EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR EVERYONE

A Handbook for Educators, Families, Politicians

by

Don Glines

History, Philosophy, Methods of Options

--with over 1100 Resource References--
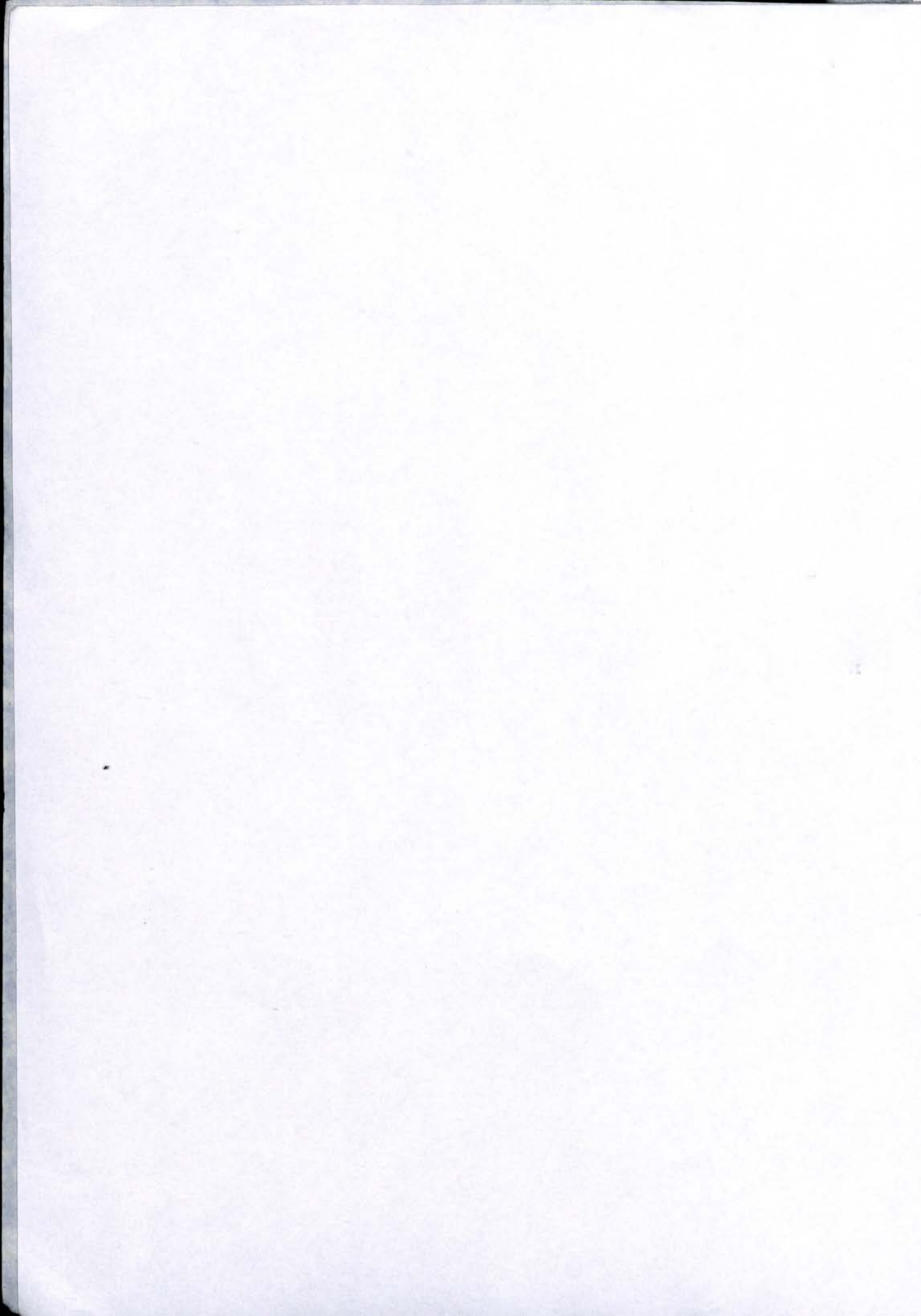
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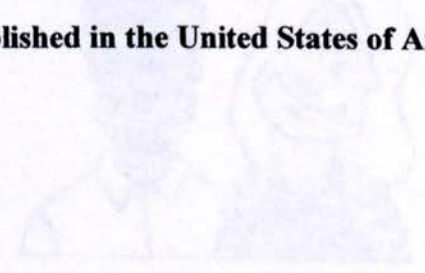
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IALA

The International Association for Learning Alternatives

6 West Fifth Street, Suite 700
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55102

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PART D: Learning Alternatives Resources for Imagineering

DEDICATION

IN A WORLD FULL OF COPYCATS, THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE ORIGINALS.

