

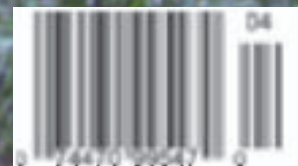
The Magazine of Alternative Education

Education Revolution

I s s u e N u m b e r F o r t y T h r e e

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Education Revolution

The Magazine of Alternative Education

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AERO, which produces this magazine quarterly, is firmly established as a leader in the field of educational alternatives. Founded in 1989 in an effort to promote learner-centered education and influence change in the education system, AERO is an arm of the School of Living, a non-profit organization. AERO provides information, resources and guidance to students, parents, schools and organizations regarding their educational choices.

The mission of *The Education Revolution* magazine is based on that of the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO): "Building the critical mass for the education revolution by providing resources which support self-determination in learning and the natural genius in everyone." Towards this end, this magazine includes the latest news and communications regarding the broad spectrum of educational alternatives: public alternatives, independent and private alternatives, home education, international alternatives, and more. The common feature in all these educational options is that they are *learner-centered*, focused on the interest of the child rather than on an arbitrary curriculum.

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Education Revolution

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Real Schools – In Their Own Words

Mary M. Leue, Editor
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“This marvelous volume is packed with fascinating essays and reminiscences by many of the most passionate and radical educators of our generation.

“In their intimate descriptions of democratic schools, we see how a truly progressive and person-centered education builds community and changes lives. It will be hard to settle for a conventional school after reading this book and seeing what is possible.”

Ron Miller, Ph.D, Goddard College
Author of *Free Schools, Free People: Education and Democracy After the 1960s*

“It is important to be able to recognize a gem when you see it. And you have to know where to go to find them. Mary Leue’s new book, “Real Schools – In Their Own Words,” is such a gem. Mary’s publications are always low profile and hard to find. But for those who know them, they provide a texture and context which is important, even crucial for us to understand if we are to create educational environments which will truly serve our children. “This book touches upon 27 schools that have something unique about them. They vary greatly in location, time and mode of operation. They have in common a respect and understanding of children that is sorely needed for all children today.”

Jerry Mintz, Director
Alternative Education
Resource Organization

Welcome to the Education Revolution!

I’m pleased that in this issue we can offer a pocket guide to the great educational reformers, pre-20th century. It’s good to know that someone else has been there first.

Jerry’s piece about helping a large Indian school democratize shows what can be done when you start with some great kids and an administration that is open to change.

albertlamb@bigfoot.com

A Word from Jerry

Since getting back from India I’ve had many wonderful email messages from kids at the New Panvel DAV School. My days spent there helping them create democratic structures for their school seems to be paying off. Here’s a sample:

HELLO SIR
WE ARE FEELING LONELY WITHOUT YOU
PLEASE COME AND VISIT US ONE MORE TIME
HOW ARE YOU ? HOW IS AMERICA ?
I HOPE YOU WILL BE FINE
ARE YOU MISSING US ?
TODAY ONLY WE GOT FREE FROM STUDIES
AS ALL DAYS WE ARE BUSY WITH STUDIES
WE TOO WILL TRY TO VISIT AMERICA

LOVINGLY MUTHUKUMAR

Mr. JERRYMINTZ,
After you came to our school it is becoming more and more democratic. Now we are enjoying it. In some festivals we can wear whatever we want. Now, I think it’s the biggest democratic school you have ever seen. We want it to be fully democratic. Now we can go to the library in any free period. Thanks a lot. Please come again.

SHILEEN
5th b D.A.V.Public School

JERRY, WHEN YOU CAME AND TOLD US ABOUT DEMOCRACY, FROM THAT DAY ONWARDS, I THINK THAT DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE HERE.
I THINK THAT WE SHOULD CHOOSE OUR OWN CLOTHES, BUT TEACHERS WE SHOULD NOT CHOOSE ON OUR OWN. A SWIMMING POOL SHOULD BE HERE.
WHEN THERE ARE TESTS, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO WRITE THE TEST ON COMPUTER. JERRY I AM MISSING YOU. WHEN WILL YOU COME AGAIN?

VAISHNA

Looking for News

with Albert Lamb

Education News?

One difficulty in finding what is going on out in the world is that the terms in which education is discussed are so full of jargon and technical, or politically based, terminology that it is hard to be sure what is going on even when you read all about it. The NCLB, or the No Child Left Behind Act, is a case in point. It is a legal structure with a friendly name put in place by American legislators with the leadership of the Bush administration in Washington. A package of laws filled with new requirements for teachers, schools and state school systems. It has been in place for a while now but who knows what is really happening with it? As soon as you try to investigate you find yourself drowning in a sea of educationese. Try this one on for size. In November the American Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, announced a major adjustment to the NCLB laws (it was what the British press would call a “Climb Down”) and I challenge anyone to tell me what she was talking about:

“We’re open to new ideas, but we’re not taking our eye off the ball. There are many different routes for states to take, but they all must begin with a commitment to annual assessment and disaggregation of data. And they all must lead to closing the achievement gap and every student reaching grade level by 2014.

“A growth model is not a way around accountability standards. It’s a way for states that are already raising achievement and following the bright-line principles of the law to strengthen accountability.” *Secretary Spellings Announces Growth Model Pilot, Addresses Chief State School Officers’ Annual Policy Forum in Richmond November 18, 2005 Quoted on the Education Department website.*

When I moved to England, 17 years ago, it took me a few years to come up to speed with all the local terms about educational provision and then they changed many of them. It is all something of a verbal shell game designed to keep the uninitiated confused. If you are really interested in why the NCLB Act has run into such trouble there is a study that came out recently, a study you can look up on line. Here’s the introduction:

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) expanded the federal role in American education, and by doing so altered the distribution of power among the federal government, states, and local districts. When the law was enacted, it was unclear how this change in the distribution of power would play itself out. This study examines the developing set of relationships between federal, state, and local officials under the new law and the factors that have contributed to a growing conflict over implementation. To fully understand the implications of NCLB requires examining these interactions as well as understanding the substantive educational issues it raises. We identify three factors that contributed to the growing dissatisfaction with the law, namely, the Bush administration’s approach to federalism, the states’ limited capacity to meet the new requirements, and the fiscal constraints facing state governments. We argue that these factors have contributed to the conflict with federal officials, eroded state commitment to the law, and complicated implementation efforts.

Teachers College Record, Date Published: November 03, 2005 <http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 12227

But the more serious question is “What the hell is really going on in the world of education?” Here in the UK the New Labour government is talking about expanding the National Curriculum, which now dictates what kids have to do in the classroom even down to 20 and 40 minute weekly segments, into the area of early childhood. Daycare centers will be required to tick literacy boxes for kids that can hardly walk and talk while offering them prescribed activities. And this is being done at a time when childhood is already under all sorts of new threats. Sue Gerhardt describes the situation in the UK very well in her piece, *Mind the Baby* on page 20 . Here is another angle on the problem, from a Guardian newspaper column by Jenni Russell that appeared here recently, on November 26:

Almost imperceptibly, and without any discussion about its desirability, we have arrived at a situation where adults feel they are not allowed to interact with children, unless they are professionals, relations or friends. In the past three decades, anxieties about abuse have merged with a growing individualism in our patterns of child-rearing. Children have become the private concern of their parents. This is a historically unprecedented way for children to be brought up – leaving the job exclusively to parents and paid professionals. It is a toxic combination, for just as adults have been forced to retreat from a generalised responsibility for socialising the young, so many of the families that retain it have either been disintegrating, or finding themselves so preoccupied with work and their own needs that there is little time left to respond to their children.

Childhood is becoming something radically different than what it was in even the recent past. Children hold such a different place in society that questions about their education have to be seen in a different context. When they start talking about the state imposing a curriculum on toddlers you know that somebody has crossed a line. Exactly who is crossing the line, the needs of government or industry, can be hard to figure.

Our contributor to this issue, Sue Gerhard, wrote a book recently called *Why Love Matters – How affection shapes a babies brain* where she connects recent findings in brain research to traditional psychological models of early childhood development. Children learn their emotional vocabulary, and their nervous system actually gets shaped, in their first couple

of years and this takes place largely within their relationship with their parents.

The majority of parents now are working outside of the home and they mostly leave the care of their kids to professionals, starting at a very early age. Even if kids are going to end up in alternative schools the emotional damage may be done:

Study: Preschool harms children's development, by Ron Strom: A new study on the effects of preschool on children, which finds attendance harms kids' emotional and social development, is being used by a homeschool organization to help encourage parents to educate their children at home. The study, conducted at UC Berkeley and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, found that while youngsters gained cognitive abilities via the preschool experience, behavioral problems also increased – especially among kids from wealthy families. “The biggest eye-opener is that the suppression of social and emotional development, stemming from long hours in preschool, is felt most strongly by children from better-off families,” said UC Berkeley sociologist and study co-author Bruce Fuller. On average, the report finds that the earlier a child enters a preschool center, the slower his or her pace of social development, while cognitive skills in pre-reading and math are stronger when children first enter a preschool program between the ages of 2 and 3. The study found that children who attended preschool at least 15 hours a week displayed more negative social behaviors when compared with their stay-at-home peers. Fuller says those elected officials pushing for compulsory preschool should rethink the idea. The report, entitled “The Influence of Preschool Centers on Children's Development Nationwide: How Much Is Too Much?” looked at 14,000 kindergartners across the nation. The Morningstar Education Network is using the results of the survey to point parents in the direction of homeschooling. “These negative social behaviors children are displaying are getting worse,” said Denise Kanter, Morningstar's research adviser, in a statement. “A child's success in life and academic performance hinges on their healthy social and emotional development. Young children need to be at home bonding with their mothers and fathers.”
http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=47322

Predictably, big government and big business can't really be trusted with looking after the emotional life of children. John Gatto, in his *Underground History of Education*, available from Oxford Village press and now, on his own website, available on line, talks about the genesis of this in his prologue:

Exactly what John Dewey heralded at the onset of the twentieth century has indeed happened. Our once highly individualized nation has evolved into a centrally managed village, an agora made up of huge special interests which regard individual voices as irrelevant. The masquerade is managed by having collective agencies speak through particular human beings. Dewey said this would mark a great advance in human affairs, but the net effect is to reduce men and women to the status of functions in whatever subsystem they are placed. Public opinion is turned on and off in laboratory fashion. All this in the name of social efficiency, one of the two main goals of forced schooling.

