

The Magazine of Alternative Education

Education Revolution

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Issue Number Forty Six



Two Young Children from Australia & Nepal Become Close Friends During The Intense Week-Long International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC) Held This Past Summer in Sydney, Australia.

INSIDE

Report from IDEC 2006 | Education in the News | Conference Listings
Networking the Networks | Report from AERO 2006 | Book Reviews
Eulogy for Ouida Mintz | Reader Correspondence
AERO Welcomes New Editor Ron Miller

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Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO)

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.

A Formal Introduction

by Jerry Mintz..... 3

From the Editor's Desk

by Ron Miller..... 3

Featured Articles

AERO Conference Report..... 4
IDEC 2006 Report..... 17

Education in the News

Main Section..... 7
Home Education..... 11
International News..... 11
Correspondence..... 15
Conferences..... 16

Networking the Networks

With Ron Miller..... 17

Books Etc.

by Aleksandra Majstorac Kobiljski..... 20

Ouida Mintz (1917-2006)

By Jerry Mintz..... 22

The Mission of *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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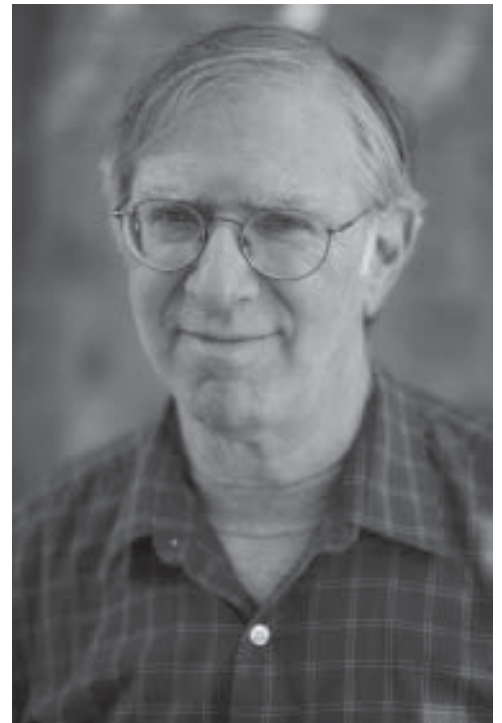
A Formal Introduction

by Jerry Mintz

It is my pleasure to introduce Education Revolution readers to our new editor, Ron Miller. I've known Ron since he was in graduate school in the late 80's, before I started AERO. You may know him from the magazines he has published, *Holistic Education Review* and *Paths of Learning*, or from the many books he has written or edited such as *What Are Schools For?*, *Creating Learning Communities*, or *Free Schools, Free People*.

Ron has been involved in alternative education for 25 years, first as a Montessori teacher, then as an activist scholar, publisher, and most recently as a member of the Education program faculty at Goddard College. Currently he is founder and director of a new program at Goddard designed for homeschooling teens. He has spoken at conferences in various parts of the world. You may have read his recent article in *Education Revolution Magazine* about his experiences as a presenter at a groundbreaking conference in Turkey. He helped start the Bellwether School in Williston, Vermont for his three sons, but also sent one of them to a Waldorf school, and has recently been homeschooling another. Ron has a Ph.D. in American Studies from Boston University, where he pursued an intensive study of the cultural roots of American education and the origins of alternative education movements.

Ron has been a strong supporter of AERO and *Education Revolution Magazine* since its inception. It is wonderful to have him now as our editor.



AERO Director Jerry Mintz
(www.JerryMintz.com)

From the Editor's Desk

By Ron Miller



Ron Miller Speaks at the 2006
AERO Conference

After working parallel to AERO for nearly twenty years, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to be part of this important organization, and to contribute my energy to its audacious goal of bringing about a revolution in education.

I became interested in this position while attending the AERO conference in Troy last summer, where it was apparent that AERO is making serious progress toward a vision that has long eluded my colleagues and me: joining together, in an informal but supportive coalition, the diverse array of holistic/progressive/democratic educational networks and movements that have, for too long, struggled in isolation from each other. The dialogue has begun, and in the pages of *Education Revolution* I hope to build and deepen this dialogue further. Toward this end, we are introducing a new section, "Networking the Networks." I invite readers to send us news and announcements that can inform and inspire educational allies in other communities.

I invite you to use *Education Revolution* as a forum for exploring common ideals and discussing different philosophical emphases. Let me know what you want to see in this newsletter and what you think is not so relevant. Send me your thoughts, ideas, and friendly criticism. You can reach me at holistic@gmavt.net or by cell phone at (802) 310-2169.

Wherever you are, whatever form of teaching, learning, and community building you practice, remember that you are part of a wider movement for cultural renewal and human liberation. Your work IS making a difference at this historic moment. I hope this modest publication will encourage and support your heroic efforts.

The 3rd Annual AERO Conference: A Smashing Success!

by Isaac R. Graves



This past June over three hundred adults and students and over forty children descended on historic Troy, NY to attend the third annual 2006 AERO conference. Attendees came from around North America and the world to take part in the only conference that brings together educators, parents, students, children, administrators, and individuals for the purpose of finding the commonalities and celebrating the differences between the countless educational alternatives. Thirty states and provinces, ten countries, and numerous schools and organizations were represented.

Dozens of workshops on subjects such as “Class Struggle in the Classroom” and “Media Literacy” (see www.AEROConference.com for a complete list) were held daily including a special five-part series on starting new educational alternatives. The open workshop space enabled each attendee to suggest and hold spontaneous workshops and presentations and allow for follow-up sessions to happen without being restricted

by the schedule. Over seventy-five scheduled and spontaneous workshops took place over the four-day conference.

Some of the highlights included six keynote speakers, two keynote panel discussions, live bands, a talent show, amazing documentaries, an auction to raise funds for AERO, and even a student film festival!

The conference was a success on many fronts, but the best way to understand that success would be to hear just a little of the feedback from some of our participants:

“My words can’t begin to express the impact attending this conference has had on my life.” – L.D., MD

“I was impressed with the organization of the conference and the wide variety of workshops, keynote speakers, and other ac-



Keynote Panel Discussion at AERO Conference 2006

activities. There was truly something for everyone who attended. I came away with several new perspectives and ideas for Brooklyn Free School. It was also great to see and meet many of the people who are interested in starting their own schools.” –A.B., NY

“Just wanted to thank you for everything...My sister and I enjoyed the conference a lot and got out so much information and inspiration from it. We also met so many interesting people and heard so many stories and experiences that convinced and ensured us that we are on the right path.” –K.N., Finland

“We were there Thursday night through Noon Saturday and we LOVED it. It was energizing, inspiring and invaluable for me to be in one place at one time with hundreds of people who are all committed to a new future for education. I am overwhelmingly grateful to have been there.” –M.C. , NY

“The conference was a great experience for me. I am so glad I went and came home inspired in many ways. As a first-timer, I was pleased that many adult and youth attendees generally made an effort to talk to me and make me feel welcome. The keynotes were interesting and provocative, and the question/answer periods after keynotes were particularly good. A great conference where much was learned and many relationships were made or reinforced. Thank you again for making it happen!” – C.Z., CA

“Just this to say that the one day I was able to spend at the conference this year was entirely worth every penny and ounce of effort it took to get there. My group went away informed and refreshed to continue our school-opening journey. Thank you all for taking these topics to such thoughtful, intelligent, edifying heights. The conference has been a lifesaver.” – H.L., NJ

“Our time in Troy was terrific, informative, fun, inspiring... I could go on and on.” –A.W., PA

“We had a great time at the Conference. Thank your very much for all your help and kindness.” E.J., South Korea

“The AERO conference was fabulous!” –K.S. , MD

The conference could not have been as successful as it was this past year without the kindness, generosity, and support we’ve received from the attendees, sponsors, and many other individuals. I can’t begin to relay how many lives have been touched by this event and I can’t begin to explain how grateful we are for the support in enabling that to happen.

I look forward to sharing these experiences again at next year’s conference (June 28th – July 1st, 2007)!

See the brand new www.AEROConference.com for information on registration, program, speakers, and much, much more!



