15 kids are often fed up with the school attitudes to learning and to the students.

Dana: Why did your school want to host the IDEC?

Pat: Because it is such a great experience to meet lots of other people doing the same things, struggling in the same ways, with the same passions for giving their children a good start in life.

Dana: Are there other alternative schools in New Zealand?

Pat: There are two other democratic schools, one here in Christchurch which started to take our overflow, with about 15 kids, and one in the north of the South Island with about the same number. There have been about 10 others but all have finally died. There are also Steiner and Montessori schools which would call themselves alternative.

Dana: Here in the US, the big push from the government in recent years is towards increased testing and standardization. Do you feel a similar push in New Zealand?

Pat: Yes but it is being strongly resisted by all the schools and there may not be the political will at the moment.

Dana: Can this trend be reversed?

Pat: I'm sure it will be eventually but some children's lives may be very badly affected before that happens. It was the norm 70 years ago, but there are few people left who remember how pointless it was, and so we might have to go through it again. I don't think it will last as long this time. People know a lot more about how learning happens than they did then. Mind you knowledge has very little impact on fear and prejudice.

In A Box

From David Gribble's book, **Real Education: varieties of freedom**: "In 1966 two women in Christchurch, New Zealand, inspired by the examples of Summerhill and Mataranga, an alternative school in Wellington, called a public meeting to discuss the issues that concerned them. The first meeting was attended by about thirty people, of whom a third were parents unhappy with ordinary schools, a third were unsatisfied teachers and a third were from a psychological society which wanted schools to give greater consideration to mental health. It was decided to form a school, and every week the group met to discuss philosophy and to find ways of raising money. The school, Tamariki, opened with ten children between the ages of five to eleven in September 1967. In January 1968, at the beginning of the next New Zealand school year, the school grew to about twenty, and moved into an old boarding house with a big garden. The schools stayed there for twenty-five years...Lessons were voluntary, as they were at Summerhill, but there was not even a regular timetable of lessons, except for at the start of the day for the oldest children. Groups or individuals worked with teachers only when they found it appropriate. However, for [teacher] June Higginbottom, this was not the essential issue; what concerned her most was passing on disciplinary control to the children. She refused to take control herself, and when the children asked her to sort out the conflicts that arose she said they must find ways to do that for themselves...The next question was what to do when someone didn't obey a formal request. The answer the children devised was the meeting system...In 1990 the school became integrated, that is to say supported by the state. They [received state funds] to build a new school, the teachers got proper salaries and the school got \$50,000 a year on top of that...There are now sixty children in the school, and there is a waiting list."

Book Reviews

Ron Miller's Free Schools, Free People
By Herb Snitzer

Edith Hamilton, the Greek scholar, once remarked that, "leisure and the pursuit of knowledge, the connection was inevitable – to a Greek." The

Greek word for leisure was *scholē*, what we now call school but leisure is a far cry from what we demand of children these days.

One hundred years ago union leaders were finally able to get child labor laws passed, thus getting children out of the factories, replaced by adult workers making adult salaries. But what of the kids being replaced? What was the culture to do with thousands of children? The result was to make schooling compulsory and to structure schools as if they were production lines, taking “raw materials” and passing them through a series of graded exercises eventually producing an “educated” person (which was soon to be replaced by a trained person). We made a crucial mistake a hundred years ago and continue to do so today. Being an educated person is a far cry from being trained to perform specific functions within a corporate or institutional setting, with nary a philosophy, history or ethics course ever taken, either on a high school or college setting.

It was against this growing rigidity in American education that a number of brave and determined educators, beginning with Homer Lane at The Ford Republic School in Detroit where he instituted a program of teaching responsibility through self-government, began to appear on the education scene. Perhaps the most famous of these educators was A. S. Neill, founder and first head of The Summerhill School, in Leiston, Suffolk, England.

Neill was my mentor, a close friend for the last thirteen years of his life (I met him when he was 77, I was 28). He also wrote the introduction to my 1972 book, *Today Is For Children*. He was (is) the most important influence in my life when it comes to living as full a life given my early childhood conflicts.