Dewey called this transformation “the new individualism.” When I stepped into the job of schoolteacher in 1961, the new individualism was sitting in the driver's seat all over



In our next issue we'll be looking at a lovely Vermont family-run school from the recent past: East Hill School

urban America, a far cry from my own school days on the Monongahela when the Lone Ranger, not Sesame Street, was our nation's teacher, and school things weren't nearly so oppressive. But gradually they became something else in the euphoric times following WWII. Easy money and easy travel provided welcome relief from wartime austerity, the advent of television, the new nonstop theater, offered easy laughs, effortless entertainment. Thus preoccupied, Americans failed to notice the deliberate conversion of formal education that was taking place, a transformation that would turn school into an instrument of the leviathan state.

America doesn't hold the monopoly on the Leviathan State. The following article from the *Christian Science Monitor* shows that Japan has gone down a similar road. It's good to read about the tinkering and the jockeying for power in another culture:

“Conservative academics and lawmakers are concerned about Japan's national strength on the back of falling academic ability, while those on the left point to a growing polarization between top students and underachievers,” says Yuki Honda, an assistant professor specializing in alternative education systems at the University of Tokyo. Japan's education system currently aims to promote flexibility in the classroom and provide more leeway in learning styles. Known as *yutori kyoiiku*, the system is based on education guidelines from the 1970s. Back then, long lesson hours and the voluminous amount of material covered were reduced in an effort to make school more enjoyable. The policy was also partly a response to increasing truancy, vandalism, and other juvenile crimes that were seen as fallout from strict teaching methods.

From 1980, curriculums moved away from rote learning, and toward the development of creativity and problem solving skills. But two changes in 2002 proved to be a lightning rod for critics: the six-day school week was replaced permanently with a five-day week, and the introduction of a cross-disciplinary class designed to teach children to apply a wider knowledge base when approaching problems. The five-day week, implemented in stages since 1992, has reduced total class time over the first nine years of a child's education from 6,964 hours to 6,475 hours, while the cross-disciplinary class resulted in another 30 percent drop in regular lesson time.

After years of criticism that Japan was going soft on its students, the OECD poll appeared to have convinced the Ministry of Education that the system wasn't working. Senior ministry officials indicated earlier this year that they were

ready to bow to broad-based political pressure and hammer out a new direction for education policy, while more recently there have been signs that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi plans to focus more on education. Changes on the drawing board include increasing lesson time for science and math, reintroducing Saturday classes, and shortening vacation periods.

But while the push for a longer learning schedule was gaining momentum, the ministry released results of the first aptitude tests since the 2002 reforms. Conducted in January and February of 2004, fifth and sixth grade elementary school students scored better than their predecessors in 2002 on 43 percent of questions. When the results for the three years of junior high school are included, average scores were higher for all grades in all 23 subjects tested with the exception of first year junior high social studies and math. "It is obvious the assumption that the lenient curriculum is causing a decline in academic ability is unfounded," says Hisashi Fusegi, a professor of education at Shinshu University in central Japan.

Proponents of *yutori kyoiku* say the debate over declining academic ability has been significantly influenced by elite corporations as well as some university teachers who want

to ensure a steady supply of high achievers. Opponents of the so-called lenient curriculum argue that education should respond to market forces whereby schools are accountable for students' results. Parents in particular have been vocal opponents of the five-day school week. Some parents simply don't want to look after their kids for one extra day as it means a loss of time at the workplace. Many more are concerned their children aren't getting enough learning time. Indeed, surveys show that half of parents think their children need extra education outside of regular school as long as the lenient education policy remains. Some polls even suggest that the gap in scholastic ability is widening between children from wealthy households, which can afford to send their children to private schools as well as pay high cram-school fees, and their peers who attend regular public schools.

Schools have tried to compensate for the loss of teaching hours on Saturday by increasing classroom time on weekdays. Last year, 90 percent of elementary schools taught longer hours than required under ministry guidelines, and when the new school year kicked off in May, surveys showed that elementary and junior high schools were increasing classroom time by another 12 percent.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0804/p13s02-woap.html>

Being There

with Jerry Mintz

Conference in India

Dr. K.B. Kushal, director of the Dayanand Institute of Education Management and Research, had invited me for the second time to keynote a conference in India. Their parent organization, the Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) Schools have 700 schools around India and they are over a century old. Their schools are English speaking, and their mission statement says they are student-centered. He also wanted me to stay on after the conference to help democratize the 2400 student school where his office is located, the New Panvel DAV.

I flew out of New York on September 29th and arrived in India just after midnight on Saturday, October, 1st. Along the way I completed writing my keynote for the DAV youth science fair.

On the first leg, to England, I got a bit of sleep. By the time I arrived in Mumbai I had crossed 10 time zones in 14 hours of flying. I was put in a 7 star hotel that had all of the amenities and even complete broadband Internet access in the room.

In the morning I printed out my talk in the hotel's business center. A driver met me and brought me to the conference site, the Thane DAV school. The opening ceremonies were in a huge tent erected for the purpose which held more than 800 people. They had over 8000 attend the entire three-day event.

Upon arrival a delegation put a red, flower encrusted mark on my forehead, which was reserved for the top dignitaries. I was then marched down a red carpet to the front row where the group was being introduced one by one and



taking their place on the stage. Among them there was the local mayor, police chief, regional director and the vice president of the DAV, and a governor. They all spoke to the large audience. After the governor spoke I gave my keynote, which was rather radical, as I believe Dr. Kushal had wanted it to be.

My keynote was well received. Someone said that the politicians seems to particularly like the critique of traditional schooling. The students enjoyed the

poem that I wrote at age 15 about my feelings and frustration with my school experience.

After my talk I visited dozens of science exhibits and projects done by the students. When I walked into a room and looked at one exhibit, there was no leaving until each and every student had explained their project to me.

That first evening I met Dr. Kushal, his wife and their son for supper. We tentatively planned the three days when I would be in the New Panvel school, and talked about the groups I would want to meet with.

On the second day of the conference Dr. Kushal thought it would be good for me to do a follow up workshop on democratic education. Of course, everything here was very tightly scheduled beforehand, so I wondered who might show up. They gave me the conference room on the fourth floor of the school. They asked me to name the workshop, so I called it "Democratic Education and Student Empowerment."

First they asked me to sit in on the elocution competition and say a few words to the students at the end of the event. They said it would be an hour and a half but it was longer, with 50 students speaking 3 minutes each on one of three subjects: "Imagine a world without science;" "The aftermath of the Tsunami," and "The energy crisis." Some of the students were quite good, some dramatic, some panicked and froze, They were around 10 or 11-years-old in this particular competition.

When I spoke at the end I first asked if my remarks were going to be judged and graded. When the kids laughed I pointed out to them that none that I had heard had used humor as a way of getting people's attention. I pointed out to them that, even if they didn't win the competition that they were all winners because they had been practicing so hard for this, and the ability to do

effective public speaking was an asset that would last them a lifetime and be an important tool.



An announcement was made on the school PA system that my unscheduled workshop would be in the conference room at 3:30. I went up to the room and when 3:30 came there were only three girls there. I heard another announcement on the PA system. A few more people began to trickle into the room. I put the chairs in a circle, not expecting too many more, and had the India IDEC video started. I narrated it, explaining what was going on. I think it was a good way to start because it had taken place in India and they could relate to it.

After it had run about 15 minutes, people began piling into the room, mostly students, I stopped the video and began the workshop. I gave an overview of democratic education and how it worked, where the democratic schools were, etc. I mentioned that at the IDEC in India I had demonstrated democratic process to two different Indian Montessori schools. As a result they had gone back to their schools and democratized them. One, Naama Scaale had even subsequently demonstrated it to other schools that wanted to democratize.

I was going to go on and give them more general information, but it was clear that they wanted me to demonstrate democratic process with this group right on the spot. I hadn't planned to do that, partly because this was not a cohesive group or community, but consisted of students, teachers and administrators from several schools, some of them not

even DAV schools. Nevertheless, I decided to give it a shot, because they were so eager to do it.

I explained to them how to put things on the agenda: For example, the issue could be a problem or it could be a positive suggestion for the group. We got a volunteer student to take the log and record the proceedings. I also explained to them the idea of the "I r o q u o i s democracy" in which, after a motion is passed, the minority has the chance to say why

they voted the way they did and a revote could be called for or a new proposal made.

Here's what they put on the agenda to discuss:

No Homework on Holidays

Students getting a chance to select their own teachers

Timetables being made by students

Students grading teachers

Students choosing their own subjects.

More field trips (excursions)

With these agenda items I began to understand what this group had become. They were now a sort of instant, mostly student, think tank. These would be their general recommendations and positions.

The first item we discussed was about homework. Someone suggested that homework could be given on holidays, but that it should be a limited amount. This was discussed, along with the concept of homework, itself. The vote on that proposal was 16 in favor, 24 against. Those against included students who didn't like the concept of homework itself.

The proposal to have no homework assigned during holidays was passed 32-14. Some of those not in favor voted



Dr Chopra and Dr K.B Kushal

against because they were against the concept of homework. Others thought homework was a good learning tool.

A proposal that more time should be given for homework was passed 23-12, even though some pointed out that this did not mesh with the previous vote. So it was then interpreted to me that if homework were to be given, more time to do it should be allowed.

Finally, a proposal that a free period should be given to complete homework was passed 20-18. But during the comment period for those who voted against, it was made clear that some had voted against because they didn't agree with the idea of assigning homework. In the subsequent revote this was defeated 16 for, 21 against. When a motion is defeated we move on. There is no more discussion of it.

Along the way it was pointed out by some that they had no objection to assignments by teachers if that course was freely chosen, and the student had chosen to study that subject under that teacher.

The time fled and soon it was almost 5 O'Clock, time to end for the day. The students pleaded to be able to have another session on the next day. A parent from Pune also requested it. The principal of the DAV school in Airoly was there the whole time, very supportive of the discussion, and we talked about what had happened in some detail after the workshop.

Overall I am very encouraged by this process and have hope that we will find a way to employ democratic process in some of these schools.

Day three started out early for me, as I woke up at 5:30 and wrote the above.

Breakfast didn't happen until 9:30 when I met with Dr. Kushal, and the Chairman of the DAV, Dr. Chopra, a remarkable and Gandhi-like 85 year old. We talked about many things, including Chopra's pioneering work exposing the effect that the dowry system had had on reducing the

relative female population in India. We also talked about our plans for the school in New Panvel later in the week.

We arrived at the conference site, the Thane DAV School, amid pomp and ceremony as the Chairman and his wife were greeted. We hadn't got there until nearly noon and I doubted it would be possible to have the continuation of the meeting from the day before. Nevertheless, Dr. Kushal found a way to arrange it on the spot, in spite of his many other conference responsibilities. The ability to react spontaneously to such opportunities is one important positive indicator to me.