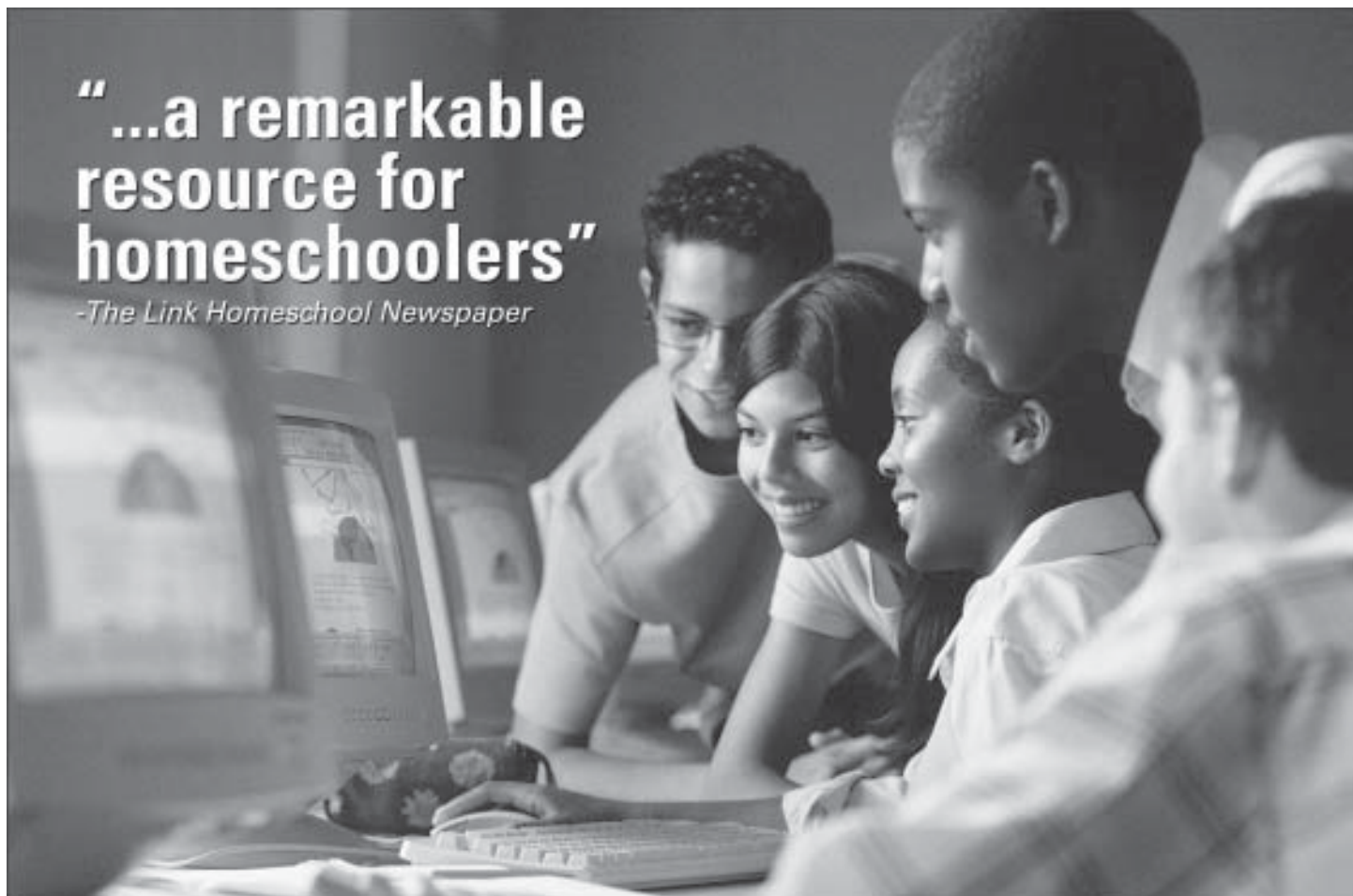
Samantha Sterman (Fieldston School) & Ken Jacobson (AERO Advisory Board Member) Take in Some Sun Between Workshops



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Education In the News

Edited by Carol Morley & Ron Miller

Joint Organizational Statement on No Child Left Behind:

Eighty-two national education, civil rights, religious and civic organizations have now signed on to the “Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB” calling for a major overhaul of federal K-12 education law. Based on concerns raised during the implementation of NCLB, signers of the joint statement believe that significant, constructive corrections are necessary to make the Act fair and effective. Among these concerns are: over-emphasizing standardized testing, narrowing curriculum and instruction to focus on test preparation rather than richer academic learning; over-identifying schools in need of improvement; using sanctions that do not help improve schools; inappropriately excluding low-scoring children in order to boost test results; and inadequate funding. Overall, the law’s emphasis needs to shift from applying sanctions for failing to raise test scores to holding states and localities accountable for making the systemic changes that improve student achievement. The statement makes recommendations for revision of the law in five significant areas.

<http://www.fairtest.org/>

Attention Hyperactivity Deficit or Advanced Creative Think-

ing: If you’ve got an active intelligent, high energy, “ants in the pants” type of child, watch out! Your child is in danger of being misdiagnosed by school officials and by medical physicians as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). “Don’t let this happen to your child!” says author and educator Elaine Ely, Ph.D. “You don’t want to let school officials require your child to be placed on a daily regimen of psychotropic drugs such as Ritalin.” Dr. Ely, a certified teacher with over 24 years experience with middle school students, is part of an ever expanding group of educators, who believe that most of the ADHD classified students aren’t sick with a real mental illness at all. Instead, they are “Advanced Creative Thinkers”. Dr. Ely and an ever-increasing number of educators are extremely concerned about the lack of a clear distinction between the bright, rambunctious, even boisterous children who behave as advanced creative thinkers, and those who get misdiagnosed with ADHD. Dr. Ely believes that parents, educational professionals and the medical community have to learn to recognize that there are real differences between mental diseases with a real biological and chemical basis, and normal behavior of bright, healthy and energetic children. “Advanced Creative Thinkers (ACT) are being victimized,” said Dr. Ely. “They are academically overlooked, emotionally and socially stunted, physically misdiagnosed with ADHD mostly by teachers who simply don’t want high energy children in their classes.” Dr. Ely says there are simple and reliable tests that can help you determine if your child has creative gifts. She has developed an informal inventory of 12 questions that can be used to

evaluate whether a child has advanced creative thinking skills.

<http://www.trafford.com/robots/02-1292.html>

Seattle School Board Reports on Alternative Schools. In June 2005, an advisory committee of the Seattle, WA, School Board issued a comprehensive report on alternative public schools within the city. The report discusses the distinctive principles underlying the concept of alternative schools, and explains how to implement the “best practices” that characterize them. In one section the report lists these core principles:

- “Providing each student with a personalized education through a focus on the individual student’s academic, social and emotional needs with systems in place to address those needs as part of daily practice.
- Being chosen by families, students and staff for the school’s distinct mission, culture, philosophy and practices.
- Assessing student learning authentically and without sorting or stratifying.
- Having a strong identity and being shaped by the community it serves.
- Articulating and modeling shared values.
- Including and responding to the voices of all its constituents by distributing leadership.
- Being less bureaucratic and more personal.
- Experimenting and innovating pedagogical practices.”

The committee urges the Board to continue supporting the development of educational alternatives, commenting that “without the choice and distinctiveness that alternative schools provide, the District may well lose families to private schools or home schooling or will under-serve students whose families cannot afford either option.”

Certainly, this is good advice to all public school districts.

To read the complete report see:

<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/altedfinalreport.pdf>

Students Protest Metal Detectors: Charging that some security measures make students feel like criminals, young people in New York City delivered thousands of postcards addressed to city officials and signed by kids in almost 200 public schools protesting the safety measures. The message urges the Department of Edu-

let the JOURNEY begin

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cation to “include youth voice and experience” in formulating security policies. “We hope the chancellor and mayor will see how important this is to us and how they should include youth in decision-making,” Elisabeth Ortega, a high school student from the Bronx said.

<http://www.gothamgazette.com/>

From **Small Schools Changing Shape of NY Education**, by Nahal Toosi, AP: In the past few years, New York’s embrace of the small-schools model has dramatically reshaped the nation’s largest public school system. Scores of other districts, including Chicago, San Diego, and Milwaukee, are betting that smaller settings will yield higher attendance and graduation rates than mammoth high schools. The small schools in New York are highly specialized, with themes ranging from human rights to aerospace. They generally have fewer than 600 students and outside partners, such as nonprofit groups. In 2001, the New York City system, which has 1.1 million students, had fewer than 1,250 schools. The addition of new small schools, which primarily serve grades 6 through 12, will swell that figure to nearly 1,450 this fall. Some education observers said New York is forming too many small schools too quickly. They expressed concern that the schools lack a broad enough curriculum, and they question how long interest in this latest school overhaul movement will last. Education administrators said the city’s school system, with a graduation rate

of 54 percent (others put it even lower), needs emergency surgery, not more therapy. This year, a key group of small schools will graduate its first classes, and officials are betting the rates will top the citywide average. Small schools aren’t new to New York, but this latest wave is much larger, more centrally supported, and more closely monitored than previous versions. It’s accompanied by a phasing out of large, failing high schools – 20 in seven years – whose campuses are given to small schools. The new wave is also better funded, thanks largely to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The foundation has poured hundreds of millions of dollars into districts and schools nationwide to promote school reform, including \$130 million in New York in the past five years. The Citywide Council on High Schools recently asked the Education Department to delay small-school creation until it resolves space and academic questions. © Copyright 2006 The New York Times.