Over the years, they were the Thomas Edison counterparts in education who envisioned the light bulbs and wanted to replace the gas lamps.

The persons cited represent only a handful of the 20th century pioneers who tried to invent beyond the traditional schooling conventions to provide non-traditional innovations and renewal. From their efforts grew the concept of *learning alternatives for everyone all the time.*

IALA, The International Association for Learning Alternatives, expresses appreciation to these leaders and the hundreds of other educators, parents, students, and philosophers who have worked to create choices of learning options in every community.

>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>»—>

William Alexander	Paul Goodman	A. S. Neill
Dwight Allen	Daniel Greenberg	Jean Piaget
Robert Anderson	Ann Grooms	Helen Parkhurst
Ronald Barnes	Willis Harman	Mary Ann Raywid
Robert Barr	Leslie Hart	Everett Reimer
James Beane	Edmund Holmes	Virginia Roth
Nate Blackman	John Holt	Harold Rugg
Nelson Bossing	Eugene Howard	Bertrand Russell
Perry Butler	Madeline Hunter	Len Solo
Evelyn Carswell	Ivan Illich	Vernon Smith
Morrel Clute	Wayne Jennings	Gardner Swensen
George Counts	William Kilpatrick	Mary Ellen Sweeney
Stuart Courtis	Arne Langberg	Rudolf Steiner
John Dewey	David Lehman	Robert Theobald
Harl Douglass	Mary Leue	Lloyd Trump
Mario Fantini	Kathleen Long	William Van Til
Patrick Farenga	Margaret McMillan	Gordon Vars
Robert Fizzell	Margaret Mead	Geoffrey Vickers
Paulo Freire	Roland Meighan	Carleton Washburne
Buckminster Fuller	Ron Miller	Roy Weaver
Robert Gilchrist	Jerry Mintz	Henri Weber
Don Glines	Maria Montessori	William Wirt
John Goodlad	Henry Morris	Rosalind Zapf

American Education

More teachers, more vouchers, more computers, more charter schools, more tests, more federal money, more local control, more, more...   The calls constitute a cacophony of pleas and threats, warnings, and promises from public figures, parents, teachers, and other citizens—all asking for more learning.

As each call is debated, pushed, shot down, revived, and discarded again, we move around the same endless circle, once again looking for a place to stick another bandaid on an institution suffering from malnutrition and structural inadequacy.

Now we have agreed on a major resuscitation effort, with promises to breathe new life into a gasping, exhausted national school system. Instead of another bandaid, it might be compared to the replacement of an arthritic knee or hip. Nothing more; the systemic problems will continue untreated. American schools will remain in crisis.

What then is the life-threatening problem in our **educational system, and where can we begin with an effective treatment?**

Lloyd Elliott, President Emeritus
George Washington University—2002

THE CRUISE SHIP OF LIFE

The Passengers!

Lucy: "On the cruise ship of life, Charlie Brown, which way is your deck chair facing?

Charlie: "I don't know; I've never been able to get one open."

Lucy and Charlie Brown (Charles Schulz)

The Crew!

The problem with staffs of one-size-fits-all schools and districts is that like Charlie, they have never been able to open their 150-year-old deck chairs. Finally, now we know how, by creating EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR EVERYONE ALL THE TIME.

Don Glines and Roland Meighan

LEARNING !

"We are faced with the paradoxical fact that
education has become one of the chief obstacles
to intelligence and freedom of thought."

Bertrand Russell

"Schools have not necessarily much to do with
education...they are mainly institutions of control where certain
basic habits must be instilled in the young. Education is
quite different and has little place in school."

Winston Churchill

"For all the children some of the time, and for
some of the children all of the time, the classroom
resembles a cage from which there is no escape."

Phillip Jackson

PREFACE

THE LEARNING SOCIETY

The development of **learning societies** is a key challenge for the early decades of this new century. One goal is to alter the "me-first" drive for economic growth that has dominated the mentality of the past one hundred years. The perceived "age of communication" has become an "age of misinformation."