Again I went to the 4th floor conference room and again there were just a few kids there. But another announcement was made and gradually the room filled to even a greater extent than the day before, reaching perhaps 100 students and teachers.

I started out by reading my notes from the day before. There were many returnees, mostly students, but there were also many other new people and quite a large number of teachers and parents.

We found another log keeper and continued the meeting from where we left off the day before. We jumped right into a hot issue, "Students getting a chance to select their own teachers." The boy who put on the agenda item was present and described the topic.

Many aspects of this were discussed, with students and teachers predictably differing in their point of view. Question of "qualifications" were brought up. One teacher said that students should not be given this power as they were not mature enough to judge teachers. Students said they were capable of judging and should have this right. The possibility of cooperation between students and teachers was suggested.

The first proposal made, by a teacher, was that students should show more respect for teachers. Respect was not defined. Nevertheless it was passed by an overwhelming margin.

The next proposal was that students should have the right to remove teachers who are incompetent. I think some people had problems with the vagueness of the proposal and it was defeated, 28 for to 33 against.

The next proposal was the students should annually vote on each teacher. It was not clear whether this meant an evaluation or an actual vote on who was invited back, but this was passed 37 to 22. No new proposal was made by those voting against.

The next proposal was that at the beginning of the year teachers would give a sample class. Some objected that one class was not enough to judge. Others said it was better than none, but this proposal did not pass.

Two similar proposals were made about establishing a committee to evaluate teachers. The one which allowed the teacher to pick the students was overwhelmingly defeated. The second, establishing representatives on the committee by student election from each class was passed 49 to 5.

After that one item we were almost out of time, but the group wanted to stay as long as possible. One student wanted to discuss an item he brought up—that "Students be given fair chance to show their talents." A student volunteered to chair this item. There wasn't much time for discussion, but apparently it struck a chord in the group, as a vote of 35 for and two against was taken.

We then had to close the session because it was lunch time. The students, teachers and parents there expressed their gratitude for having the session. I suggested that they take these ideas back to their schools.

Mail & Communications

Edited by Carol Morley

Napa New Technology High School opened nine years ago with a new vision about educating students and has hosted over 8,000 visitors, including international, national and state educators and business, government and organization leaders. The Sacramento site, opened in 2003, shows the success of the NTHS model in a more urban environment. NTHS is a model for new small high schools and is one of the nation's first 21st Century Schools, from which students graduate with the full complement of 21st Century knowledge and skills. With support from the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, 11 schools have been launched to date based on the New Tech High School model. 13 more will start-up across the country in the next three years. To learn more about the New Technology High School Model and the New Tech High Network of Schools, go to <http://www.newtechfoundation.org> and <http://www.newtechhigh.org>.

Campus California TG (CCTG) is an International non-profit institute that among other activities is training & placing international volunteers/ activists at humanitarian & environmental projects abroad. We offer programs where you, as a participant, can take actions as a responsible World-citizen through volunteering abroad & in the USA for a better world. Currently Campus California TG has international volunteers at humanitarian development projects in Mozambique, Nicaragua, Malawi, Zambia, Namibia and Botswana. We train and send Volunteers to Africa and Central America. Do you want to volunteer in Africa? Or learn a bit more about the Clothes recycling project in the Bay Area? Contact www.cctg.org info@cctg.org. Tel: (530) 467-4082.

From: **Educating the World's Children: Patterns of Growth & Inequality**: More than 100 million children worldwide, some 60% of them girls, are not in a classroom. In Africa only a third of the children who enter actually complete primary school. According to a new report, primary enrollment and completion growth in the last half of the 20th century has moved steadily upward, although the increase in primary school entry varies substantially from country to country. The report, authored by the Education Policy and Data Center at the Academy for Educational Development (AED), also reveals that the greatest disparities are found between urban and rural areas and between sub-regions within a country, rather than as a result of gender. The report identifies countries that will achieve the goal of universal primary education by or before 2015. It also provides case studies of those that are unlikely to reach that goal by 2015, but should still be considered success stories because they are moving faster than the historic trend. A third group of countries will only approach universal primary access and completion over the next several decades with changed policies and conditions, as well as long-term support. http://eportall-ssdc.aed.org/extend/en/external/epdc_reports/EducatingTheWorldsChildren.pdf

Why Do Some Parents Choose to Keep their Children in Failing Schools: Recent estimates indicate that of the 3.5 million children eligible to exercise transfer options under No Child Left Behind, only 2 or 3% have done so. It seems that an astonishingly large proportion of parents are choosing to keep their children in failing schools. A new study by Courtney Bell examines why this is occurring. She finds that almost all parents, regardless of individual characteristics, use the same basic criteria when choosing their child's school. Principally, they search for environments that emphasize academic achievement and their child's well-being. However, the range of schools (or choice sets) available to parents varies according to their social networks, customary attendance patterns (i.e. public, magnet, charter, private, secular private, and home-schooling), and the past academic success of their child. For example, Bell shows that the social networks of middle-class parents locate choice sets that are 64% non-failing, 90% selective, and 64% tuition-based schools, while the choice sets of poor and working-class parents are 48% non-failing, 31% selective, and 14% tuition-based schools. Her findings question the effectiveness of market-based choice reforms, especially if disadvantaged families do not even consider schools that advantage their children educationally. <http://www.ncspe.org/list-papers.php>

From **School Size: Is Smaller Really Better?** by Lynn Thompson, Times Snohomish County Bureau: Mountlake Terrace High School was supposed to lead the way in the national movement to remake large high schools into smaller ones that graduated more students and better prepared them for college. But the school that reorganized itself into five small academies with one of the first Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Small Schools Grants in 2001 is also serving as a cautionary tale about the difficulty of change. The Gates Foundation announced last week it is moving away from its emphasis on converting large high schools into smaller ones and instead giving grants to specially selected school districts with a track record of academic improvement and effective leadership. Education leaders at the foundation said they concluded that improving classroom instruction and mobilizing the resources of an entire district were more important first steps to improving high schools than breaking down the size. Mountlake Terrace isn't giving up on its independent small schools organized around themes such as technology and the performing arts. But the Edmonds School District is rethinking how to organize its three other large high schools, which have all received federal small-schools grants. "I think we're finding that it's not necessarily about the structure of the school as much as it's about the quality of instruction. It's the relationship between teacher and student that's critical," said Ken Limón, the district's assistant superintendent for secondary education. Richard Lear, director of the Small Schools Project, is also co-author of "A Foot in Two Worlds," a study of 17 comprehensive high on the way to becoming 72 smaller schools. The

study, released last month, says the most successful small schools have highly focused curricula and a high degree of autonomy for teachers to adapt instruction to individual student needs. Copyright © 2005 The Seattle Times Company.

From **Small-group Learning Still isn't Perfect, Evaluator Says**, by Steve Brandt, Star Tribune: Three years and millions of dollars



"Quit rocking the boat!"

into its high school reform, an evaluator finds Minneapolis still struggling for consistent results from the small learning communities. Evaluator Catherine Dvoracek's findings point out potential pitfalls for other large Minnesota high schools as they look at the school-within-a-school approach to compete against the intimacy of multiplying charter schools. She found a pattern in which high-performing small learning communities co-existed in the same buildings with others struggling with poor attendance and higher dropout rates. Dvoracek found the Minneapolis district went into its reforms with a good grasp of research showing what makes small learning communities work. But she found flaws in the follow-through caused partly by tight budgets and partly by difficulties changing the traditional concentration of power in the hands of principals and department chairs. But the biggest flaw she urged be addressed are the entrance barriers that keep some students out of some of the academic clusters within their high schools, shunting them into others. Joe Nathan, who heads the university's Center for School Change, said that research on such open admissions finds increased achievement for students at the top and bottom ends of a program, with a narrowing of class and race gaps. Dvoracek recommended that selection criteria be phased out over several years. That suggestion may well provoke opposition from parents who fear lowered standards.

StoriesWithoutEnd.com (SWE), an innovative Web site designed for parents and their children ages 4 to 9 years old, is being beta-tested and will soon be available for use. Based on the fact that cognitive stimulation physically creates and strengthens brain synapses, SWE will offer incomplete stories — a new one every week — that parents will read to their children. The children — using their creative imaginations — will complete the stories. Aside from the actual launch, SWE's creator, Rich Gittens said that he is most excited about SWE's "Best Endings Competition." Gittens said that beta-testing of the site began in late October, and he anticipates a full-scale launch in mid to late November. Access to the site will be by subscription at a cost of \$9.95 per month for 12 months.

Bold Book Lays Bare the Surprising and Controversial Reason for the Failure of the U.S. Educational System: Norman Edmund is a man on a mission. The retired founder of the world famous **Edmund Scientific Co.**, and an amazingly youthful 89 years old,

he's spent 15 years conducting specialized study into a glaring blunder in the educational system — a mistake perpetrated over 50 years ago, but which today affects the entire educational system and virtually every facet of industry. The focus of Edmund's book — the 'scientific method' of research and knowledge acquisition — is familiar to many, but Edmund has uncovered the origins of a deliberate effort to disprove the existence or relevance of it. Edmund posits that the scientific method is the complete method of creative problem solving and decision making for all fields, and that it is the greatest quality control method ever developed. Website: www.theblunder.com.

LibEd, the British magazine of the Libertarian Education movement can now be found at: www.libed.org.uk They have made a new start with an online magazine instead of the old print edition, which hasn't been going for a while.