From **School Choice Movement is Getting Smarter**: School choice has experienced unprecedented legislative success over the past two years for a few underlying reasons. First and foremost, the school choice movement is acting smarter. Instead of taking the unions and their massive resources head-on, advocates are adopting toe-hold strategies, pursuing small programs addressing specific problems that are difficult for politicians to oppose. The strategy makes sense from a moral perspective, writes Clint

Bolick, for it focuses assistance on the neediest schoolchildren. It also works politically, because choice begets choice: Once the Rubicon is crossed and legislators vote to adopt a school choice program – no matter how small or targeted – it becomes easier to support a new one, or expand the old one, the next time around. Hence, of the seven new school choice programs enacted last year, six were in states that already had school choice. The seventh was a program for disadvantaged children in Utah, which was expanded this year. At the same time, pro-school choice legislators are bargaining hard, exchanging increases in public school funding for private school choice.

<http://news.publiceducation.org/t/4842/53019/83/0/>

From Study Explores Impact of Police Officers in Schools: Putting police officers in violence-prone schools may cut crime, but it also increases tensions, turns harmless disputes into criminal matters and is perceived by many students as racially biased, according to a recent report by graduate students at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. The Impact Schools Initiative began in January 2004, when New York City assigned officers to 22 especially troubled public middle and high schools. The city claims that half of those schools have shown such dramatic safety improvements that they have now been removed from the program, reports Kamelia Angelova. But the Wagner report found that the program has also increased expulsions and that many students in these schools get criminal records for incidents that would not be treated as criminal offenses if they were committed in schools with less police presence. "The Impact Initiative is a quick-fix to lower the number of crimes and it ignores the educational and psychological aspect of violence," said Roberta Thomas, who recently graduated from the Wagner program and worked on the report. When police are present, students are often charged with "disorderly conduct" for screaming in the halls or yelling at a teacher – incidents that are punished less severely in other schools, the study found. The study recommends that the city focus on crime prevention rather than punishment, on building relationships with the students rather than treating them as potential criminals, and a renewed focus on the broader issues of reducing overcrowding and funding disparities.

<http://www.citylimits.org/content/articles/weeklyView.cfm?articlenumber=1922>

Charter Schools Joining the Mainstream: A decade ago, charter schools existed largely on the fringes. Many were start-ups operating out of rented church basements – alternatives to failing urban schools that struggled to teach the basics. Now more than 200,000 California students are enrolled in 574 charters – independently operated public schools that have wide latitude in what they teach and how they teach it. While charters are still most popular in big cities and among low-achieving students, they're starting to take root in bedroom communities and affluent suburbs, creating stiff competition for regular public schools and drawing students from highly regarded private schools as well. Charter schools are by no means a magic bullet for the numerous challenges of public education, writes Dana Hull. Some stumble, fail to meet community expectations, lose students and ultimately

close. The research on charter schools is also mixed. But charters are also drawing families who are frustrated with the teach-to-the-standardized-test pressure facing many public schools, as well as parents shopping for specific programs.

<http://news.publiceducation.org/>

NEA to Challenge No Child Left Behind: A majority of the 8,200 delegates gathered for the National Education Association's annual convention overwhelmingly approved a plan that would push for aggressive changes to the federal No Child Left Behind law, which is up for reauthorization next year. The nation's largest union, whose leaders have often complained they were not allowed to participate in the crafting of the country's chief education law, approved a plan that calls on NEA members to lobby Congress for reforms to bring the law more in line with the views of the 2.8 million-member union. The changes proposed include establishing an accountability system that no longer relies only on testing as the measure of success or failure. Instead, the union recommends designing a system based on multiple benchmarks, including teacher-designed classroom assessments, student portfolios, graduation/dropout statistics, and college-enrollment rates, among other measures. The plan also calls for smaller class sizes, more funding for schools, and revisions to the definition of "highly qualified" teacher. The plan passed with just three delegates speaking publicly against it, reports Vaishali Honawar, because they argued that the union should take even more extreme measures and try to repeal the NCLB law in its entirety. At the Representative Assembly, the union also released a survey of 1,000 NEA members that showed nearly 70 percent dislike the No Child Left Behind Act and believe it has failed to improve education. Only 29 percent of those surveyed said they approve of the law.

<http://news.publiceducation.org>

Bill Gates, The Nation's Superintendent of Schools?: Warren Buffett's gift of \$31 billion to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will double the foundation's assets, bringing it to more than \$60 billion, and will increase its annual giving to nearly \$3 billion. Never before has an individual given such a large amount of money to someone else's foundation, writes Diane Ravitch. Never before has a private foundation had assets of this dimension. Never before has any individual or foundation had so much power to direct the course of American education, which is one of the primary interests of the Gates Foundation. Educators are waiting with bated breath to see which direction this multibillion-dollar behemoth will take. When judged by their influence on education, foundations have a decidedly mixed record. With the ability to hand out more than \$1 billion or more every year to U.S. educators without any external review, the Gates Foundation looms larger in the eyes of school leaders than even the U.S. Department of Education, which, by comparison, has only about \$20 million in truly discretionary funds. The department may have sticks, but the foundation has almost all the carrots. In light of the size of the foundation's endowment, Bill Gates is now the nation's superintendent of schools. He can support whatever he wants, based on any theory or philosophy that appeals to him. We must all watch for signs and portents to decipher what lies in store for American education. <http://www.latimes.com/>

From Report Reveals Harsh Impact of Zero Tolerance Policies on Florida Public School Students: The Florida State Conference NAACP, Advancement Project, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) released “Arresting Development: Addressing the School Discipline Crisis in Florida,” a report that reveals the findings of public hearings conducted last Fall throughout Florida on the increasingly harsh school discipline policies and practices in Florida’s public schools. A year ago, the nation was stunned by the release of video footage showing a 5-year-old St. Petersburg kindergarten student being arrested and handcuffed by police officers at school after having a temper tantrum. The hearings were held in response to this incident and growing community discontent with unreasonable school discipline practices. The report notes that statewide there were 26,990 school-related referrals to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice during the 2004-05 school year. Over three-quarters of these referrals were for misdemeanor offenses such as disorderly conduct, trespassing, or assault and/or battery, which is usually nothing more than a schoolyard fight. In addition to turning to police and juveniles courts as disciplinarians, Florida schools are increasingly utilizing discipline methods that focus on removing students from the classroom instead of addressing underlying causes of behavioral problems and ensuring that those students continue to receive an education. These punitive practices fall hardest on students of color and students with disabilities. And state juvenile court administrators and education advocates have reported a growing number of children with disabilities being referred to the juvenile justice system. The report concludes that in each of the counties highlighted, school districts have spent millions of dollars for school police officers who spend most of their time disciplining students for conduct that should be addressed by school programs, counseling, and parental involvement. The result is thousands of children who are needlessly saddled with criminal records and denied an education. Ultimately, parents, students, educators, and other stakeholders must work collaboratively to reach an agreement on the best path to take to keep schools safe and stop the unnecessary criminalization of Florida’s students. For a copy of the report please visit: <http://www.advancementproject.org> or <http://www.naacpldf.org>

From Test Reformers React to New National Poll on “No Child Left Behind”: Today’s national survey results showing that a strong majority of Americans believe “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) has harmed schools or failed to improve them demonstrates that “Politicians are far out of step from their constituents when it comes to judging local educational quality by narrow ‘one-size-fits-all’ standardized exams,” according to Dr. Monty Neill, Executive Director of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest). The annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup (PDK/Gallup) poll found that nearly seven in ten of all adults who said they were familiar with NCLB believe the federal testing mandate is not helping schools. More than two-thirds of all respondents said a single test could not fairly assess whether a school needs improvement. Eight out of ten agreed that simply testing students in reading and math was too narrow. In the sponsor’s news release announcing the new survey results, William Bushaw,

executive director of PDK International, concluded, “The views expressed in this year’s PDK/Gallup poll should serve as a wake-up call to our nation’s policy makers as they begin the process of reauthorizing NCLB in 2007. The public rejects the punitive approach found in NCLB, favors a broad curriculum, prefers more appropriate measures of school performance than a single high-stakes test, and supports efforts targeted at helping our most vulnerable students.” The Joint Organizational Statement on NCLB with a list of signers is online at: <http://www.fairtest.org>

From the American Educational Research Association: A new study by University of Minnesota researchers indicates that state-mandated high school exit examinations (HSEEs) lower the high school graduation rate, denying diplomas to thousands of young people per year who otherwise would have graduated from high school. The study, “High School Exit Examinations and State-Level Completion and GED Rates, 1975-2002,” appears in the June 21 issue of Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (the education policy journal of the American Educational Research Association). It is authored by John Robert Warren, associate professor of sociology, Rachael Kulick, graduate student, department of Sociology, and Krista Jenkins, former University of Minnesota undergraduate student.

”Despite growing evidence that state-mandated high school exit examinations have deleterious consequences for high school graduation rates without improving learning or labor market preparedness, such policies are being implemented in additional states over the next few years,” said Warren. He went on to note that, as their article went to press, more than 40,000 high school seniors in the state of California are on the verge of being denied diplomas as a result of their failure to pass California’s high school exit exam.