Traditional "one-size schooling"—with only limited choice alternatives—works against the imaginations and relationships required to create preferable futures. The conventional "standardized" school messages are clear: (1) obey those in charge without question, (2) promote excessive emphasis on specialization, (3) erect rigid boundaries between courses, and (4) expect certainty and stability. The stereotype teachers lead their students to believe that there are answers to all questions.

There will be few significant improvements as long as the process of schooling remains homogeneous, bland, and boring. Ideally, education and life together are exciting, surprising, and fun. Therefore, learning societies should be designed to prepare people to live in a radically changing world. **The one-size for everyone compulsory schooling structure rejects person-centered, lifelong curriculum; it too often destroys spontaneity and creativity.**

Alternatives-focused educators view learning based on the belief that human beings desire personal growth. People should not be forced to learn but instead provided opportunities to release their natural drive. Ron Miller, publisher of *Paths of Learning*, has promoted these concepts the past decade through the philosophy of holistic education and "teaching from the heart."

The need for significantly better interaction goes well beyond existing understandings. There is yet the fallacy that information, communication, learning, and schooling are the same concepts—that if schools are "improved" the other factors will follow—thus concealing the basic issues. Purposive conversation rather than obsessive formal instruction is desired. Different learning styles and multiple intelligences must be served. Such a scenario requires profound change in social and educational institutions. As early as 1911, Edmond Holmes concluded, after thirty years as Chief Inspector for Schools in England trying to make a national curriculum function, that his work had caused *The Tragedy of Education*. In his words, *"The calamities perpetuated—tests, restricted curriculum, standards—resulted in a profound misconception of the meaning of life."*

Many cliches now abound using famous quotations to inspire leaders to greater heights. Gulliver, Figment, Charlie Brown, Willie Wonka, Mark Twain, Don Quixote, and the Titanic are only a few. As trite as their favorite expressions, quotes, songs, and statements may appear, ironically they are truisms, and are needed for **inspiration to find the courage to dismantle the old schooling structures of the past and create new learning systems for the future.**

"To dream the impossible dream...to be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause...for the world will be better for this...that...one individual strove with the last ounce of courage...to reach the unreachable star."

Thus enter the roles and realms of the members of the International Association for Learning Alternatives. Desperately needed are many new "Vice-Presidents for Heresy"—individuals who will form as a group to lead the development of a true **learning society** based on powerful principles of learning, growth and development factors, brain-mind research, and most of all, compassionate opportunities for everyone all the time.

Ann Grooms, long an alternatives leader, suggests that heretical leadership begins with a journey:

"All journeys start with a dream. The dream may not be very vivid, but it is present: the motives for the journey may be many. You dream about where you are going, you dream what things will be like when you arrive. You dream what you will do while you are there. Yes, you dream of your journey."

Fabled Gulliver constantly reminds the heretics: *they know the dream is possible, for they have been there; they have seen what others have not even dreamed.* Each educator who has a heartfelt belief in alternatives must have as a companion, **Figment—that precious purple dragon—who with his friend Dreamfinder, guides visitors through the *Journey into Imagination* at Epcot** Center, Florida. Cohabitation with a Figment of Imagination is one of the essential requirements for leaders who are going to carry the mission of changing from uniform schooling to diverse learning systems for the present, while expanding the potentials for the future.

Robert Theobald, Roland Meighan, Wayne Jennings, Don Glines

RELEVANCE

"DEAR PENCIL-PAL,

HOW DO YOU GO TO SCHOOL?   I RIDE
IN A SCHOOLBUS.   I GO TO A BIG SCHOOL.
WE LEARN ALOT.   THEY TEACH US SCIENCE,
ENGLISH, GEOGRAPHY, ARITHMETIC,
HISTORY, AND SPELLING.
WHEN I GET BIG, I WOULD LIKE TO
DRIVE A SCHOOL BUS.

CHARLIE BROWN"

(CHARLES SCHULZ)

TRADITION

"We need radical re-think in education. Tinkering with a counter-productive system will not do it. Humans invented the current conventional schools over 150 years ago. Therefore, people can now invent new learning modes to replace a system that has outlived its usefulness."

Roland Meighan

"Today, democratic educators continue to struggle on behalf of populations chronically denied their rights and traditionally excluded from meaningful participation in the governing of society."