Raising Accountability for Parents Too: Superintendent Stanley Bippus takes issue with the failure to hold parents accountable in the national push to raise student outcomes. He asks why are there not more efforts to hold parents accountable for meeting child-rearing responsibilities when public schools face intensifying pressure? Between birth and age 18, children spend only 10 percent of their waking hours at school with the bulk of their time spent in the home environment where, with no standards of accountability, parents may choose to be unsupportive and uninvolved in the education process. Even when educational reformers do consider what may be done to help children being raised by irresponsible parents, they generally focus instead on strategies to hold schools more accountable. Instead of addressing parent accountability, the reformers ignore the worst of parenting. Parents are expected to send their children to school on a regular basis due to compulsory attendance laws. Little to no effort is made to hold parents who violate the law accountable because it is time-consuming and costly. It is not politically correct to refer to some parents as irresponsible when there are no standards for parenting as there are for 4th-grade math or 7th-grade English. <http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=3654&snItemNumber=950>

From **No Child Law Irks Teachers' Unions**, by Julia Silverman, AP: The homecoming game had been canceled, and parents were running out of ways to keep cranky children entertained, because of a teachers' strike in which a major sticking point was more than just a local issue: it was the federal No Child Left Behind Act. In school districts around the country, the Bush administration's centerpiece law on primary and secondary education is beginning to emerge as an issue at the bargaining table. In Sandy's 4,200-student Oregon Trail District, teachers are afraid they will be replaced, transferred, or otherwise penalized if they, their students, or their schools fail to measure up under the law, which sets stringent new standards for performance. While salary and benefits are also stumbling blocks in the dispute, the teachers and the school board in this city of 5,400, about 40 miles southeast of Portland, are wrangling over contract language related to No Child Left Behind. Under No Child Left Behind, schools must bring increasing percentages of children from all backgrounds up to scratch on reading, math, and writing tests. Schools that repeatedly fail to make enough progress face a series of sanctions, the most serious of which include school closure and takeover by a private company. The law also says that by the end of this school year, teachers must be "highly qualified" in the subject they teach. That definition varies from state to state, but it generally means that teachers must have majored in the subject they teach, must be certified by the state, and must pass an exam. In some places, teachers are pushing for contract language to protect themselves. To meet No Child Left Behind's requirements, the National School Boards Association is encouraging school systems to consider more aggressive ways of recruiting teachers. Those include offering higher pay or other incentives to those who agree to teach in hard-to-staff schools

or hard-to-fill fields, such as advanced sciences or special education. But those ideas could also cause upheaval during contract talks. © Copyright 2005 Globe Newspaper Company.

Navajos Turn Sights on Schools, by Deborah Bulkeley, *Deseret Morning News*: For many American Indian youths, the educational outlook is bleak. In some cases, youths are more likely to drop out of high school than to graduate. The Navajo Nation has taken a step towards putting education into its own hands by creating a department of education. Leland Leonard, Navajo tribal education director, said there hasn't been much improvement for Navajo youths since No Child Left Behind became law in 2001. In 2004, the State Office of Education reported that just under 71 percent of American Indian youths in Utah graduated from high school. "The states and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are not doing it," Leonard said. "This is an initiative of exercising our sovereignty, our inherited right to reform the educational system on the Navajo Nation." Leonard said in July the Navajo Nation amended its Title 10 education code to create its own department of education and is also establishing a school board. The department will look at the "unique language and culture and incorporating those into the curriculum" over the next decade at about 180 schools in the Four Corners region. "The Navajo language and character development, those are all essential tools our kids need to learn," he said. Shirlee Silversmith, Indian education specialist at the State Office of Education, said: "The Navajo Nation is probably one of the largest tribes across the nation and is in the forefront as far as developing and establishing themselves as a tribal education department," she said. Silversmith said every Utah tribe has an education director, and she believes that eventually, the others may move in the same direction as the Navajos.

Teen 'Go-Getter' Ousts Mayor in Michigan, by Wendy Koch, *USA Today*: — Michael Sessions is too young to drink champagne legally, but the 18-year-old high school senior has reason to celebrate: He unofficially won a race for mayor by defeating the baby boomer incumbent. Michael Sessions, who turned 18 in September, ran as a write-in candidate because he was too young to get on the ballot in the spring. He defeated a 51-year-old incumbent. The young politician used \$700 from a summer job to fund his door-to-door campaign in Hillsdale, Mich., a town of about 9,000. Unofficial results show that Sessions got 732 votes, compared with 668 for Mayor Doug Ingles, 51. Once his victory is certified and he's sworn in - the ceremony is set for Nov. 21 - he may be the youngest mayor in the USA. Sessions plans to use his bedroom as his office. "I've always been interested in politics," says Sessions, who registered to vote the day after his birthday and became a write-in candidate one day later. "It's certainly hard to be a write-in candidate," he says, adding that he drove around town Tuesday afternoon, nervous that people didn't know his name. He says many voters told him they wanted "new energy," but he was still caught off-guard by the support he received. "He was a real go-getter during his campaign," says Steven Brower, a government and economics teacher at Hillsdale High School. "He acted like he was running for president." Brower, who gave his former student campaign tips, says he's thrilled: "There are too many kids today who laugh at government." He says Sessions, by carefully researching issues before taking a position, will serve responsibly in the largely ceremonial, four-year post. The job comes with no office, no chair, no filing cabinet - not even a drawer, says incumbent Ingles. The mayor, who gets a \$250 monthly stipend, casts one of nine votes on the City Council.

From Volunteers Depart for Year of Linking Internet Technology and Community Service: The World Education Corps, A Collaboration of iEARN & Kellogg College of Oxford University: Ten young people from 8 countries have departed for a year of service in 10 countries as part of a unique program called the World Education Corps (WEC). The WEC is an innovative initiative to assist digital

technologies in education through year-long service. With seed funding from James Martin, one of the most important leaders in the technology revolution in the past 40 years, the WEC has joined with iEARN, the International Education and Resource Network, and Kellogg College of Oxford University in the United Kingdom, to create an international service corps of persons to serve in the field of education technologies. In this pilot year, the WEC recruited volunteers to serve in 10 pilot countries: India, Pakistan, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Jordan, Argentina, USA, China and Nigeria. In each of these countries, iEARN has identified placements at educational and other institutions. Volunteers spent eight days at Oxford University in an intensive cross-cultural preparation and in-depth study of global issues facing the planet—as outlined by Jim Martin in his upcoming book "The Meaning of the 21st Century." Persons wishing to serve through the WEC, should contact: iearn@us.earn.org

Home Education News

Global Virtual Curriculum was developed by a leading U.S. public school district and each course was developed by a Nationally Certified Teacher to National Academic Content Standards. Whatever your personal philosophy of homeschooling, there is a benefit to your students and families in considering a virtual curriculum. The advantages of Global Virtual Curriculum include portability, online resources and links to the best library and museum resources, effective communication mode between student and parent, visual clues of progress, and tools that may assist with state reporting requirements. Last year we provided curriculum for grades 3-12 in over 140 school districts. This year, we're adding 2nd grade, K-5 Spanish as well as another 20 high school core and elective courses, including Aviation Science, Forensic Science, Graphing Calculators and several other exciting courses. For more information, contact Carla Tiedeman at (702) 300-1707. Email: carla@globalstudentnetwork.com Web: www.GlobalStudentNetwork.com

International News

GERMANY
Matthias and Karen Kern have 5 children, two daughters and three sons. All of the sons have refused to go to school and the parents have respected their decision. Matthias and Karen Kern and one of their sons, Malchus, have been attending the IDEC in Berlin. The whole family was also engaged in starting a Sudbury-modeled school in southern Germany, which after more than one year of illegal operation was finally closed down by the authorities. The parents have been fined 250EUR each, making it difficult to appeal. Nevertheless the father wants to apply for an appeal. That's necessary in order to fulfill all prerequisites so that the European Court in Strassburg can begin to take care of a complaint, which already has been filed by the father. It seems that the European Court is only taking action if all national ways of complaining and appealing have been tried. The father is working as a state schoolteacher and is now facing difficulties in his job. School authorities are blaming him for not forcing his son to attend school and are saying that this shows also that he has failed as a teacher. That makes it more likely that the parents are taking the decision to leave the country and settle down in France, where laws are less strict. The parents were hoping that they could refer to the case of another son of theirs, who was able to arrange a special agreement with the school authorities so that he was no longer obliged to attend school. But the judge said that this special agreement does not constitute a leading case. The parents emphasized that they are not against school in general, but that they are against forcing children to attend school and that they would like to see more freedom of choice in education.

Alternative Schools Grow Ever More Attractive An increasing number of people fed up with the standardized education provided by Korea's public schools are turning to alternative education, licensed or otherwise, which has been proliferating since the mid-1990s. Following explosive growth since 2000, there are now more than 100 alternative schools across the nation. Prof. Cho Han Hye-jeong of Yonsei University is also the principal of Sungmisan School. "It is natural that a growing number of people who have had enough of the existing entrance exam-oriented school system are coming to think. 'I'd like to spare my children such an education,'" she says. That has meant an end to the prejudice that alternative schools are for misfits and troublemakers. More and more ordinary students, including the academically gifted, go to alternative schools to pursue an education that values their individuality. Competition for some of the most popular alternative schools is fierce, with as many as five applicants for every place. No longer are alternative schools a place where a handful of education-conscious parents send their children. Highly educated and professional parents lead the trend, and the children of academics, teachers, doctors, lawyers and entrepreneurs now make up a substantial proportion of pupils at alternative schools. Prof. Lee Tae-woo of Yeungnam University suggested to his daughter Jingyu, 16, she switch to an alternative school. "I've always wondered if children are happy within the boundaries of formal education," he says. "If children get a standardized education like battery chickens, they can't develop their own personalities and thus make themselves unhappy." Supreme Court Justice Kim Young-ran and lawyer Kang Ji-won also sent their daughters to alternative school. "We got an intellectual education in the formal education system, but I'm often skeptical if the education enriched our lives," Kang says. As the number of alternative schools has mushroomed, legislators earlier this year passed a bill aimed to absorb the alternative programs into the framework of the formal education system. When a related executive decree goes into force next year, the number of state-approved schools,

called Keeping Promises. Seven topics including safer streets, bullying and advice when parents split up have already been suggested. Every school in Scotland would be given voting cards so that pupils could have their say, she said. The commissioner has teamed up with information agency Young Scot for the consultation. Youngsters have been invited to voice their opinions online, by text, freephone, e-mail, or by filling out voting cards. The commissioner said: "The first part of this quest is to find out what young people care about and what issues are most important to them. "I want to get a proper steer on the concrete issues young people want us to address, not just what adults think young people care about. In addition, I want to make a partnership with young people, help them to feel they've got a stake in society and that they can achieve and change things. "Once the consultation closes we will have a general idea of what we need to do and then, over a two-year span, we hope to identify the main issues and the blockages that stop improvement." The consultation was officially launched at Edinburgh's Dynamic Earth on Friday. The issue which tops the poll will become the commissioner's main priority for the next two years. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4383630.stm>

Conferences

February 28 to March 3, 2006 **National Charter Schools Conference** The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is hosting the conference in Sacramento, California. Visit our website at: <http://www.charterconference.org/> For general conference information, email conference@charterassociation.org or call 213-244-1446 x.201.

May 4-7, 2006 **2006 Annual West Coast-USA International Conference on Montessori Educational And The Partnership Way** - Monterey, California Contact: www.montessori.org

June 29th to July 2nd, **AERO Conference 2006** Russell Sage College, Troy, NY "Educational Alternatives: Finding Our Commonalities & Celebrating Our Differences" To get detailed information about the conference, visit <http://www.EducationRevolution.org/conference.html> or edrev.org/conference.html

June 29 to July 1, **The International Association for Learning Alternatives** will hold its annual conference at Ocean Shores, WA. Conference information and registration information will be posted soon on the IALA website. <http://www.learningalternatives.org>.