It was Neill’s 1959 book, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*, (Hart Publishing) that set the tone of The Free School Movement, giving others the direction and strength to start free schools throughout The United States and elsewhere.

A long overdue book, *Free Schools, Free People; Education and Democracy After the 1960s* by Ron Miller (State University of New York Press) has now been published, giving an excellent overview of that time (1959 - 1976) regarding the restive atmosphere enabling free schools to open and in some cases, prosper. One can do no wrong but to add this book to a beginning understanding of what happened in American education during those dramatic years of racial, cultural and political change.

I am only sorry that Miller did not take the time to interview people who actually ran free schools, rather than concentrating on the writings of John Holt and George Dennison (whose influence was not as great as represented here). It was a pleasure however to “meet” old friends through the pages of this book: Jonathan Kozol, Len Solo, Peter and Kat Mann, Dave Dellinger and others who made up what Miller calls The Free School Movement. He suggests that the Movement actually lasted a short five years (1967 - 72) yet The Barker School was started in 1959, The SummerLane School in 1962, The Lewis-Wadhams School (of which I was one of three founders) in 1963, The Minnesota Summerhill Community School around the same time. I was

never able to fully grasp what Miller meant by a “Movement,” but when one is immersed in day to day life in a highly active school community the idea of a movement is not on the front burner.

Actually there were so many different approaches taken. I know that in Lewis-Wadhams drugs were not tolerated, the community voting out a number of students who were given prior warnings to stop using drugs, while other schools had a more accepting if not loose approach to drug usage. The same was true for sex between students and staff members, a no-no at Lewis-Wadhams, not so at other places where almost-anything-goes was the mantra. (It has always been my position that the misuse of sex and drugs were the major reasons many free schools closed).

One of the very unique features of the Free School Movement was the idea of voluntary classes, and this was the one issue never resolved between Lewis-Wadhams and The New York State Board of Regents. “Kids don’t have to go to classes?” was the usual question of education officials and some parents. “Yes, that’s right, classes are voluntary,” I would exclaim. “Kids go to classes they want to attend, and are free to do what they want with their time,” I would further add. This idea of voluntary classes was distorted by the popular press to mean that kids could do anything they wanted - a Lord of The Flies mentality which was in fact anything but. I used to point out that the United States is a democracy (long before Ashcroft) advocating freedom yet America has thousands of laws and regulations. My protestations usually fell on deaf ears.

What is of continuing interest to me is the fact that social and political commentators reflecting back on the sixties and early seventies almost never mention the Free School Movement as being central or even important, yet there is no doubt in my mind that alternative public schools, a more tolerant approach to learning, and other innovative education approaches are the outgrowth of what happened in American education through the efforts, dreams, and determination of a handful of people willing to go their own way.

Ron Miller is to be congratulated for taking the time and effort to bring our attention what took place in American education during the sixties and early seventies. I hope he will do a follow-up on what took place - day by day - at the various schools and how those living in those school communities dealt with the internal as well as external pressures coming from education and political establishments. (A visit by the FBI and an undercover agent hired as a staff member were but two of the many happenings at Lewis-Wadhams.) All free schools came under one form of attack or another from state education departments or local education officials, although I must say, living in the Adirondack Mountains had its advantages given their live and let live approach. I was never invited to join the local Kiwanas Club but then we were never visited by the local American Legion either.

Free schools were far from a romantic lifestyle, yet it brought together people from all social and political spectrums, driven by a dream that all

people can live together in peace, respecting each other's differences while also celebrating in each other the ideas and ideals of freedom, participatory democracy and the ability to make a significant contribution as part of the nerve of our generation and time.

Those years were individually and collectively transformative and we are all the better for them. Thank you Ron Miller. Buy his book.

Jean Liedloff's "The Continuum Concept"

By Steve Rosenthal

In 1985 Jean Liedloff published a book entitled *The Continuum Concept*, of which John Holt said, "If the world could be saved by a book, this just might be the book."

The "continuum concept" is the idea that newborn children's expectations are the results of millions of years of development since the first single cell animal. Similarly adults have an innate ability to parent. In our modern day cultures parents approach to raising children is a haphazard conglomeration of what they have seen on TV, in movies and read in books. The difference between what babies expect and what they experience has a direct impact on their inherent potential for wellbeing.