Ron Miller

PREAMBLE

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING ALTERNATIVES

In 2000, to lead the achievement of a learning society, and to foster the creation of new learning systems based upon the philosophy of *educational alternatives for everyone all the time*, a group of committed pioneers organized *IALA*—**the International Association for Learning Alternatives**.

This organization is destined to fill a huge leadership void in the advocacy of Learning Alternatives—for both present and future generations. To comprehend the significance of *IALA*, it is important to review briefly a century of efforts—especially of those leaders over the past thirty years—**to move away from the conventional one-size-fits-all undemocratic system of schooling, and instead move toward democratic choices for learning for all citizens.**

An easily recognized representative of voluntary enrollment non-traditional education is found among those few—but truly experimental—university laboratory schools. The programs under John Dewey at the University of Chicago *circa* 1900-1910, the Ohio State University School *circa* 1930-1940, and the Minnesota State (Wilson Campus) University School *circa* 1968-1978 proved that **conventional schools could not be defended for all students.** The majority of graduates of such innovative research and development centers were *strikingly* more successful in life. This finding has been resoundingly verified, both by the famous *Eight-Year Study* of the *Progressive Education Association* (1942), and numerous earlier and later investigations.

Carleton Washburne in Winnetka IL, Henri Weber in Nashville, Addison Poland in Newark, the Dalton Plan and Helen Parkhurst, George Counts, and most members of the *National Society for the Study of Education* were among the many pre-World War II educators who tried to change the "iron-cast system of schooling." The 24th yearbook of the *National Society*, released in **1925**, focused on the methods and results of individualized instruction, and proved through a major four-year, six-district national study that **homogeneous grouping was wrong**—that students did not benefit academically and were hurt socially. Yet 90% of school districts continued some form of "ability grouping."

The "modern era" push for educational alternatives occurred from 1965-1975—with the formation of *IALA* related to events in 1971. Many optional programs emerged in this ten-year span, ironically fostered not by the free school movement, but by mainstream groups such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Kettering Foundation. These scattered *ad hoc* developments were in need of sustained leadership. Thus in the spring of 1971, an invitational conference of twenty-five alternatives advocates was held at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine Wisconsin to consider the formation of a national organization.

Nate Blackman of Chicago, Len Solo of Cambridge MA, Martha Ellison of Louisville, Bob Fizzell of Macomb IL, and Don Glines of Mankato MN were among the invitees, along with Vern Smith, Bob Barr, and Don Burke of Indiana University. The latter three indicated that Indiana University was developing a Center for Educational Alternatives, and could offer a small room for a library of materials, secretarial assistance, and faculty leadership. Therefore, rather than form a new structure, it was decided to make the Indiana campus the national clearinghouse for alternatives, and the site of the annual conferences. All went reasonably well until 1982 when Indiana informed the group that after hosting twelve years of meetings, the school of education could no longer continue its support.

During this formative modern era—but still related to previous 19th and 20th century philosophers as Emile Rousseau, Bertrand Russell, and John Dewey, and the growth and development studies of specialists like Jean Piaget— a number of very definitive national reports were published by mainstream organizations. In 1976, the National School Boards Association selected Mario Fantini, Don Glines, Gene Mulcahy, Vern Smith, Don Waldrip, and Betty Jo Zander to prepare a monograph on the value of educational alternatives. In 1972 the National School Public Relations Association published a document featuring 60 pioneering districts and 299 optional programs for students. In 1977 the Educational Research Service summarized evaluations of 30 programs covering fifteen states. Landmark efforts were the federally funded alternatives projects in Minneapolis, Berkeley, and Tacoma, and local district initiatives as the St. Paul Open School directed by *IALA* leader, Wayne Jennings.

In this era, the journal *Changing Schools* evolved at Indiana with Bob Barr as editor. It reached prominence with editor Roy Weaver, was sustained by Mary Ellen Sweeney and the Colorado Options group, and preserved by Jerry Mintz as part of *Education Revolution*. Concurrently, other organizations were attempting to alter the traditional structure. The National Association for Core Curriculum, led by Gordon Vars, promoted child-centered curriculum integration. The National Association for Secondary School Principals, supported by the Danforth Foundation, created the "model schools project" which emulated the plan by J. Lloyd Trump in *A School for Everyone*. Earlier (1963-1965), the Walker Elementary School and the Canyon del Oro Secondary School in the Amphitheater District of Tucson Arizona created two exciting alternatives for their patrons—a choice of traditional or non-traditional education. Later (1965-1967), the district-wide experiments in University City Missouri, (1967-69) state led innovations in South Dakota, and (1968-1978) the individual Wilson Campus School in Mankato Minnesota became national demonstration sites.