July 10-16 **IDEC 2006** (the International Democratic Education Conference) will be taking place in Sydney, Australia. The steering group around Tim Perkins introduces itself at: <http://idec2006.org>



"I think they're teaching me sushi."

currently at 25, is expected to rise sharply. Dr. Chung Yeon-sun, of the Seoul Alternative Learning Community Network, says: "Given the current situation, where public education has been degraded to a system incapable of bringing any intellectual or emotional stimulus to students, we should expand and diversify alternative education programs so they can in turn change our public education." <http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200510/200510030002.html>

SCOTLAND

Children urged to set the agenda: Scotland's children commissioner has urged youngsters to contact her with issues they think should be priorities. Professor Kathleen Marshall plans to use the internet and text messaging to court views as part of a month-long consultation

Jobs and Internships

Schools looking for teachers *Teachers looking for schools*

As we go to press there are 21 schools advertising jobs and there are 8 teachers looking for employment. Contact us if you would like to place an ad as an alternative school or as a teacher looking for an alternative school. You can email us at info@educationrevolution.org or call us at 800 769-4171. Placing ads is a free service for AERO members.

Revolutionary Times

Who was Robert Herbert Quick?

*Robert Herbert Quick (what a great name!) was an English vicar in the 19th century who wrote a book in 1868 called **Essays on Educational Reformers**. Then, after 22 years teaching in a high-tone boarding school (Harrow) and lecturing on the History of Education (at Cambridge University) he completely rewrote his book into a new version. He claimed that the initial success of his book was entirely due to having a good title and large sales in the US.*

*Our **Quick's Tour** comes from his Conclusion, in the 1890 edition and, all these years later, it is full of surprises. Who would have guessed that so many of the essential names in the educational reform movement were among our greatest writers and thinkers, men now known for completely separate accomplishments? And isn't it amazing how many of the key issues to do with education and childhood have remained the same? The "idolatry of books," mentioned in the first paragraph, is certainly still used as an excuse for bringing in repressive and paternalistic educational regimes. And regimes that most frequently results in revulsion with everything to do with reading good books!*



Quick's Tour of early educational REFORMERS

Robert Herbert Quick

The scholars of the Renaissance fell into a great mistake, a mistake which perhaps could not have been avoided at a time when literature was rediscovered and the printing press had just been invented. This mistake was the idolatry of books, and, still worse, of books in Latin and Greek. So the schoolmaster fell into a bad theory or conception of his task, for he supposed that his function was to teach Latin and Greek; and his practice or way of going to work was not much better, for his chief implements were grammar and the cane.

The first who made a great advance were the Jesuits. They were indeed far too much bent on being popular to be "Innovators." They endeavoured to do well what most schoolmasters did badly. They taught Latin and Greek, and they

made great use of grammar, but they gave up the cane. Boys were to be made happy. School-hours were to be reduced from 10 hours a day to 5 hours, in those 5 hours learning was to be made "not only endurable but even pleasurable."

But the pupils were to find this pleasure not in the exercise of their mental powers but in other ways. As it has been said, young teachers are inclined to think mainly of stimulating their pupils' minds and so neglect the repetition needed for accuracy. Old teachers on the other hand care so much for accuracy that they require the same thing over and over till the pupils lose zest and mental activity. The Jesuits frankly adopted the maxim "Repetition is the mother of studies," and worked over the same ground again and again.

The two forces on which they relied for making the work pleasant were one good – the personal influence of the master (“boys will soon love learning when they love the teacher,”) and one bad or at least doubtful – the spur of emulation.

However, the attempt to lead, not drive, was a great step in the right direction. Moreover as they did not hold that the classics in and of themselves were the object of education the Jesuits were able to think of other things as well. They were very careful of the health of the body. The Jesuits wished the whole boy, not his memory only, to be affected by the master; so the master was to make a study of each of his pupils and to go on with the same pupils through the greater part of their school course.

The Jesuit system stand out in the history of education as a remarkable instance of a school system elaborately thought out and worked as a whole. In it the individual schoolmaster withered, but the system grew. The single Jesuit teacher might not be the superior of the average teacher in good Protestant schools, but by their unity of action the Jesuits triumphed over their rivals as easily as a regiment of soldiers scatters a mob.

The pouring-in theory of education was first called in question by that strange genius who seems to have stood outside all the traditions and opinions of his age,

“holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all.”

I mean Rabelais.

Like most reformers, Rabelais begins with denunciations of the system established by use and custom. After an account of the school teaching and school books of the day, he says – “It would be better for a boy to learn nothing at all than to be taught such-like books by such-like masters.” He then proposes a training in which, though the boy is to study books, he is not to do this mainly, but is to be led to look about him, and to use both his senses and his limbs. For instance, he is to examine the stars when he goes to bed, and then to be called up at four in

the morning to find the change that has taken place. Here we see a training of the powers of observation. These powers are also to be exercised on the trees and plants which are met with out-of-doors, and on objects within the house, as well as on the food placed on

the table. The study of books is to be joined with the study of things, for the old authors are to be consulted for their accounts of whatever has been met with. The study of trades, too, and the practice of some of them, such as woodcutting, and carving in stone, makes a very interesting feature in this system.

On the whole, I think we may say that Rabelais was the first to advocate training as distinguished from teaching; and he was the father of teaching by intuition, i.e., by the pupil’s own senses and the spring of his own intelligence. Rabelais would bestow much care on the body too. Not only was the pupil to ride and fence; we find him even shouting for the benefit of his lungs.

Rabelais had now started an entirely new theory of the educator’s task, and fifty years afterwards his thought was taken up and put forward with incomparable vigour by the great essayist, Montaigne. Montaigne starts with a quotation from Rabelais – “The greatest clerks are not the wisest men,” and then he makes on of the most effective onslaughts on the pouring-in theory that is to be found in all literature.

His accusation against the schoolmasters of his time is twofold. First, he says, they aim only at giving knowledge, whereas they should first think of judgement and virtue. Secondly, in their method of teaching they do not exercise the pupils’ own minds. The sum and substance of the charge is contained in these words – “we labour to stuff the memory and in the meantime leave the conscience and

understanding impoverished and void.” His notion of education embraced the whole man. “our very exercises and recreations,” says he, “Running, wrestling, music, dancing, hunting, riding, fencing, will prove to be a good part of our study. I would have the pupil’s outward fashion and mien and the disposition of his limbs formed at the same time with his mind. ’Tis not a soul, ’Tis not a body, that we are training up, but a *man*, and we ought not to divide him.”

Before the end of the fifteen hundreds then we see in the best thought of the time a great improvement in the conception of the task of the schoolmaster. Learning is not the only thing to be thought of. Moral and religious training are recognised as of no less importance. And as “both soul and body have been created by the hand of God” (the words are Ignatius Loyola’s), both must be thought of in education. When we come to instruction we find Rabelais recommending that at least part of it should be “intuitive,” and

Montaigne requiring that the instruction should involve and exercise of the intellectual powers of the learning. But the escape even in thought from the Renaissance ideal was but partial.

The opening of the sixteen hundreds saw a great revolt from the literary spirit of the Renaissance. He exclusive devotion to books was followed by a reaction. There might after all be something worth knowing that books would not teach. Why give so much time to the study of words

and so little to the observation of things? “Youth,” says a writer of the time, “is deluged with grammar precepts infinitely tedious, perplexed, obscure, and for the most part unprofitable, and that for many years.” Why not escape from this barren region? “Come forth, my son,” says Comenius. “Let us go into the open air. There you shall view



Loyola



Rabelais

whatsoever God produced from the beginning and doth yet effect by nature.”

This great revolution, which was involved in Francis Bacon’s philosophy, may be described as turning from fancy to fact. All the creations of the human mind seemed to have lost their value. The only things that seemed worth studying were the material universe and the laws or sequences which were gradually ascertained by patient induction and experiment.

Till the 19th Century this revolution did not extend to our schools and universities. It was only in the 1840s that natural science has been studied at Cambridge University, the university of Bacon and Newton. The English Public School Commission of 1862 found that the curriculum was just as it had been settled at the Renaissance. But if the walls of these educational Jerichos were still standing this was not from any remissness on the part of “the children of light” in shouting and blowing the trumpet. They raised the war-cry “Not words, but things!” and the cry has been continued by a succession of eminent men against the schools of the 17th and 18th centuries and has at length begun to tell on the schools of the 19th.

It was towards the middle of the sixteen hundreds a very eminent Innovator took a comprehensive view of education, and reduced instruction to its proper place, that is, he treated it as part of education merely. This man, Comenius, was at once a philosopher, a philanthropist, and a schoolmaster; and in his writings we find the first attempt at a science of education.

Comenius proposed quite a new theory of the educator’s task. He is to bring to maturity the seeds of learning, virtue, and piety, which are already sown by Nature in his pupils.

This is quite different from the pouring-in theory, and seems to anticipate the notion of Froebel, that the educator should be called not *teacher* but *gardener*. But Comenius evidently made too much of knowledge. Had he lived

two centuries later he would have seen the area of possible knowledge extending to infinity in all directions, and he would no longer have made it his ideal that “man should know all things.”

The next great thinking about education – I mean Locke – seems to me chiefly important from his having taken upon the principles of Montaigne and treated the giving of knowledge as of very small importance. Montaigne, as we have seen, was the first to bring out clearly that

education was much more than instruction, as the whole was greater than its part, and that instruction was of far less importance than some other parts of education. And this lies at the root of Locke’s theory also. The great function of the educator, according to him, is not to *teach*, but to *dispose* the pupil to virtue first, industry next, and then knowledge; but he thinks where the first two have been properly cared for knowledge will come of itself.

Locke, instead of accepting the learned ideal, declares that learning is the last and least thing to be thought

of. He cares little about the ordinary literary instruction given to children, though he thinks they must be taught something and does not know what to

put in its place. He provides for the education of those who are to remain ignorant of Greek, but only when they are “gentlemen.” In this respect the van is led by Comenius, who thought of education for *all*, boys and girls, rich and poor, alike. Comenius also gave the first hint of the true nature of our task – to bring to perfection the seeds implanted by Nature. He also cared for the little ones whom the schoolmaster had despised. Locke does not escape for a certain intellectual disdain of “my young masters,” as he calls them; but in one respect he advanced as far as the best thinkers among his successors have advanced. Knowledge, he says, must come by the action of the learner’s own mind. The true teacher is within.