Critics of state HSEEs contend that these policies reduce rates of high school completion particularly for race/ethnic minorities and for economically disadvantaged students (Center on Education Policy 2005; National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy 2000). The present study lends support to such claims. According to Warren, “the negative impact of state-mandated HSEEs on high school graduation rate grows stronger as states’ poverty rates increase and as states become more racially/ethnically diverse.” About half of all states require students to pass an HSEE in order to obtain a high school diploma, and similar requirements will soon be in place in Washington and elsewhere. <http://www.aera.net/>

From Northfield Vote will Close Village School by Emily Johns, Star Tribune: Students at Northfield’s first charter school need to start looking for a new school for next year. The Northfield School Board voted 5-2 Tuesday to withdraw its sponsorship of the nine-year-old Village School of Northfield, a move that will essentially close the school. Board members cited academic performance, student safety and compliance with state education standards as reason for concern. The Village School is a democratic, project-based charter school that receives about \$500,000

annually in state funding. Students at the school choose when and what they want to learn, and they base their learning around projects such as growing tomatoes or building a boat. School officials pride themselves on providing a home for at-risk students who struggle in a more traditional school environment.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, 32 percent of the students qualify as special education students and 55 percent are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, meaning they come from low-income families. District officials told the school in March that its sponsorship might not be renewed because of district concerns over student safety and academic performance. The school has not met the state's definition of adequate progress for the last two years and it has only a 59 percent graduation rate. In January, Northfield Police Chief Gary Smith sent Superintendent Chris Richardson a letter citing concerns about student safety and behavior. He said police officers have found students selling marijuana downtown during school hours, trespassing at the nearby AmericInn pool and fishing, claiming it was a math assignment. Half of the Village School's 40 students live within the Northfield School District's boundaries. Richardson said some families have already contacted the Northfield Area Learning Center, a district school for at-risk high school students. Younger students could consider home schooling, or applying to the district's two other charter schools for admission if they're not interested in returning to the Northfield School District.

HOME EDUCATION NEWS

Home Education Magazine's FREE Homeschooling Information and Resource Guide. Thinking about homeschooling? The award winning Home Education Magazine has a Homeschooling Information and Resource Guide that can help.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UNITED KINGDOM

Schoolhouse Celebrates 10 Years of Supporting Home

Education in Scotland. Home educating families from across Scotland gathered in Dundee in May to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the national charity Schoolhouse Home Education Association. Founded in the city in 1996 by a group of parents from the Tayside area who were concerned at the lack of dedicated information and support available to home educators in Scotland, the organization has grown into a highly respected national body whose volunteers handle more than 1000 enquiries every year.

To mark this important milestone, Schoolhouse has been developing new information resources for parents, including a new look website designed and built by a home educated young person, and new information booklets covering the questions most often asked by new enquirers. The association has also renewed its call for a change in primary legislation to ensure that parents in Scotland have the right to remove their children from a state school upon written request, as is the case for parents south of the border and those in Scotland whose children attend private schools. The campaign has been backed by more than 40 MSPs who have already signed up to a parliamentary motion tabled by Scottish Green Party education spokesperson Robin Harper MSP.

The new look Schoolhouse website is at :
<http://www.schoolhouse.org.uk>

North of Scotland Home Educators: NOSHED is an informal network of home schooling families who meet on a regular basis in the Elgin/Inverness area. If you live in or are visiting this area & would like to find out about NOSHED events please join us at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/noshed>

School with No Rules is Forced to Lay Down Law Because of Spoiled Pupils, by Richard Garner: For years, Summerhill, the "free" school founded by the philosopher A S Neill in the 1920s, gained notoriety for its pupils skipping lessons, outdoor bathing in the nude and voting for their own school rules. It was, in fact, the very epitome of the kind of liberal progressive school so frowned upon by education traditionalists such as Chris Woodhead, the former schools inspector.

Now, in a new book, its current head, Zoe Neill Redhead, the founder's daughter, reveals the school is having to adopt a more disciplinarian tone towards its current pupils, who have been so pampered by their parents, she says, that they no longer know the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

"We see the results of parental interference and over-indulgence all the time," she says in the book Summerhill and A S Neill, previewed in this week's Times Educational Supplement and published by the Open University. "In modern society, parents seem to be unable to leave their kids alone for more than a short while. At Summerhill, we now see many children who are in constant search of adult influence and stimulation, unable to quietly get along with their own lives without the need for admiration and attention."

The result has been that - while the school still adopts its liberal approach with pupils able to make their own rules - it has had also to adopt the role of a disciplinarian towards them, because they know no rules. In Mrs Neill Redhead's words, it has had to start "teaching kids that they can't do what they like, that they have to have regard to other people's rights and feelings - a bit of a role reversal that Neill would have found interesting".

The philosophy of Summerhill, which is in Leiston in Suffolk, has always been that the individual has control over his or her own life. Hence the policy that pupils are allowed to decide for themselves which lessons they want to attend - a policy criticised by Ofsted, the education standards watchdog, in the late Nineties, which led the then education secretary David Blunkett issuing a notice of complaint against the school which could have led to its closure.

He was insistent that pupils should be compelled to attend lessons - but ultimately lost a court battle with the school.

So Summerhill continued with its ideal that "you don't have to be answerable to your parents or any adult; you can just get on with your life and learn or make mistakes".

"You can be lonely, you can be bored, you can take risks, you can be really nice or you can be quite horrible," says Mrs Neill Redhead. "So long as what you do doesn't upset or hurt anybody else, you can be completely yourself." Unfortunately, she argues, this philosophy does not fit in with modern parenting. "The new parenting trend makes parents feel they have to be part of their children's childhood at every turn," she writes. "Parents rush home from work or pick up the children from school and are immediately involved in the pattern of providing a stimulating environment for the children. We must not let them watch too much television, play computer games or play outside in the street ... Talk to them at home and make sure that we are always on hand to inspire and encourage them.

"This in itself causes many tensions within the family for the obvious reason that parents find it extremely difficult and tiring to provide this constant stream of enthusiasm and that the children are more often than not reluctant participants."

As for Summerhill, it is thriving again with 84 pupils (its average was 60 while A S Neill was head), after winning its legal showdown with the Government.

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IRELAND

Home Education Network (HEN) Ireland was Founded in 1998. It is an informal organization of homeschooling parents and exists to protect their right to do so, as well as to share experiences and offer informal advice. It is not a religious or political organization. Eileen McNulty writes, "surprisingly for a traditionally conservative country in many ways, home education is

very easy in Ireland. It is written into the Constitution that parents are the primary educators and families are not obliged to follow any particular curriculum - just the provide a minimum education. We are now obliged by law the register children as home learners, though many people do not and just keep a low profile.”

HEN Ireland member Nick Gudge estimates that there are about 5000 homeschooled children in Ireland (0.5% of the school age population), though the actual number could be anywhere between 2000 and 20,000. He reports that, as in the U.S., families homeschool for various reasons, including a commitment to child-led learning, problems in schools, religious or cultural distinctiveness, and medical conditions, to name the most common.

HEN Ireland recently held a gathering. For more information see:
<http://www.henireland.org>

CHILE

Massive Student Protests in Chile. A series of recurrent protests has taken place since April, 2006 in Chile, with nearly 800,000 taking to the streets on May 30. High school students are demanding that the new government of president Michelle Bachelet reverse educational policies put in place by the authoritarian Pinochet regime. They want the national government to take a more active role in equalizing educational opportunity and subsidizing student transportation costs and other fees.

Pinochet’s policies, like those of conservatives in the U.S., supported the privatizing of education. Jose Joaquin Brunner, the former education minister, said Chile’s poorest schools allocate an estimated \$73 a month per student, compared with more than \$385 at the richest. The law also allows the virtually uncontrolled creation of private schools that are entitled to government monthly subsidies of \$57 a student. Critics say the schools’ owners are more interested in profiting from the subsidies than providing a high-quality education.

Javier Romero, a leader of the movement, said: “We want the state to be the only guarantor and administrator of public education. Only that would ensure equality.”

The protests became known as the Penguins’ Revolution or The March of the Penguins, because of the students’ black & white uniforms, but despite this whimsical description, the marches were serious and turned violent. Television and print media showed images of police beating young protesters, provoking criticism from parents and citizens. President Bachelet condemned the police’s handling of the unrest and sacked the head of special forces.

On June 1, Bachelet addressed the nation by television, announcing several new measures for education that met most of the student’s demands. She agreed to allocate \$200 million to repair school buildings and to improve meals for poor students, and

announced a 73-member presidential advisory committee to study reforms of the education law, which included six seats reserved for high school students. On June 9 student leaders accepted the invitation and called for an immediate end to strikes and school take-overs.

However, later in the summer, movement leaders called new demonstrations, complaining that the commission is working too slowly and the government is not keeping its promises. On August 23, around 2,000 students were marching in Santiago and other cities in the country, in protest of the slow speed that the reforms were taking place. The rally eventually got violent when small groups turned away from the peaceful demonstrations and started throwing rocks at the police. The police responded with tear gas and water cannons. More than 200 of the demonstrators were arrested and over a dozen were injured. In early September, hundreds of high school students took to the streets again, hurling rocks at police. 85 more were arrested.