In the early 1980s, with the demise of the Center at Indiana University, another attempt was made to form a national leadership organization. This was especially needed, many believed. **The original intent of alternatives for everyone—whether high, middle, or low-achieving—every child an individual, not a "group" ("7th graders")**—had been sidetracked by the election of President Reagan and another cycle of the back-to-basics, rigid uniformity, and American values syndromes. To traditional school people and politicians, this signaled the reinforcement of the one-size-fits-all mentality. Voluntary, open-

style educational alternatives began to be eliminated nationwide. To survive, many teachers said they would take the "at-risk" youth if they could continue their programs. Thus the movement changed from **educational alternatives** for all to **alternative education** for the few. The achieving students were to attend the "regular" school while the non-achieving youth were to attend the "non-regular" alternative.

This development had a negative effect on the formation of a national coalition. Those who entered alternatives during this at-risk period and became leaders wanted a "non-organization." **The old alternatives-for-all pioneers wanted a national office with a clearinghouse for information and conferences.** In 1989 the International Affiliation of Alternative School Associations and Personnel (note alternative school, not educational alternatives) was formed as a compromise. It was designed as a loose confederation of state organizations agreeing to annual conferences, but with no central office. State and national meetings were held each year, sponsored by individual associations in the few states which created meaningful organizations.

To help fill the national void, Mary Anne Raywid developed The Center for Educational Alternatives at Hofstra University and became the primary reference location. Meanwhile, in New York Jerry Mintz had established the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) and published an excellent national directory of alternatives. When Mary Anne retired, Jerry and his organization became the national focus, as AERO developed a most extensive electronic base—both national and international—and published the fine *Education Revolution* journal.

During the 1990s, there were two additional attempts to form national leadership. In 1993, a group led by Wayne Jennings, Tom Williams, Carol Meixner, and Don Glines proposed SEAL—States Educational Alternatives League—a national clearinghouse and contact center sponsored by a league of states. It failed, the result of the continuing disagreements in educational philosophies—**alternative vs. alternatives, private vs. public, small vs. large, specialized vs. comprehensive.** Later, the Learning Alternatives Network—LAN—was formed, but it too failed to succeed. Thus national guidance remained dormant.

Fortunately, through all the many individual and state association efforts, **the concept of choice (without private vouchers) was kept alive.** In 2000, in Bloomington MN, the state representatives at a national meeting of alternatives leaders voted to create *IALA*. They selected "learning alternatives," not "alternative learning" as the name to provide an information source and leadership advocacy for multiple optional programs, and to carry on some of the thirty-year-old traditions established by the conferences begun at Indiana University. *IALA* **was conceived to bring hope for the future of EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR EVERYONE—ALL THE TIME.**

Antecedent Conferences Leading to the Formation of IALA

1971 Bloomington IN	1984 State College PA	1997 Ann Arbor MI
1972 Bloomington IN	1985 Boulder CO	1998 Orange CA
1973 Bloomington IN	1986 Des Moines IA	1999 New London CT
1974 Bloomington IN	1987 Port Townsend WA	2000 Bloomington MN*
1975 Bloomington IN	1988 Minneapolis MN	2001 Bend OR
1976 Bloomington IN	1989 Orlando FL	2002 Duluth MN
1977 Bloomington IN	1990 Palo Alto CA	2003 Philadelphia PA**
1978 Bloomington IN	1991 New London CT	2004 Michigan**
1979 Bloomington IN	1992 Williamsburg VA	2005 Washington**
1980 Bloomington IN	1993 Boulder CO	
1981 Bloomington IN	1994 Des Moines IA	*IALA formed
1982 Bloomington IN	1995 Bloomington IN	**planned
1983 Chicago IL	1996 Portland OR	

IALA Leadership 2002-2003

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Catherine Harnett, MN

Board of Directors

Chair: Wayne Jennings, MN

Associate Chair: David Lehman, NY
Secretary: Lynn Vincent, MI   Treasurer: Bob Wiley, WA
Member: Elizabeth Quigley, PA Member: Irv Zisselman, GA
Member: Ray Morley, IA