We now come to the least practical and at the same time most influential of all the writers on education – I mean Rabelais, Montaigne, and Locke, was (to use Matthew Arnold’s expression) a “child of the idea.” He attacked the practice of teachers not in the name of expedience, but in the name of reason; and such an attack – so eloquent, so vehement, so uncompromising – had never been made before. He proposed making a clean sweep and returning to what he called the state of Nature.

Rousseau was by no means the first of the Reformers who advocated a return to Nature. There has been a constant conviction in men’s minds from the time of the Stoics onwards that most of the evils which afflict humanity have come from our not following “Nature.” The cry of “Everything according to Nature” was soon raised by educationists. Bacon’s follower, Wolfgang Ratke announced is as one of his principles. Comenius would base all action on the analogy of Nature. Indeed, there has hardly ever been a system of education which did not lay claim to be the “natural” system. And by “natural” has been always understood something different from what is usual.



Montaigne



Comenius



Locke

BUT IS IT NATURAL?

When we come to trace back things to their cause we look to God, to Nature, or to Man.

According to the general belief, God works in and through Nature, and therefore the tendency of things apart from human agency must be to good. This faith which underlies all traditional Western thoughts and modes of speech, has been beautifully expressed by Wordsworth –

“A gracious spirit o’er this earth presides,
and in the heart of man; invisibly
It comes to works of unreprieved delight
And tendency benign; directing those
Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.”

Prelude, v, and f.

But if the tendency of things is to good, why should the usual be in such strong contrast with “the natural”? Here again we may turn to Wordsworth. After pointing to the harmony of the visible world, and declaring his faith that “every flower enjoys the air it breathes,” he goes on –

“If this belief from heaven be sent,
If this be Nature’s holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament,
What man has made of Man?”

This passage might be taken as the motto of Rousseauism. According to that philosophy man is the great disturber and perverter of the natural order. Other animals simply follow nature, but man has no instinct, and is thus left to find his own way. What is the consequence? A very different authority from Rousseau, the poet William Cowper, tells us in language which Rousseau might have adopted –

“Reasoning at every step he treads,
Man yet mistakes his way:
While meaner things whom instinct leads,
Are seldom known to stray.”

Man has to investigate the sequences of Nature, and to arrange them for himself. In this way he brings about a great number of foreseen results, but in doing this he also brings about perhaps even a greater number of unforeseen results; and alas! It turns out that many, if not most, of these unforeseen results are the reverse of beneficial.

Another thing is observable. Other animals are guided by instinct; we, for the most part, are guided by tradition. Man, it has been said, is the only animal that capitalizes his discoveries. If we capitalized nothing but our discoveries, this accumulation would be an immense advantage to us; but we capitalize also our conjectures, our ideals, our habits, and unhappily, in many cases, our blunders. So a great deal of action which is purely mischievous in its effects, comes not from our own mistakes, but from those of our ancestors. The consequence is, that what with our won mistakes and the mistakes we inherit, we sometimes go far indeed out of the course which “Nature” has prescribed for us.

The generation which found a mouthpiece in Rousseau had become firmly convinced, not indeed of its own stupidity, but of the stupidity of all its predecessors; and the vast patrimony bequeathed to it seemed nothing but lumber or worse. So Rousseau found an eager and enthusiastic audience when he proposed a return to Nature, in other words, to give up all existing customs, and for the most part to do nothing and “give Nature a chance.” His boy of twelve, his *Emile*, was to have been taught

nothing. Up to that age the great art of education, says Rousseau, is to do everything by doing nothing. The first part of education should be purely negative.

Rousseau than was the first who escaped completely from the notion of the Renaissance, that man was mainly a *learning* and *remembering* animal. But if he is not this, what is he? We must ascertain, said Rousseau, not *a priori*, but by observation. We need a new art, the art of observing children.

Since the appearance of the *Emile* the best educators have studied the subject on whom they had to act, and they have been learning more and more of the laws or sequences which affect the human mind and the human body. Rousseau’s great work was first, to expose the absurdities of the school room, and second, to set the educator on studying the laws of nature in the human mind and body. He also drew attention to the child’s restless activity. He would also (like Locke before him), make the young learner his own teacher.

There is another way in which the appearance of the *Emile* was, as the Germans say “epoch-making.” From the time of the earliest Innovators, we have seen that “Things not Words,” had been

Rousseau



the war-cry of a strong party of Reformers. But *things* had been considered merely as a superior means of instruction. Rousseau first pointed out the intimate relation that exists between children and the material world around them. Children had till then been thought of only as immature and inferior men. Since his day an English poet has taught us that in some ways the man is far inferior to the child, “the things which we have seen we now can see no more,” and that

“nothing can bring back the hour

Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower.”

Rousseau had not Wordsworth’s gifts, but he, too, observed that childhood is the age of strong impressions from without and that its material surroundings affect it much more acutely than they will in after life. Which of us knows as much about our own house and furniture as our children know? Still more remarkable is the sympathy children have with animals. If a cat comes into a room where there are grown people and also a child, which sees the cat first? Which observes it most accurately? Now, this intimate relation of the child with its surroundings plays a most important part in its education. The educator may, if so minded, ignore this altogether, and stick to grammar, dates, and county towns, but if he does so the child’s real education will not be much affected by him. Rousseau saw this clearly, and wished to use “things” not for instruction but for education. Their special function was to train the senses.

Perhaps it is not too much to say of Rousseau that he was the first who gave up thinking of the child as a being whose chief faculty was the faculty of remembering, and thought of him rather as a being who feels and reflects, acts and invents.

But if the thought may be traced back to Rousseau, it was, as left by him, quite crude or rather embryonic. Since his time this conception of the young has been taken up and moulded into a fair commencement of a science of education. This commencement is now occupying the attention of thinkers such as Herbert Spencer, and much may be expected from it even in the immediate future. For the science so far as it exists

we are indebted mainly to the two Reformers with whom I will conclude – Pestalozzi and Froebel.

The study of nature shows us that every animal comes into the world with certain faculties of capabilities. There are a set of circumstances which will develop these capabilities and make the most of them. There are other circumstances which would impede this development, decrease it, or even prevent it altogether. All other animals have this development secured for them by their ordinary environment: but Man, with far higher capacities, and with immeasurably greater faculties both for good and evil, is left far more to his own resources than the other animals. Placed in an almost endless variety of circumstances we have to ascertain how the development of our offspring may best be brought about. We have to consider what are the inborn faculties of our children, and also what aids and what hinders their development. When we have arrived at this knowledge we must educate them by placing them in the best circumstances in our power, and then superintending, judiciously and lovingly, the development of their faculties and of their higher nature.

There is, said Pestalozzi, only one way in which faculty can be developed, and that is by exercise; so his system sought to encourage the activities of children, and in this respect he was surpassed, as we shall see, by Froebel. “Dead” knowledge, as it has been called – the knowledge commonly acquired for examinations, our school-knowledge, in fact – was despised by Pestalozzi as it had been by Locke and Rousseau before him. In its place he would put knowledge acquired by “intuition,” by the spring of the learner’s own intelligence.

The conception of every child as an organism and of education as the process by which the development of that organism is promoted is found first in Pestalozzi, but it was more consistently thought out by Froebel. There is, said Froebel, a divine idea for every human being, for we are all God’s offspring. The object of the education of a human being is to further the development of his divine idea. This development is attainable only through action; for the development of every organism depends on its self activity. Self-activity then, activity “with a will,”

is the main thing to be cared for in education. The educator has to direct the children’s activity in such a way that it may satisfy their instincts, especially the formative and creative instincts. The child from his earliest years is to be treated as a *doer* and even a *creator*.

Now, at last, we have arrived at the complete antithesis between the old education and the New. The old education had one object, and that was learning. Man was a being who learnt and remembered. Education was a process by which he *learnt*, at first the languages and literature of Rome and Greece only, but as time went on the curriculum was greatly extended. The New Education treats the human being not so much as a learner as a doer and creator. The educator no longer fixes his eyes on the object – the knowledge, but on the subject – the being to be educated. The success of the education is not determined by what the educated *know*, but by what they *do* and what they *are*. They are well educated when they love what is good, and have had all their faculties of mind and body properly developed to do it.

The New Education then is “passive, following,” and must be based on the study of human nature. When we have ascertained what are the faculties to be developed we must consider further how to foster the self-activity that will develop them.

Pestalozzi and Froebel



GOING DEMOCRATIC

*Twenty-four hundred students in India
choose democracy for their DAV school*

Reported by Jerry Mintz

In New York I had heard from Dr. K.B. Kushal, director of the Dayanand Institute of Education Management and Research in India. Dr. Kushal's institute is connected to Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV), an organization, which runs 700 schools. As well as wanting me to speak at their DAV conference and science fair he asked me to stay on to help set up democratic processes for the 2400 student school where his office is located, the New Panvel DAV. To our knowledge, a school of that size had never before become democratic.

During the conference Dr. Kushal and I met for dinner and we discussed plans to democratize the school in New Panvel. All of the DAV schools are supposed to be 'student-centered' but this school was planning to go a step further. We thought about what the basic elements were that made a school democratic. It seemed to me that the key was intention. If your ultimate intention was to have a democratic school and you made the first steps in that direction, I think you could call yourself a democratic school. On the other hand, some schools, no matter what size, such as Waldorf schools, really could not be called democratic, because their system, while interesting and different, is still an authoritarian system by definition.

On the last morning when I met Dr. Kushal for breakfast he said that he would not be able to go to New Panvel today, as planned. He had to be with Dr. Chopra, the Chairman of DAV, who had decided to stay on a few days. So, I'd be on my own in starting off the process in New Panvel. In fact Dr. Kushal was never able to make it during my three days at the school. Shortly thereafter I checked out of the hotel and started out with my driver on the one-and-a-half hour trip to New Panvel, mostly on terrible roads. We arrived shortly after 11 AM.

The principal was not there at first, but I met with two administrators, Smita and Suja, and got answers to some of my basic questions about the school. The age range goes from two-and-a-half to fifteen. Currently the administration and teachers make basic decisions. There is no student council. There is a head boy and head girl selected by the teachers. They have no particular power. Kids do fill out forms for feedback about teachers and there is some one-on-one feedback from students to teachers.

The administration makes all the basic decisions, staff assignments, etc. At the moment kids don't have much choice about how to use their time, except to pick a language and to pick an activity one period a week on Saturdays. Computers and the Internet are generally available to students. School is 6 days a week.

I requested that they find four or five students who could come to the room we were meeting in to hear their point of view on the need for changes, their reaction to proposals, etc. Six children came in. I had met several of them at the science fair in Thane. They had won the only prize that New Panvel had garnered at the fair. Their names were Anjali, Govinda, Daipanna, Shweta and Mayuresh, and were 11 and 12 years old.