(Information for this summary was gathered online from several websites including Wikipedia, BBC, al-jazeera.com and the Miami Herald.)

THAILAND

The Whispering Seed is a Village-based Sustainable Living and Learning Center and Home for Children who Have Been Orphaned, Abused and Neglected Along the Thai-Burmese Border. Our Community Learning Center provides trainings, workshops, seminars and resources for villagers in our local area and to the larger international community in the following areas: holistic child-rearing, democratic and holistic models of learning, cross-cultural youth empowerment trainings, natural healing techniques, preserving traditional crafts (dance, music, spinning and weaving), documentary film making and sustainable models of living, including Permaculture, natural house building and organic farming. Jim Connor and Saowanee Sangkara.

Teacher Training Program in Holistic Learning & Sustainability. After working with one Burmese group in China and then having the opportunity to Travel inside Burma and work with teachers at a monastic school there, we have decided to start a Teacher Training Program for teachers from inside Burma and also for Karen and Mon teachers along the Thai-Burmese border. Jim will be working with Wongsanit Ashram and friends from Burma and Thailand to design a 1 year residential program in Thailand. We hope to start working with the first group of teachers starting around the end of this year for a 4-6month period. We hope to have the 1 year program designed and ready to start by next June of July 2007. The program will incorporate many aspects for teachers to not only learn about holistic learning and alternative, democratic models of education, but also will include trainings in different aspects of sustainable living such as Permaculture, natural house building and holistic health care. We also hope to include in the program study tours in Thailand and India for the teachers to directly experience different models of learning communities. We are currently designing the program

and curriculum and are starting to look for funding sources for the program.

We are in need of a few things here at Whispering Seed to help make life a little easier for us. If any readers are able to help us obtain them, we would greatly appreciate hearing from you: laptop computers, first aid supplies, homeopathic and naturopathic medicines, children's books, children and adult rain jackets, umbrellas, tooth brushes and tooth paste, summer clothing for children, floor loom for weaving, blank notebooks, coloring books, English workbooks, pens, colored pencils, markers, paints, toys, games, puzzles, and donations towards purchasing fruit trees for the land. With warmest blessings!! - Jim, Nao, and the children at whispering seed!

<http://www.whisperingseed.org>
whisperingseed@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Bullying Tactics Used by Queensland Labor Government (Australia) to Close Down The Booroobin Sudbury School are Still Being Used Against the People Involved. Booroobin School, founded by parents in 1996 and operated until 2003, had implemented democratic values; restorative justice that ensured there was no bullying or violence; and self-directed learning long before the State government thought these were good ideas. Booroobin complied with the Adelaide Declaration of National Goals in Schooling in the 21st century, as agreed by all the States and federal governments. Booroobin provided a much needed choice in education that legislation proclaimed that it supported as a prime object, but willfully took away, despite hundreds of pages of evidence and information from all the parents, Students and Staff, and petitions, resolutions made by schools, people and conferences around the world. Neither the Minister nor the Premier responded. Parents, Staff and Students made sacrifices to establish, resource, furnish, staff and operate their school. The government had no capital investment in it, yet claimed the right, over and above the human rights contained in International Human Rights Law, of Booroobin parents, children teachers and independent schools to go about their right to educate young people according to their democratic values and principles. Government didn't believe it was good enough for Booroobin to use innovative, 21st century approaches to learning and teaching, under legislation that came into effect in 2002. They only wanted Booroobin to conform.

In 2004 parents decided they wanted the School to continue, but in the different form of The Booroobin Sudbury Democratic Centre of Learning. It meant that the center of learning would have to be self funding. Parents realized from past bad experiences that accepting funding meant trading off their principles and democratic values for lesser educational outcomes for their children.

The Minister for Education threatened criminal action and fines against parents and two of the founders for operating the democratic centre of learning, which he claimed by its existence inferred it was a non-state school (despite the web site

categorically stating that it was not a non-state school).

The Booroobin new school Committee will continue to meet to consider and prepare a submission to become a non-state school. Until the new school commences, parents educational needs for their children will not be met.

Resolution of the 14th Annual International Democratic Education Conference, Sydney, Australia - July 13th, 2006

We, the people attending the International Democratic Education Conference being held this week in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, have learnt of and are dismayed by the detrimental effects caused by Queensland State Government education legislation on the people connected with The Booroobin Sudbury Democratic Centre of Learning ("Booroobin"), near Maleny in Queensland.

Booroobin Centre of Learning students, elected staff, graduates and parents have attended our conferences for some years and have participated equally and fully in our conferences.

We believe Booroobin's democratic education principles and practices support its students' learning to become reflective self-directed, responsible citizens and life long learners. This indeed is reflected in the United Nations Resolution of choices in education.

The International Democratic Education Conference supports the Booroobin community in using the appropriate processes to become an accredited school like other successful accredited schools in other countries using democratic education principles and practices.

CANADA

From **Schools Urged to Cut Suspensions**, by Louise Brown, Toronto Star: In a strong rebuke of zero-tolerance discipline, a blue-ribbon panel has called on Ontario schools to stop expelling and suspending so many students and consider all factors — from a child's age to a learning disability — before kicking them out for bad behavior. A six-member review team under MPP Liz Sandals is urging schools to be less quick to suspend students, and when necessary to suspend them for shorter periods, keeping them at school where possible rather than sending them home. It calls on schools to communicate better with parents when students get into trouble, and guarantee all expelled students the chance to take an alternative program. They are proposals many expect to be adopted this fall by the Dalton McGuinty government, which has long distanced itself from the Conservatives' tough Safe Schools Act, particularly after the Ontario Human Rights Commission charged that schools seemed to be applying it more harshly with children of color and disabled students. Although described as "zero tolerance," in fact the act gave schools some discretion as to when to suspend or expel students, a power applied unevenly across the province. Sandals' Safe Schools Action Team, appointed 18 months ago to consult with the public,

yesterday released recommendations that call on all schools to use discretion wherever possible, to kick students out only as a last resort. Education Minister Sandra Pupatello has said she will review the recommendations this summer and prepare a response this fall. The panel also suggests Queen's Park strip principals of their right to expel students without consulting the school board, a right they were given only six years ago when the new law came in. And it suggests Queen's Park remove a teacher's right to suspend a student for a day without consulting the principal.

INDIA

The central idea behind Hole-in-the-Wall is that groups of children learn on their own without any direct intervention. This was conceptually explained by Dr Sugata Mitra, Chief Scientist of NIIT, as Minimally Invasive Education (MIE). He found that children using Learning Stations required little or no inputs from teachers and learnt on their own by the process of exploration, discovery and peer coaching. The idea of MIE has crystallized over a period of time based on observations and educational experiments conducted at NIIT. Minimally Invasive Education is defined as a pedagogic method that uses the learning environment to generate an adequate level of motivation to induce learning in groups of children, with minimal, or no, intervention by a teacher. MIE uses children's natural curiosity and focuses on providing an enabling environment where they can learn on their own. Children, in the process of freely experimenting with the Learning Station, pick up critical problem solving skills. It also provides a collaborative setting where children can share their knowledge and in the process, develop better group dynamics, all in a highly natural environment. MIE's uniqueness is its ability to attract children towards the Learning Station driven purely by their own interests. Conventional pedagogy, on the other hand, focuses on the teacher's ability to disseminate information in a classroom setting. MIE thus complements the formal schooling system by providing a much needed balance for a child to learn on her own and provides for a holistic learning experience.

<http://www.pnyv.org/>

Correspondence

From Harris Sussman:

We didn't set out to be the only (and therefore the largest and the best and the most significant) project in the United States devoted solely to helping talented blind people in Russia, but it looks like that's what we are, a year and a few months after starting up. We set out to give some form to our remembrance of my father-in-law, in our mourning, a memorial, a tribute to his life and living. Moisey Naumovich Adamov was blind since the age of two. He became a professor first of mathematics then of quantum physics at St. Petersburg State University in St. Petersburg, Russia, where he taught and advised students for 57 years until his death in February 2005 at the age of 84.

At her father's memorial service my wife Svetlana recognized

some of her father's friends and colleagues who are blind, and met some others she did not know. As she talked to them, as they spoke about Moisey, she was acutely aware of how her father had been a vital figure in their lives, listening, advising, networking, mentoring, cheering them up and on. There was now a void for them and in the social fabric of the city. And simultaneously, government social policy was withdrawing aid to blind people, services that had been available to them were disappearing, and blind people were marginalized to an even greater degree than before in an increasingly aggressive and unfriendly economic climate. Blind people – children, students, scientists, musicians, artists – were being left to fend for themselves, lucky if they had a caring family, unlucky if they didn't.

We decided we could help some people by putting them in touch with each other and with outsiders, performing the kind of connective links that Moisey had provided. Our son put up a website that meets the standards for being usable by blind people. We have been moving outward from the people who knew Svetlana's father to people they know. We've been told there are 13,000 blind people in St. Petersburg, 58 blind university students. It is said that there are 300,000 blind people in Russia. We're helping one person at a time, through personal contact, expanding the circle, building a network and a community of awareness, assistance and connection.