Ex-Officio: Don Glines, CA   Ex-Officio: Robert Barr, ID

Contributors

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Research: Elizabeth Quigley, PA
Membership: Bob Wiley, WA
Nominations: Lynn Vincent, MI

International Programs: Jerry Minrz, NY
Publications: Don Glines, CA
Public Policy: Wayne Jennings, MN
Development: Catherine Harnett, MN

IALA Publication

Changing Schools: Journal of Learning Alternatives

IALA Website: Electronic Information

www.alt-ed.com

IALA

The International Association
For
Learning Alternatives

Mission:

The *mission* of *IALA* is to lead, promote, and support learning alternatives and choice options.

Purpose:

The *purpose* of *IALA* is to meet the needs of students, parents/guardians, teachers, future teachers, administrators, and the general citizenry through a professional organization dedicated to the improvement of learning alternatives and choice options by:

1. Conducting an annual forum for professional growth, technical and educational support, networking opportunities, and dissemination of best practices.

2. Serving as a change agent for the conventional educational systems.

3. Representing the interests of learning alternatives and choice options practitioners.

4. Providing ongoing dissemination of information, research, publications, and resources through clearinghouse contact centers, websites, and other means of information sharing.

International   Leadership

CHOICES

"Students do not participate in choosing the goals, curriculum, or manner of instruction. This is in striking contrast to all the teaching about the virtues of democracy."

Carl Rogers

"People learn best when they have a need to know. Learning is a deeply personal, affective experience involving self-concept. The genius of good teaching lies not in providing information but in helping students discover needs to know they never had before."

Arthur Combs

PART A

LEARNING ALTERNATIVES

ALL THE TIME

TRAGEDY OF EDUCATION

In nine schools out of ten, on nine days out of ten, in nine lessons
out of ten, the teacher is engaged in laying
thin films of information on the surface of the child's mind
and then after a brief interval he (or she) is skimming
these off to satisfy him/herself that the
information has been duly laid...

"If there is to be a fit education system, the practice of telling children
what to do and compelling them to do it must stop, for it has
only produced passivity, lassitude, docility, or naughtiness.
Uniformity is just plain BAD education. The tendency
of the examination system to arrest growth, to deaden
life, to paralyze the higher faculties, involves schooling
in an atmosphere of unreality and self-deception
which obscures the true purpose of education.
Conscription-based schooling and uniform
curriculum imposed by adults on
children is an affront to
learning."

Edmond Holmes
The Tragedy of Education, 1911

"There must be in the world many parents, like myself, who have young
children they are anxious to educate as well as possible, but are
reluctant to expose them to the dulling effects of
'tell and test them' schools."

Bertrand Russell
On Education, 1926

CHAPTER ONE

JUSTIFYING CHOICE

Educational alternatives advocates promote a strong but simple theme: **ALTERNATIVES FOR EVERYONE ALL THE TIME.** Research clearly indicates that for students to reach their potential—while still meeting politically motivated mandates—families, students, and teachers must have more choices than those existing in most public education systems. **Uniform group-oriented structures prevent optimal personal growth and the attainment of unfortunate, erroneous, but "required" accountability expectations, test percentiles, and graduation rates.**

Low performing students can be more successful when matched with their preferred learning styles and environments. High achieving youth may be more effectively challenged when presented with diversely tailored individualized options. Most communities can reach their desired prominence if differentiated choices are available at each school site or within each jurisdiction. Alternatives are tools for continuing the implementation of individual growth programs through improving opportunities. Willie Wonka and the famous Chocolate Factory clearly reflect the potential: "We make realities out of dreams and dreams out of realities. We are the dreamers of the dreams"—in this case—for fulfilling the dreams for learning diversities. Creating choices for all persons, regardless of social status or political persuasion, is an exciting, provoking, yet realistic process for education.

The philosophical vision of options dictates that **every program is a "regular" one. Every program is also one of multiple diverse "alternatives." There can no longer be a "regular program" designed for the many, and an "alternative program" for the few. The term "alternatives" should not be used in the singular, but always in the plural—with an "s."** This practical perception calls for education leaders to envision what could be in the future rather than focus on what has been in the past.