We had an excellent brainstorming session. They believed that we could accomplish something. Anjali had a lot to say. Her big issue dealt with homework. She felt too much was piled on the students and suggested that the school go back to "timetabled" homework, which they had previously done, in which homework was limited to one or two subjects a day. She also suggested that the main issue that a meeting of the whole school could decide was the basic question of whether the school should be democratized or not.

It was decided that we should then go meet with a 7th grade class. But by the time we got there we realized that it would make more sense to meet with all the 7th graders at once, about 128 of them. We found a room that was big enough and they all piled in, sitting on the floor.

I gave an overall outline of what was meant by democratic education and democratic schools. We talked about various issues such as homework, grades, selection of teachers, and various ways in which democratic process could be started in the school. We talked about the town meeting concept, elected parliament concept, class meeting concept.

One idea that was suggested was the whole school meetings could be held after school at 2 PM, so that those who wanted to leave could go home, and those who wanted to go to the meeting could go. The biggest room only held 1000, which is 1400 less than the total student body.

We then decided to give a demonstration of democratic process. Anjali decided to bring up her idea of timetabled homework. Students were reluctant to talk at first because it involved coming up to the front to the one microphone. But once the ball was rolling we had at least a dozen speakers for and against. I spoke against, because I said I didn't believe in forced homework. But the ultimate vote was overwhelming for Anjali's proposal with only about 6 of the people in the room voting against. We speculated that the students felt that getting rid of all homework was not likely to be practical or understood by the parents, but that this proposal, which was in the form of a recommendation by the group, actually had a chance to be implemented.

There was a lot of enthusiasm in the meeting. Afterward it was decided that tomorrow morning the students would select four representatives in each class, 12 all together, to be a forerunner of the parliament idea.

The next day I got to Panvel at 9:30 AM. I met for a few minutes with Smita, one of the administrators, a coordinator. There are four for the school. Today the principal, Bhatta Charjee, would be able to participate. I asked what kind of feedback there had been. They said that two or three parents had called to express their concern about prospective

changes in the school. The students were very excited about the process.

First I met with the 12 representatives who had been selected this morning from the three 7th grade classes. Some, including Anjali, had been part of the previous day's focus group. We then planned the rest of the day.

We started by meeting with the entire 7th grade class and the feedback was intense. Among other things, more than half of the ones who had talked to their parents about yesterday's session reported that their parents weren't too happy with the idea. We subsequently talked about what to do about that. The students suggested educational meetings and seminars for the parents about democratic process.

Then we talked about voting on whether the school should become a democratic school. After a lot of discussion, a vote was taken. The first vote was 50 to 1 with a number of abstentions. We asked the one negative why he voted as did and he said he thought the democracy was being disrespectful to the teachers. I talked about the number of abstentions, indicating to me that some people were not sure about the school's direction. At first there were 49 abstentions. After more discussion I suggested maybe some weren't ready to call the school democratic and would rather just explore the possibility. I put that up as an alternate proposal.

In the re-vote on the first proposal there were 75 in favor, the same one against (good for him!) and 30 abstentions. But there was little support for the alternate proposal, probably because the majority wanted to establish the school as democratic.

Some of the specific comments about issues were more conservative than the previous day, some speaking against the freedom to leave class, choose all subjects, etc. It was clear that they had been thinking about the reality of the situation and wanted to make practical decisions.

Next, I introduced the idea of democratic process to the 6th graders. They embraced it and brought up several potential issues. One of them was the question of uniforms, which all the students wore. A proposal was made that once a week the students would be

able to come to school in informal clothes if they wished. That proposal was passed after some discussion. We then voted on whether the school should become democratic. That was passed 186 to 8, with 20 abstentions.

The group then broke up into class groups to select 4 representatives from each class to become part of a potential parliament. They spread out to meet in the corners of the room. After that they came back together, asking many questions and making many comments, until time ran out.

There was a short break until the 5th grade assembled and we had only about 35 minutes with the 5th graders. But they were very receptive to the idea and voted for the school to become democratic.

Immediately after we had a gathering of the elected class representatives. Since there were 15 classes, there were about 60 representatives. The first thing we discovered was that about a third were picked by their teachers, and two-thirds were elected. That issue was discussed.

We talked about a possible vision of how democracy would work in the school: There would be regular class meetings, chaired by the representatives. They would discuss and resolve issues that only affected that class. Other issues that involved school policies could be brought up in the classes. If a majority thought they should be brought to the parliament, the representatives would bring it there to be discussed. The parliament could then vote on the question, or if the parliament thought the issue should be voted on by the school, the issue would be brought by the representatives to be discussed and voted on by the classes, with the results brought back to the parliament to be totaled. This would give a large school the same experience of interactive democratic process for the students as a small.

Another option would be to propose a meeting of the whole school in town meeting format, with a set number of speakers on both sides, followed by an electronic vote. We asked the representatives to meet the next morning to get a list of issues that might be brought to the parliament.

After the meeting with the representatives I had a meeting with all

of the teachers in the conference room. I summarized what had been happening during the last two days and opened up to questions. Generally the teachers seemed open to the ideas and ready to try them. Some felt the school had already taken steps toward democracy by giving the students more choices, and they seemed to feel that the approach was in line with the DAV mission statement which emphasizes a "student centered approach" with "a deep sense of human values" in a "stress free environment," which "brings out their inner interests."

My last morning the car came just before 9 AM and we were at the school by 9:30. I only had a half hour with the 275 8th to 10th graders. I talked about what democratic education was, took some questions. Then we voted on whether they wanted the school to become democratic. The vote was 224 for, 43 against with 8 abstaining. They then selected their class representatives for the parliament.

We had the meeting of the parliament, about 75 members, in the conference room from 12-1. We asked the students from grades 5-7 to let us know what the issues were as expressed by their constituents, as we had asked them to do yesterday. They were prepared! The first to go, 5th grader Bhavanish, read a long list of issues presented by his class. Many were greeted with loud applause by the other delegates. In the end there were so many issues expressed by the students that we had to cut them short because of time.

The coordinator, Smita, then asked the delegates to vote on whether they supported the idea of the school becoming democratic. All but one said they did. The lone dissenter said he thought it would be too chaotic and negatively effect academics. I found out later that he was the school's "Head Boy," so chosen by the teachers. So in a way he was fighting for the system that had put him in that position.

I said goodbye to the group and the meeting broke up, whereupon I was besieged by dozens of kids asking me for my autograph! I had already given them our website and told them they could write to me from the site.

MIND THE BABY

by Sue Gerhardt



After the recent bombings of the London Underground, Mayor Ken Livingstone reacted with visible emotion. His voice shook and he publicly enacted the traumatic shock many of us felt. Not so long ago, his counterpart would have felt compelled to enact the role very differently: by behaving with control and mastery of his emotions, to make us feel safe. It seems as if our political leaders are morphing from parent figures into siblings, but I wonder if we are witnessing a real cultural shift towards genuine emotional openness, or whether this behaviour is merely a posture which is currently judged to be effective with the electorate.

In the 1960s, most families had a parent at home. Now it is only around 30%, and often only the poorest families, who have a stay-at-home parent. The majority of mothers with very small babies return to work within 10 months of giving birth. Clearly, the government supports these developments. Many of its policies are aimed at drawing increasing numbers into economic activity, not only to relieve it of the burdens of welfare dependency, but also to make full use of women's labour.

New Labour talks up emotion, but remains driven by two primary forces: managing economic resources well enough to stay in power, and maintaining a strategic position in the world power game. Although politicians promise to "listen" to their people, and claim to want to meet the needs of their electorate, in practice they have little desire to engage with people.

The coldness and manipulation at the heart of New Labour politics is nothing new, and is not particularly surprising. What is surprising is that New Labour feels the need to convince us that they do care. So we are offered policies on "emotional well-being", parenting classes, and initiatives in schools such as "circle time" when children are encouraged to talk about their feelings. These policies appear to demonstrate the caring, emotionally responsive New Labour politics. However, once again we find the economic motive not far from the surface. Child poverty is targeted because many expensive social problems emanate from the poorest layers of society. Parenting classes are often about using behavioural techniques to achieve better discipline over unruly children, who disrupt the learning of other children.

Recent work in the neurobiology of emotional development has confirmed decades of attachment research, putting us in a much better position than we have ever been in to understand what children need to develop emotionally. We can now articulate this, and describe it scientifically, not just in the language of therapy. There is a substantial body of work which gives us a clear idea of how human beings are socialised into human culture, and how they learn to relate to other people.

What many people do not yet realise is that this starts from the moment of birth, and that in fact the most intense period of socialisation occurs in the first two years of life, before language takes the dominant role. During this time of life, babies are learning at a phenomenal rate how to sustain their attachments to others, attachments which are a matter of life and death.

Secure children, who have consistently responsive parents, develop a balanced stress response. They have had parental figures who noticed how they felt and helped them manage experience. Their biochemical systems have not been overloaded, and have been set up to cope with a moderate level of adversity; they don't overreact to minor stresses.

Insecure children, on the other hand, receive very different messages. If they are overprotected, or neglected, they will be afraid of others and lack confidence in their own capacities. These children may develop a hypersensitive stress response, and quickly become overwhelmed by the stresses of social interaction. Within this narrow area of emotional regulation, which is at the core of our personal lives, parents play a decisive part in teaching good regulation or passing on poor regulation.

The systems in question are forming during the first two years of life, and this is when they are most open to influence. That does not mean to say that development stops at two years old. The brain continues to develop rapidly throughout childhood, but at a slower rate, which slows even further in adulthood.

So, in the light of this new research, how do the government's initiatives stack up? It is true that in its policy document, the government pays lip service to the importance of babyhood. In practice, New Labour does not seem to be able to prioritise the need to support early parenting.

It is proving very difficult to put babies' needs on the map. They are inconvenient. They don't contribute to the economy. To many, babies are boring "blobs" who don't even talk. The assumption seems to be that not much is going on in their brains, so they might as well be looked after by some underpaid young girl. The massive emotional developments taking place in the first two years are not understood by many, and even if they were, it would be difficult for a work-driven society to take the emotions of babies seriously.

This difficulty in focusing on infancy also has something to do with the intensely dependent and passionate nature of the parent infant relationship. It is about love, that taboo word. It is about a unique emotional connection between parent and child, an intense need to protect and cherish, a value that transcends all other values. Yet New Labour reduces this to "childcare", something that you can train people to do and pay them for. Looking after children is work

that produces a finished product, the socialised child, the potential worker; it is not conceived of as primarily a vital relationship that makes us human.