<http://www.sussman.org/mnafund/>

From Arnold Greenberg:

Folks: I've been following this conversation about compulsory education, coercion and the value and purpose of college. I don't get the chance to post here much so I'd like to share some thoughts on these topics.

I agree with most of Gatto's observations, especially how the Prussian influence on American education created how our schools operate. Socrates believed that teachers should not get paid because when they do, the tendency is to extend their lessons longer and longer. Wilhem Wundt's "psycho-physics" of breaking knowledge down into small units interrupted by a horn made students dependent on the instructor, training them to follow instructions, be obedient and learn only what was presented, thereby greatly expanding the time it takes to learn something. American educators learned these methods, became heads of colleges and psych and education departments. The Carnegie Unit was created by a group of college professors who calculated how much "seat time" was required in order to learn the various prescribed subjects—hence, 12 years.

Most of what became and continues to become the curriculum was and still is created by the corporate leaders and college presidents who decide what society needs. In other words, social engineering and compulsory education go hand and hand, creating the "education industry"—probably the largest industry in this country when you include school busses, testing and textbooks, unions, construction and more. The Carnegie Unit, created in the 1890s, still dominates many school systems in this country. Many of you may already know all of this. What is

important to emphasize is that “The System” is impossible to change. Most everyone in these schools, administrators, teachers, students know it is not working, but it seems as if “The System” has a life of its own, like a monster that either eats up any one in its way or forces people to run away in order to save their souls. Some of these “run aways” are us, starting new schools around the country. Unfortunately, many people are greatly damaged by this monster.

Regarding the question, should algebra be taught—that’s an interesting question. Some of you may know of Seymour Papert, a major educational innovator in the use of computers in school. He’s a mathematician, retired professor emeritus from MIT and creator of the Logo program. He happens to live in Blue Hill, five minutes from our school and when he is not traveling around the world, spends a lot of time at our school, helping us develop an approach to teaching mathematics that involves real mathematical thinking. He says that there are many areas of mathematics that are more interesting and important than algebra. It was an arbitrary decision to make algebra the topic that gets taught. He says it was chosen because it is relatively easy to teach. His main point about why math is a dreaded subject to many students is that it has no purpose. Kids love solving “real” problems and will spend hours at it if they see its relevance. At some point I’d like to share more of what we are doing with mathematics to make it relevant to students. If you don’t know about Seymour, look him up on Google. It will be worth your visit.

One more comment about algebra. I have seen many students learn algebra, for instance, in a short period of time. We have had many homeschoolers come to Liberty School who had done very little math, coming into our school barely knowing how to add and subtract. A good number, (not all) went from elementary school math through algebra 1 in a few months and completed algebra 2 and geometry the following year. In other words, completed practically all of the math expected for elementary school and high school in less than two years. These were motivated students. Several of those students chose to take calculus. I want to emphasize that many homeschoolers came to Liberty very proficient in math. Also, many students came from local public schools who also could do very little math. Unfortunately, our schools do not really know how to teach mathematics.

Regarding Compulsory Education. As I’ve said from time to time over the years on this listserve, compulsory education, is immoral. Students are captives forced to have a prescribed curriculum imposed on them. They are not consenting partners in the act of learning. In my opinion forcing students to learn something they are not interested in is a form of “intellectual rape.” Even when students are willing to cooperate and passively accept what is being “taught” the fact that so much is “teacher directed” rather than “student directed” ultimately deprives students of even thinking about what they might be interested in. A sense of who they really are is not allowed to thrive. Teachers, I believe, have to be just as sensitive to what they are taking away from students as what they are “giving” students when they teach.

It’s true that many young people learn to be “successful” in this system and become achievers. They learn to please the teacher and as Charles Eisentein said, become “pretenders,” who are not in touch with their “authentic selves” and do not know how to be authentic in an educational system. They have learned to play the game. Often, the most authentic students are the ones who refuse to play the school game, tune it out, and are considered “losers.” We get a lot of these students at Liberty from more traditional schools and often, they become our best students, our most creative, interesting people. They are passionate about things that do not fit into the prescribed curriculum. So when we ask, what is it you really want to learn about, what are you passionate about and encourage them to pursue that, it’s wonderful to see these kids open up.

Regarding college. College is part of our society’s social engineering and may be the biggest scam of all. I wrote an article that was published in the Aero magazine awhile back called “The Lie Behind the Ivy.” These prestigious places can charge \$30 and \$40k a year because they market how selective they are and offer the promise of financial success if you are a graduate. The fact is that a large majority of the graduates seldom find work in the fields they majored in and end up with a huge debt. I know so many college graduates working as carpenters, landscapers, cashiers, waitresses, barely able to make a living. Unless they go on to graduate school, often getting further in debt, then they may end up in a career of their choice.

Are they “successful” in the best meaning of that word? The eighty hour work week is becoming more common for those who want to be “successful” in the corporate world—a world that is more and more precarious as the global economy changes “the American Dream” to one of uncertainty. What does it mean to be successful?

I’m not opposed to college. It can be exciting if you are there to learn and expand your horizons, but is the huge debt students end up with it that entraps them. In other words, if students think they are investing in their futures, it may not be the wisest of investments. Most students go to college because that’s what you do in this society after college. It’s unquestioned.

We have the resources in this country to make college free—even pay students a small stipend while they study, like in many European countries. This country would get back its investment in these young people ten-fold, if they were not so strapped by debts. But this is a whole other topic for some other time.

Conferences

Nov 11 – 15, 2006, **NCAC 10th Annual Career Academy Conference**, San Francisco, CA. Experience the convergence of education’s most potent ideas and powerful networks. Meet the authors of the National Standards for Career Academies and learn how to build the bridge that connects your school to those

standards. NCAC participants come with a genuine desire to spread the knowledge and share your discoveries.
<http://www.ncacinc.org>

March 4 – 7, 2007, The **18th Annual National Youth-At-Risk Conference** sponsored by Georgia Southern University, Savannah, Georgia. Presenters will share practical programs and useful strategies on how to create safe, healthy, caring, and intellectually empowering environments to enhance the well-being of all our young people. Over 1200 participants will attend over 120 presentations related to five strands: (a) support academic learning and close achievement gaps; (b) foster social/emotional skills and the social climate; (c) prevent violence and ensure safety and security; (d) promote mental and physical health; and (e) enhance family and community support.
<http://ceps.georgiasouthern.edu/>

March 30-April 1, 2007 **GENERATION2007: Reimagine Growing Up!** Los Angeles
REIMAGINE GROWING UP ... in a society that values the whole child and supports families in conscious parenting, professionals in integrative healthcare and integral education, and youth in being the difference they want to see in the world.

We invite you to join us for three days to share, learn, and network with others who hold similar visions and values about parenting, health care, and education, and new ways to connect with the Earth, each other, and ourselves. Speakers will include Jane Goodall, Eric Utne, Thomas Armstrong, Deborah Meier, Rachael Kessler, Tim Seldin and other visionaries.
<http://www.generationhome.org/>

At the Conclusion of the Year-Long National Symposium, Progressive Education in the 21st Century, hosted by The School in Rose Valley to celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary, a committee was formed to revive the Network of Progressive Educators, which has been inactive in recent years. This group hopes to inspire Progressive Educators from across the country to join together, share information and stories, network, and plan gatherings. We hope to 1) create a critical mass of educators who will help articulate progressive practices, 2) meet together to provide support to one another and 3) create change in the climate of education in this country that is moving away from child centered, developmental and experiential educational environments for children.

We have created an online bulletin board (<http://www.peninsulaschool.org/Progressiveeducationnetwork>), we hope you will find it easy to use and useful for your practice. This is the first of monthly questions that you will receive in your inbox. It is hoped that these questions will inspire educators to engage in a conversation about progressive education.

Networking the Networks

With Ron Miller

Dear Readers,

This is a new section that we'd like to develop in Education Revolution. We are looking for correspondents from all of the various networks and movements, representing all varieties of educational alternatives, to send reports about what is happening within your community that could be of interest to others. Please contact me (Ron Miller) at holistic@gmavt.net I'm especially looking for people to write about the following networks:

- Montessori
- Waldorf
- Democratic Schools
- Quaker (Friends) Schools
- Homeschooling/Unschooling Networks
- Reggio Emilia Model
- Charter Schools
- Magnet Schools
- Progressive Educators (public and independent)
- Community Education / Folk Schools

Holistic schools not covered by the above (e.g. Partnership Education, yoga-inspired schools, Krishnamurti, Robert Muller, etc.)

4th Annual AERO Conference

June 28th - July 1st
Russell Sage College
Troy, NY, U.S.A.

www.AEROConference.com

IDEC 2006

July 10th - July 16th
Sydney, Australia

By Wendy Pettit & Cecelia Bradley



IDEC 2006 was a success. Around 250 to 300 people attended each day, from 15 different countries including Burma/Myanmar, Canada, Germany, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, UK, USA and of course, Australia.