The youth of most United Nations countries entered the twenty-first century with basically the same system of schooling as that which existed at the turn of the twentieth century. **This reluctance to change was akin to basing the 2000 global transportation policy on the horse-drawn carriage of 1900.** The majority of people today are ready to accept diversity; **the concept of public school choice goes beyond traditional achievement levels, and racial and cultural considerations, to include the interest and excitement of the individual as a life-long learner.** Schools must find ways that are significantly better in enabling youth to meet their goals. The concept of **alternatives for everyone** is the vehicle by which diverse students can achieve success.

Exciting environments are created through adoption of **win-win** policies. **When multiple alternatives are available, everyone wins.** Families, students, and teachers select the most appropriate learning delivery system. In contrast, **win-lose** thinking denies choices for each individual. Special education, gifted, continuation, and at-risk programs only provide for the few; the remaining "regular" students are too often left with the one-size-fits-all structure. **In most districts, the good ABC report card labeled students—and even the "D average" youth—who behave, try, and accept what exists, have no learning and lifestyle choices and very few curriculum options.**

Public education in society should follow the religion model of "choice" rather than the military "one-way" and political "win-lose" models. In the religion pattern, people can join conventional faiths, as Catholic, the many Protestant denominations, or those with a different perspective as in the Unitarian, Seventh Day Adventist, and Jehovahs Witness approaches. There are available other worldwide beliefs: Muslim, Hebrew, and Buddhist. People can decide to be agnostic, and still be part of the society.

In most communities in the United States, religious diversity is accepted and even promoted. The various groups realize they are working toward common goals: citizenship, kindness, clean environment, world peace, trust, faith, responsibility, and the elimination of poverty, racial conflict, and social injustice. They address this mission through differentiated styles, methods, rituals, convictions, and formats. People accept that on four corners of an intersection, there could exist four completely different churches. Private schools have the same opportunities.

However, with current public education districts based upon the military model, if four elementary schools were on the corners of the same intersection, they would mirror almost identical patterns, altered only by minimal deviations permitted to a principal or "site council." If families can understand worshiping styles, they can embrace learning styles. This commitment would become a tremendous asset in the effort to enhance the human potential of more students. **Schools should be designed for learning; they should not reflect a system which is failing many youth.**

Within alternatives structures, when given a chance to select programs, approximately one-third of the families choose to stay with some form of tradition. Another one-third select a variation of a modified design—perhaps one which might create time flexibility and teams of teachers. The final one-third opt for a more open format—maybe one providing for individualized and personalized curriculum plans, nongraded mixes of students, optional scheduling, and year-round continuous learning. **As in the religion model, educational alternatives are also seeking common goals:** self-concept, reading and math skills, good citizenship, preparation for careers, success in achieving selected outcomes, contributions to society, and maximized opportunities for individual growth and development. **Even home-based education, voucher, and private and church school supporters promote similar professed public school purposes.** The concept of choice should result in fewer students seeking the private sector, improved attendance, greater satisfaction, lower dropout rates, higher achievement levels, and many more youth completing school with happier faces and a life-long desire for learning.

These lofty aspirations can be reached through both learning democracy and democratic learning. Democracy infers the absence of domination; therefore, current

"schooling" must offer options of learning styles and personalized curriculum opportunities. Choice is the best and most equal approach for educational communities to eliminate domination, reflect democracy, and enhance success levels.

For the past five decades, the dropout rate has hovered near thirty-three percent in the majority of districts, and over fifty percent in some low achieving neighborhoods. The exceptions are usually found in more affluent college-oriented housing areas. Unfortunately even these advantaged students are not always motivated to reach their potential, for one-third leave college after their freshman year, and two-thirds do not receive a degree in the conventional four years.

Of the K-12 students who attend school, thirty percent receive A and B report card averages, forty percent are in the C category, and thirty percent are on the D and F continuum—or equivalent markings. **Thus, seventy percent receive at best average, satisfactory, mediocre, unsatisfactory, below average, or failure labels.** Of the thirty percent high achieving, over half are bored with their actual courses. This is not the best learning system. Programs of choice can overcome many of the dropout, low achievement, and poor report card dilemmas. **Walking and talking, both difficult skills, are learned before children come to school, led by parents who in most cases are not certificated teachers. However, when children begin reading in a system of domination, there is an almost immediate need for reading specialists and remedial reading classes.**

The existence of at least nine "multiple intelligences" is well-established. The current system of schooling continues to focus on only one or two of the nine, thus preventing the development of an assortment of achievements. **Ninety percent of school age youth have above average talent in one or more areas and ninety percent have below average talent in one or more areas.** Of perhaps over fifty separate "intelligence (I.Q.) scores" for each individual, there are five in the mathematics field alone. A student may score high in numerical computation, but score low in abstract reasoning or spatial relations. Learning alternatives are needed to maximize the multiple intelligences component.