There is a real difference between being “minded” and being loved. The government’s most recent offer is for the state to “mind” children after school in clubs and sports activities, but it is hard to see who will have an individual child “in mind” in this set-up. Who will be socialising these children, who is going to be noticing their feelings and helping them to manage them? They will have to hang on to their feelings until they get home at suppertime, when there will be a brief window of opportunity before bed.

Babies have an even greater need to be kept in mind than older children. They need continuous care from adults who can attune to their states, regulate them, and feed back to them who they are. The capacity to do this develops through an ongoing relationship. Babies who are looked after by strangers cannot expect to enjoy lasting emotional attachments to them, building up a mutual emotional vocabulary and understanding; by their nature, these relationships are transitory. Babies looked after by people who are not ‘in love’ with them are often socialised into emotional life, with corresponding biochemical pathways in the brain, without the responsiveness and sensitivity that produce emotional confidence and competence.

New Labour are much more comfortable talking about later parenting and how parents must take responsibility for truanting children, anti-social behaviour, alcohol abuse or unwanted pregnancies in adolescence – active disciplinary issues. The government is stuffed full of people who have not spent time with their children, who have not valued relationships above achievement and acquisition, and who hurry and hassle other parents into working and earning.

The government has a rationalist approach that parents can improve children’s behaviour at a later stage, through the application of will power and behavioural techniques, as seen on many recent television programmes. If parents learn to praise good behaviour and reject or ignore bad behaviour, the child will come into line and will find it worthwhile to behave better.

People cannot solve their own problems by an act of will. We actually change through relationship, not through reading leaflets or self-help books, or applying techniques. It is relationships that create the self in the first place, and relationships that change the self.

We need our government to recognise that it should invest in support for the early relationship between parents and their babies, as a priority. There should be state funding for a substantial carers’ allowance or salary for parenting babies up to 18 months. There should be infant mental health specialists available in every locality, under the NHS. Instead of the modern state, which pays lip service to emotional well-being and makes unconvincing displays of emotion, we need a state which genuinely values caring relationships.

Sue Gerhardt is an analytic psycho-therapist in Oxford, England. She is the author of Why Love Matters - How affection shapes a baby’s brain published the UK and the USA by Brunner Routledge



My and Five Others’ Views on the Primary Purposes of Education

by
Donna Lee

The primary purposes of education seem to be presently to babysit and to inculcate the acceptable social mores of American society. The latter consist of obedience to authority (first and foremost) thereby allowing others to control one’s destiny. Further, schools expect people to follow convention and conventional wisdom in all its forms. It seems that schooling does not even succeed with these (unworthy) purposes.

What I think should be the purpose of education is to allow students to learn self-direction, and so to learn to know when to question authority, rather than simply obeying in all or most things without question. To gain the ability to truly think for themselves apart from what society might say is ‘right’ and ‘good,’ even perhaps to learn to better understand what people generally consider ‘wrong’ and/or ‘bad’ both within themselves and the world around them.

I was surprised at the viewpoints of my five interviewees. They are all people I have been associating with for years, although rather loosely in two cases, and only for one year in one case. I thought I knew what to expect from these individuals in response to the question, ‘What do you think, feel, believe, are the primary purposes of education?’

With the consensus of thought that our society encourages, whether covertly, overtly, intentionally, or unintentionally, I was sure that I would get the same high-minded response from all my interlocutors. I thought that they would all say something to the effect that the primary purposes of education are to teach people how to think for themselves. In fact only one of my interviewees said this. He is a traditional Episcopal Minister at the church which owns the apartment building I live in. He has a 9-year-old daughter who attends a private ‘religious’ school, as he himself characterized it. In addition to believing that schools should

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teach people how to think for themselves, he agreed that they don't often achieve that goal.

Another thing that surprised me in my interviewees' responses, was their willingness to respond at all. No one demurred from responding by saying that s/he didn't have an opinion. Also, all responses, even of a retired public elementary school principal (with at least one grown daughter of her own), struck me as vague. The retired principal stated that she felt that the primary purposes of education were to help people live better in all aspects of life, e.g., morally, financially, and socially. I found this vague because, taking on just the departments of life she mentioned, one could very easily debate what 'better' means in those contexts.

For instance, is it morally better to 'blow the whistle' on something detrimental that people are doing even though you could lose a great deal that you value very highly in the bargain? Does it mean following one's own conscience in the way of the early Christians or blacks during the Civil Rights Movement, when you're in a despised minority and know that you could lose your very life for doing so?

Two other surprising interviewees were a blue-collar school worker and a white collar professional who is the manager of my apartment building. Although there were shades of differences, I think their responses were basically alike, being utilitarian in their approach rather than schooling for schooling's sake.

The blue-collar school worker stated that the primary purpose of education is to impart knowledge (again, rather vague, i.e., what/which knowledge?) so that one can pursue one's chosen profession. I tried to make my interviewees understand that we were talking about schooling of children from Kindergarten through 12th grade. However, they did not revise their opinions once they understood this.

The white-collar professional manager of my apartment building stated something to the effect that the primary purpose of education is to afford greater social and financial opportunities. Again, this is rather vague. Finally, I asked a very successful entrepreneur associate of mine, who has four children, what he thought the primary purposes of education are. He said that he believed that the present primary purposes are to teach obedience, and how to be a follower instead of a leader, and to learn to let others control, rather than controlling one's own destiny.

I would say that, in the main, from my interviewees' responses, many people have never really thought very deeply about the philosophical aspects of schooling, even the retired elementary school principal, but take as their own the conventional wisdom about schooling that our society would have us believe. I was surprised at the Episcopal Minister's thought that the primary purpose of education is to teach people to think for themselves because, I don't think, feel, or believe that Christianity, in general, teaches people to think; rather, it teaches people to believe blindly.

As for the entrepreneur, who agreed with me (although in the negative), we are both very strong-willed people who have our own thoughts on how to do things and hence have had our share of clashes in the past. However, we do agree on many things and have kept a friendly demeanor with each

other over many years. So, I was not surprised to hear him agreeing with me.

In summary, I will say that from my interviewees, it seems that two possible reasons for the vagueness of their answers are: 1) many people do not think very deeply about education, or 2) my interviewees simply did not express themselves clearly under the duress of my spontaneous question. The white-collar professional manager of my building did originally say that she would like to give me her answer the next day, but emphatically stuck with her original position after I asked her near the end of our conversation if she would like to respond later.

As Socrates discovered in ancient Athens, at the cost of his life, most people do not question their assumptions and are violently opposed to anyone asking them to.

*This essay is an excerpt from a new book, entitled, **Nowheresville, Everywhere, Earth.** To pre-order a copy, send \$ 16.00, plus name and address through www.paypal.com to Donna Lee at avataress@webtv.net*

Books etc.

by Aleksandra Majstorac Kobiljski

Children of a Child-Centered School by Don Wallis

Some educators and parents have hard time imagining a history of child-centered education back before the 1960s. Others have difficulties perceiving the day to day inner workings of such a school. For both groups, Wallis' new book is a book of answers. He brings one of the oldest alternative educational institutions in the country to life through bits of its history and its present day voices. The school was founded in 1921, and today, despite its reputation and history, it is a relatively small school with about 75 students and 5 teachers. This book is a collection of their stories, ideas and feelings about the principles of the school. You will hear them speak to you about trust, freedom, learning and play. The structure of the book will allow you to follow the ideas and principles of trust, learning as natural, responsibility, play and the wisdom of the group through words, ideas and even the physical space of the school. You will find out how a carrel of a child from an Older Group looks like or how an early morning meeting feels in the Younger Group. Cover to cover read!

College Daze by Dan Lilienthal

Unlike most books these days, this one has a clear idea about what type of impact it wants to make. It is part of Dan Lilienthal's project of thinking big in terms of ideas and thinking small in terms of actions. It means that ideas about reforming education in general are part of his "small action project" to change the education at the college he recently graduated from. He wants his book to reach as many parents, teachers and students as possible to make them start thinking and talking about the problems in the college education system. The book is to be a way of improving the educational culture at his alma mater. *College Daze* is a promising new sign of a new wave of educational reformers with a clear vision and ability to articulate what is wrong with the education they received – lessons corporate American is

beginning to see in practice and yet issues that are still too hot to be talked about in terms of big solutions of big problems. Welcome to the club Dan!

The Underachieving School by John Holt

It is good to see the reprinted edition of Holt's *The Underachieving School* at a time when the achievement of a school determines the quality of school life for millions of children in the United States. It is a collection of essays on a range of topics from the tremendous pressure of grades in high schools, conceptions of classroom order and the downfall of big city schools. What is striking about the book is that, although it was published in 1969 it still rings a bell and strongly so. Next to nothing in the volume reads as out-of-date – to the point where it is truly scary. It confirms that not only do alternative and education reform movements have history but so does the countercurrent of the established educational mainstream. The good news is that both camps have a way of rejuvenating and thus keeping the issues on the table, making choices available and voices heard. The collection is a strong voice of reminding parents and teachers alike how schools fail children, dispose children of their desire to learn and turn them into meek and docile beings with total disregard of how children actually learn. It is recommended reading for parents thinking about homeschooling.

Losing our Minds: Gifted Children Left Behind by Deborah L. Ruf

No Child Left Behind is often criticized and strongly so from many different camps. This book offers a fresh perspective on one of those many groups of children that are left behind - gifted children. Being instructed far below their capacity makes many exceptional children feel as deep dissatisfaction and frustration with their education as children who are struggling within it on the other end of the scale. The book is mainly oriented towards parents and the problems they face raising gifted children and nurturing their potential.

Sixties Legacy: A History of the Public Alternative Schools Movement, 1967-2001 by Richard Neumann

This book is one of those rare but increasingly needed works that look back and examine the roots of the alternative education movement. In the turmoil of the 1960s, among other reform movements, a drive for an alternative to conventional schooling emerged. It asked for a democratization of public schooling through parental choice and control of the process. The history of this movement reveals its connections to, as well as the critiques of, the progressive education movement. In the era where political participation and concepts of citizenry were radically defined, the movement for public alternatives created numerous alternative schools operating as democratic communities. Unlike most histories that would stop at engaging with the most recent developments, Neumann takes up the challenge of examining the developments of 1980s and 1990s. It offers an interesting and somewhat gloomy perspective on some of the pertinent issues such as the public support and parental options in the realm of publicly financed educational choices. But he affirms that the legacy of the sixties is a sense of entitlement to choices and lack of willingness to accept a single form of schooling.



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