The Continuum Concept is a result of Jean Liedloff living with the Stone Age Yequana tribe in Venezuela. The book describes many scenes from the life of the Yequana and details Jean Liedloff's view of child development. Here is a description of her Italian guides and the Indians carrying a loaded dugout canoe over half a mile of boulders: "...before me were several men engaged in a single task. Two, the Italians, were tense, frowning, losing their tempers at everything, and cursing nonstop. The rest, Indians, were having a fine time. They were laughing at the unwieldiness of the canoe, making a game of the battle, relaxed between pushes, laughing at their own scrapes and especially amused when the canoe, as it wobbled forward, pinned one, then another, underneath it. The fellow held bare-backed against the scorching granite, when he could breathe again, invariably laughed the loudest, enjoying his relief."

Jean Liedloff now lives in Sausalito, CA. She is a speaker and consults with people to help apply the principles of *The Continuum Concept*. She does not use a computer and doesn't return written correspondence. She may be reached by telephone at (415) 332-1570, 9am-12:00 noon or 5pm-9pm PST.

She found the Balinese to be like the Yequana. Two videos of Balinese families are available at the Liedloff Continuum Network website: continuum-concept.org. The Liedloff Continuum Network is a worldwide network of people who are living by the Continuum principles.

The Continuum Concept is published by Perseus Books, ISBN 0-201-05071-4.

Feedback on our last issue:

Jerry, I have just received the last issue of your magazine. The content was not a surprise for me as I was sure of its excellence and competence. It is surely a hallmark of your journal. You now have also quite improved the format, the presentation of the articles and the overall form of the magazine. Congratulations! I'm sure it still can grow to become a prominent national and international qualified journal. Phil.

Jerry, I received my issue today. I started reading it cover to cover. Got interrupted, but can't wait to get back to it. Seems chock full of readable great info from a variety of sources. I like that. Kathleen.

Jerry, Your Summer 2002 issue of Education Revolution is a dandy. I don't know when I will have time to surf out all the interesting websites. Thanks for all the hard work for little kids. Dale.

Greetings Jerry, I just received a copy of the spring ed of Education Revolution - I am enjoying the articles, especially your article about the visit to the MET - I remember your narrative style from Aerogramme- it makes me feel like I am there with you - thanks for the visit. Maggie.

Hi, Jerry, I had a marvelous time at the recent Sudbury Valley Conference and am now doubly inspired. Sudbury Maui has gone out on a limb renting a new campus. We expect 15 kids Sept. 3rd and are doing lots of PR to bring in a few more to help pay the rent and staff, but all in all we are doing well and the energy/enthusiasm level is high - the kids are great. Trust all goes well with you. Aloha, Liz. Email: liz@sudburymaui.org.

Glad to hear about your great trip to England. I'll be looking forward to reading the details in the magazine. You're doing a GREAT service here Jerry. You're a mapmaker! Thanks for taking all of your risks! It helps make the road so much easier for others! Kimberly Kassner. Email: Kassner@aol.com.

Hi there, I am really very eager to get involved in alternative education and look forward to the upcoming issues of Education Revolution - its really a great magazine and has been very helpful in providing me with a broader understanding of what kind of alternative schools exist as well as what their individual goals are. It inspires me to get involved and to throw myself in with absolute dedication to teaching children what my own education left out. I also wanted to let you know how much it is appreciated that you and your staff respond directly and with enthusiasm to your subscribers - it really makes a difference. Its made me realize that what I want to do with my life is that much more possible because there are people in the field who want to help. Thanks again, Angela.

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New Offer! *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 **Special to AERO subscribers: Reduced from \$25 to \$19.95 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 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 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 several years, 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. Canada, add \$5. Out of US, add \$10-\$15 for air mail postage. **Special for paid subscribers, only \$10 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..

***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! What are Schools For, by Ron Miller \$20**

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***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

***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 centers 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. The 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 70th anniversary celebration in August, 1991, featuring more alumni interviews, and a Summerhill democratic meeting. **We also have a 1995 tape of Sands School and Summerhill. \$25 each**

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

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