Dennis Foley, as a descendent of the Gai-mariagal gave a fitting Welcome to Country to all our international guests, and the students of Currambena and Blacktown Youth College followed this with their own special welcome songs and dances. The planned program of invited speakers included some local favorites such as Stuart Hill, Professor of Social Ecology at Western Sydney University who spoke about enabling learners by valuing their individual journeys, Louise Porter, author of "Children are People, Too," who discussed parenting and teaching relationship skills, John Marsden, author of many novels for young readers, who told us about setting up his own school outside Melbourne and the power of language, and John Edwards, who spoke of the "things we steal from children" and the differentiation between leadership and management.

Robin Grille gave a powerful analysis of the place of emotional intelligence in the development of each child, Terry O'Connell spoke about his work in restorative justice, Rebecca Dallam shared some of the work of Montessori education in our indigenous schools and Di Roberts, the principal of Minimah Aboriginal school, spoke of the changes that had occurred in her community through education. Ros Dunlop presented powerful multimedia sessions about East Timor and other places where violent conflicts are being experienced.

There were also sessions with IDEC identities. Yaacov Hecht from the Institute of Democratic Education in Israel very effectively linked the two main themes of Democratic Education and Sustainability. The work of IDE was also evident in the presentations from three students, Arik, Reshef and Rotem. Gail Thomas, sociologist and author of "Meeting the Challenge of Race Relations in America", Asakura Kageki on the Tokyo Shure Free schools, Jerry Mintz and the work of AERO and an evening of films from Isaac Graves about IDEC 2005 in Berlin, Albany Free School and US democratic schools, sessions on democratic education in Korea from Viviahn and others all contributed to the international perspective.

The program which evolved over the course of the week was rich and varied. An 'unofficial' Korean day and Japanese day brought life and art and music and dance and drumming and color to our gathering. Mira also shared the dance culture of Nepal with us. A strong thread through IDEC was the political situation which many face in their countries and work in education.

There were session on Math and Science, building sustainable school environments, the work of students in sustainable projects in forests, conflict resolution and peaceful means to communicate. The art room was in almost constant use with tee-shirts being screen-printed. Students played basketball, guitar and piano; they swam and chatted, participated in forums and other sessions chaired and ran the morning meetings. Conference participants ran sessions on topics as varied as setting up a democratic high school in Sydney and constructing model cars using mouse-trap power. Jerry hosted a most successful auction and the end of week concert was a progressive feast as we changed venues to accommodate the musical and entertainment talents of the group.

A feature of this IDEC was the on-line connections with Julia Morton-Marr in Canada and Eric Schneider in Germany. Their on-line presentations on sustainability added another dimension to our global community. Through their conference room facilities we were also able to record the session happening in the main theatre and provide the possibility of interaction with those listening in other countries. The concept of community, connectedness and the global group were also reinforced by Sally Carless and Aleia Schaum who both offer on-line connections between people and schools through Global Village School and 6 Friends.

IDEC2006 was remarkable for the openness and generosity of spirit amongst participants. There was an open-heartedness in discussions and a deep respect for others' views which gave it a particular sense of community. The organizing committee worked extremely well as a team and one of their highlights was certainly the spirit of those who attended.... we may be spread over the world but we are certainly a community. As one of the NZ participants said in farewell "My body is satisfied, my mind is stimulated and my spirit is uplifted". That says it all.

Resolutions proposed passed at IDEC2006:

1. That Lumiar in Brazil go ahead and host the next IDEC at a time and date to be decided by them.

2. That Regional IDECs are already starting to happen on their own and there is nothing to decide about them, and that the international IDECs will continue to happen as long as there are people who want to host them - and that will determine the frequency.
3. Some places are considering offering to host the next IDEC and since there was no definite proposal in Sydney the decision will be made by a committee of past IDEC hosts.
4. Resolution in Support of Booroobin (See International News for text)
5. Resolution in support of Democratic Education Consortium (See below for text)
6. Proposal to write a resolution re human rights in education to UN

What of the 'What NEXT?' in our theme?

Stuart Hill articulated the value of 'the smallest meaningful step you can absolutely guarantee to carry out' as being the way to begin to enable change. We would love to hear from all those who wish to share the next step which they took after IDEC2006

Next time, IDEC will be in Brazil and the organizing committee is currently discussing the feedback from attendees to send on to Carol at Lumiar. IDEC2007 and we want to offer our support and encouragement to that committee as soon as possible. IDEC is a very precious event for all of us.

See you in Brazil!!!

<http://www.idec2006.org>

<http://www.pnyv.org/idec2006/recordings/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2006/1681106.htm>

The 14th Annual International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC) July 2006, endorse, the Democratic Education Consortium (DEC)

Formed during the summer of 2004 in Indianapolis, the DEC is an independent group of over 35 persons that includes students, educators, activists, and community leaders from 5 states and 3 countries who attend meetings and participate via the internet.

The DEC is dedicated to promoting and advocating for democratic practices in education and has three goals:

1. A real shift to shared governance that empowers faculty and students in meaningful decision-making in policy, curriculum and instruction.
2. The creation and continuation of a public forum for issues around classrooms, schools communities and the world.
3. Schools embrace practices that develop and encourage civic engagement from a robust and lively democracy.

Democratic schools hold the best promise for a democratic society. And, indeed, democratic schools hold the best hope for con-



Students from South Korea Teach New Zealand Students a Game

tinued support for public education a cornerstone of American democracy.

Those attending IDEC2006 held in Sydney Australia give international recognition and support for the goals and efforts of the Democratic Education Consortium.



*Ramchandra Mani Bhusal from Nepal
Gazes out over the Gorgeous Sydney Harbor*

Books etc.

by Aleksandra Majstorac Kobiljski

Now that we have entered a new school year, the nation has witnessed a new homework buzz. This fall it is particularly loud. From several books denouncing homework this season we chose two of particular interest: *The Case Against Homework: How Homework is Hurting Our Children* and *What We Can Do About It* by Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish is a book of two surprised parents who learned that there is very little solid research that connects homework to success. This book essentially tells other parents what little basis they have for trusting that the teacher of their children knows what he or she is doing. In surveying more than three hundred teachers across the country they learned that only one of them has taken a course on homework during teacher's training. It is just as insane to trust a teacher's policy in assigning homework as it is to trust a prescription by a doctor who never took a course in pharmacology. The authors relate the recent homework increase, resulting from the NCLB Act implementation, to economic and security fears that are widespread in the nation since 2001. Paradoxically again, there seems to not be any solid research that connects homework to the economy or security either. It comes out as a reflex of the educational system at a time of national crisis. Thus, the mushrooming of books on homework are inadvertent allies in the construction of the homework buzz.

The authors of *The Case Against Homework* are optimists in as much as they suggest a number of strategies parents can use to help their children. Most of them involve intervention with the teacher. The question arises: What is one to do when it doesn't work and when teachers ignore kind suggestions by parents? It is a question that arises from a basic problem with an education system that uses a technique for accomplishing its goals. You can modify the technique but you cannot abolish it entirely. Those who have been around various alternative movements long enough would think that homework is not the main problem but just a symptom and an indicator of how things have changed from the time when children were advised to spend at least five hours a day jumping around in the fresh air to the moment when our society drugs children who cannot sit still longer than one hour.

Another voice enlightening us on the issue of homework this fall is Alfie Kohn's latest book *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing*. He is far less certain that the research on homework is as unanimous as Bennett and Kalish would have us think. On the contrary he points out that the research on the effects of homework before 1998 are far less unanimous; ranging from claims that homework has a positive effect to conclusions that research was conducted too poorly to yield a trustworthy conclusion. He further points to a distinction between academic and non-academic benefits of homework. His basic argument is that if homework is devised to help students develop skills that are only useful for doing more homework, they are the bad thing. He offers an important frame to re-think the concept and content of homework asking what kind of homework is or should be considered positive having in mind the well-being of one's child.

The important part of Kohn's analysis has to do with the reasons why homework, of the type that is designed to develop skills needed to perpetuate the homework myth, keeps being assigned. According to Kohn it all has to do with trust. On some level, many of us just don't trust kids. We are suspicious of what they would do with more free time and we're doubtful that they'd learn anything if they weren't given very specific assignments. This is a very interesting and conceptually important coupling. Nothing Kohn is saying about homework is new. Neither is his emphasis on trust in children which is the basis of the learner-centered approach to education. What is powerful about this book is that it couples a close analysis of the homework ideology and practice with the question of trust. Thus, he brings the discussion about homework from focusing on the trees to looking at the forest.

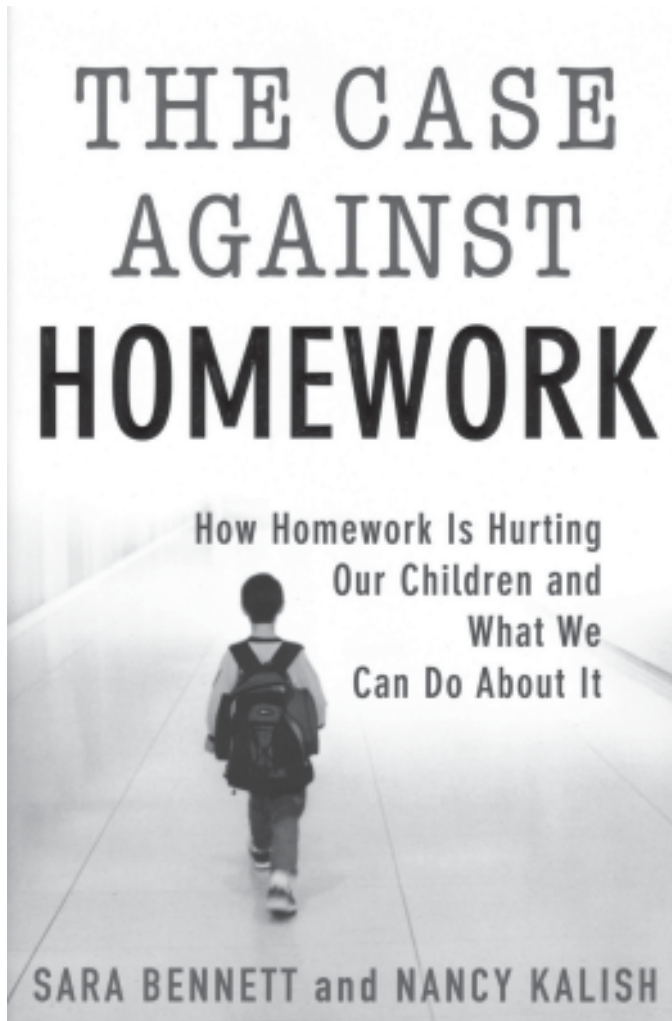
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Autumn 2006

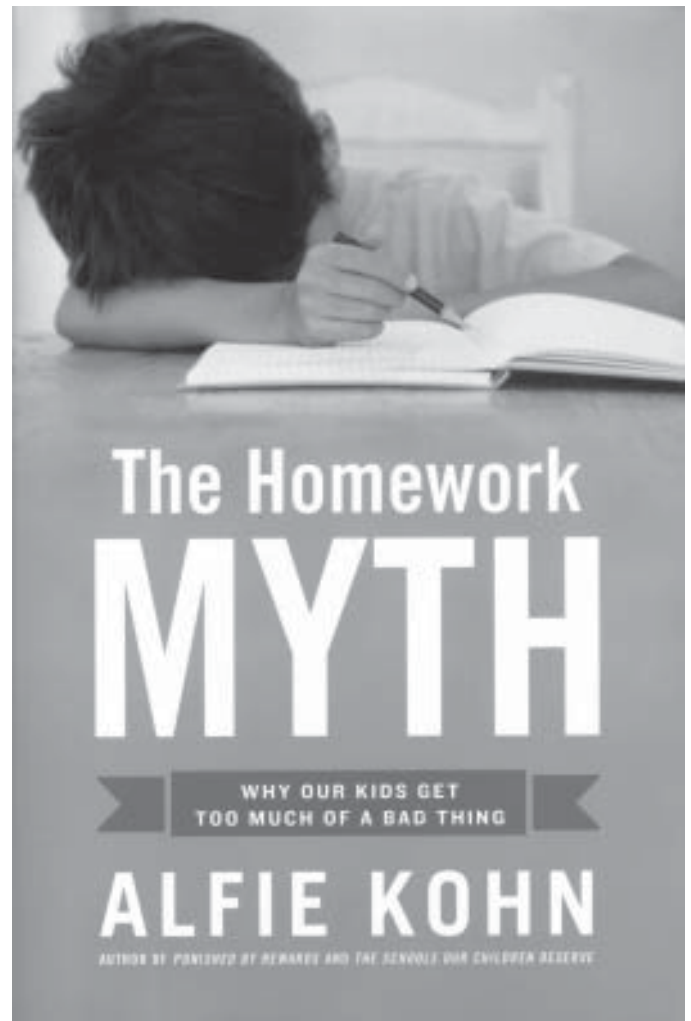
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NEW TITLES & ADDITIONS

We have recently added many new titles and some great classics to AERO's online store. Two of our most popular new titles are featured below with Alfie Kohn's title, *The Homework Myth*, in the second printing!



The Case Against Homework
By Sara Bennett & Nancy Kalish
List: \$24.95 Our Price: \$21.95
Member Price: \$19.75



The Homework Myth
By Alfie Kohn
List: \$24.00 Our Price: \$21.95
Member Price: \$19.75

WWW.EDUCATIONREVOLUTION.ORG

Ouida Mintz

1917-2006

By Jerry Mintz



Ouida Mintz Signs Copies of Her Book My Friend Lenny at Tanglewood, 2004

My mother, Ouida Mintz died on Friday, August 25th at North Shore Hospital during hip surgery after a fall she suffered at the hospital.

Ouida lived an amazing life. She never told her age, but was a childhood friend of Leonard Bernstein and played piano with orchestra before he did. Whereas Bernstein went on to an illustrious career as a pianist, conductor and composer, Ouida decided to settle down and become a piano teacher and song writer. She taught thousands of students and wrote hundreds of songs. She even hired a teenaged Paul Simon to sing her demonstration records, sometimes in duets with her. She also played violin duets with CBS's Mike Wallace as a ten year old. She wrote a book about her life called "My Friend Lenny."

More recently she was in charge of booking the artists who performed at her Association of Piano Teachers of Long Island. Also, one of her students, Frank Sanchez, decided to help her create a musical based on her book and using some of the songs she wrote. It is to be produced this Fall.

Ouida and Lenny both took piano lessons from Heinrich Gebhard,

the most important teacher in Boston at the time. She was fond of tracing back her teaching roots through Gebhard to his teacher's, teacher's teacher, Beethoven.

Although Bernstein had achieved greater fame, Ouida would often say that she got the last laugh: She had outlived him by 15 years.

Ouida would have certainly appreciated the irony that she died on Leonard Bernstein's birthday.

I am reminded of a poem that was written by my mothers beloved late sister Josie at age 11 when their grandmother had died suddenly.

To An Angel

by Josephine Blatt Pall

I never guessed, I never dreamed,
It never for a moment seemed
That you could go.

To think the angels had it planned,
Were waiting up in Heaven, -and—
I didn't know!

I tho't I saw a little sky,
A glimpse of Heaven in your eye,
A bit of blue;
But, oh, I didn't see it clear.
I didn't think you meant it dear,
I never knew.

'Twas often that I wondered why
You lingered at that last good-bye,
You held me so,
How could I dream; how could I guess,
You meant it for a last caress,
How could I know?

O, all the things I didn't say,
The things that, e're you went away,
I didn't do,
The little gifts, the trickling tears,
The kind embraces, tender fears,
That I will treasure all these years,
I never knew.

The greatest tragedy of her life was the death of my brother, Bill at the age of 20 in a boating accident on Lake George in 1966. Twenty years later my father Samson, died, in 1986. It is now 20 years later, 2006.

My mother's greatest fear was that she might die a prolonged and painful death. As it was she had five days of pain and distress from her broken hip and faced it with great bravery. As we approached the operating room my mother said, "I don't want to die!" But a few minutes later she said, "Maybe it's OK if I die." But she reminded me before she went in of a piano concert that one of her young friends, Ren Zhang, was to give on September 17th.

We said goodbye as she went into the OR. I kissed her goodbye and she blew a kiss to my sister and me as she crossed the threshold.

She didn't believe me that it would not be as painful after the surgery. Perhaps she was right. She knew that she had lived a good life. I think that on some deep unconscious level she made a choice. The doctors said that after closing the surgery her heart suddenly began to slow and then stopped. They were not able to revive her.

She passed on in the perfect way, under anesthesia. Of course it was a terrible shock to me and my sister, and even more to the surgeon and anesthesiologist who had to inform us.

I was too stunned to react at first and started going through the motions of what we had to do next. I didn't break down until I

had to inform my cousin Ellen on my cell-phone and the reality began to sink in that she was gone.

As I drove away from the hospital I was thinking about grief. It is really just a form of selfishness: we miss what that person gave us. But from my mother's point of view, she has what she wanted, peace and release.

I'll close with another of my aunt Josie's poems, written when she was 15 years old:

Sonnet to a Wave

I wonder if each weary wave that throws
Itself upon the long and lonely beach
Curses the God that made it, when it knows
Its life to be no longer than its reach.
I wonder if each frothy wave that leaps
Headlong upon the new undampened land,
And then, when it can run no longer, creeps,
As if on little legs along the sand,
'Til, at its height, it rushes down to meet
The next, and started on its backward slide
Exhausted, sinks into eternity—
I wonder if it knows that its retreat
Has swelled the power of a mighty tide,
The heart-beat of an everlasting sea.

Ouida Mintz Poses in Front of Her Piano, 2005



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Yours,

Jerry Mintz

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