Further, there are approximately thirty identified learning styles, but one, the lecture "talking to" method, has been allowed to dominate the school and university scene. This practice ensures that many learners are forced into positions of weakness rather than strength. **Student programs should be based upon their successes**, not their failures and lack of interest in the mandated curriculum. Additionally, **modern brain-mind research has been exposing many of the assumptions of mass schooling as false,** for it is known that the brain is a pattern-making organ rather than a pattern-receiving entity. This is observed when young children learn their mother tongue, not by formal instruction, but by interaction with people. Now the student learning culture must also be capable of responding to modern communications technologies.

There are obvious reasons for the overall success of home-based education. Most families have direct access to an information-rich society; they encourage learner-managed learning. They use a smorgasbord of individualized curricula, rather than a rigidly imposed group-paced package. Personal plans demand an interdependent curriculum creating interaction between the learner and the world of knowledge. They recognize different learning styles and intelligences normally not acknowledged by

conventional models of instruction. This holds true even in the development of social skills. If given the chance to enroll in democratic school options, students should have more opportunities for exciting and successful learning experiences. As Professor Bengu, the Minister of Education under Nelson Mandela, noted: *"Democracy means the absence of domination. Whilst our model of schooling is riddled with domination, we are clearly on the wrong track, assuming that is, that we actually believe in democracy."*

The growing learning research and the accompanying debates over what constitutes "school reform," analysis of national testing and grade level standards, new knowledge in the field of child growth and development, and the erroneous reliance on the fiftieth percentile as a measuring mark all support alternatives. For example, with a percentile-based system, half the number of students tested always will be "below average," no matter how much the individual raw score might improve over a five-year period.

Students who may be "gifted" in English—reading, writing, comprehension, spelling, literature—may be "remedial" in many aspects of mathematics or chemistry—equations, spatial relations, abstract reasoning, atoms, and molecules. Even in a world in the midst of an electronics revolution, numerous students "hate" electronics. Regardless of their effort, they cannot comprehend well and work effectively on programming video players, computers, and internet searches. **Reading, electronics, and music are skills and must be individualized, for as in kicking a football, most everyone can learn to kick ten to fifteen yards, but only a few can kick fifty or sixty yards**, no matter how many classes a student may take in "remedial kicking."

Most of all, the **alternatives for everyone all the time** philosophy showcases the limitations of what unfortunately has been termed "alternative education." The independent study programs, continuation schools, opportunity schools, area learning centers, and juvenile court schools may have helped "at-risk" students, as has special education benefited many of the assigned youth. Gifted and talented programs have assisted some in advanced placement, though have not been a major challenge for most enrolled.

While giving recognition and due credit to these efforts, **communities need to stand firm on the mandate** for **comprehensive options available to all**. Charter, magnet, and alternative schools have been, in general, too small; most are not comprehensive, and therefore cannot offer everything to everybody. They do not have football teams, elementary soccer fields, cheerleaders, advanced physics, multiple beginning reading programs on a self-paced continuous progress basis, specialized facilities, and school clubs and activities.

Additionally, these conventional options may not provide transportation; for the working single parent, there is little hope of enrolling the child. Most of the better programs have a waiting list or a lottery system, both wrong, for they deny the different learning environment to those not accepted. **How can there be any defense for a waiting list or lottery for learning?** Too often districts have refused to duplicate the programs or to offer them in all quadrants of the community. The private schools offer little for those who cannot afford the tuition. The voucher plan would not even be an issue if the public schools offered their own "in-house" district voucher system. This would create diverse learning styles choices addressing multiple intelligences in more

personalized environments for all who desired a non-traditional program. Those who wanted to remain in the conventional setting would have that as an option too, again remembering that **every** choice a district offers is both a "regular program" and one of many "alternatives."

Well-known philosophers, social critics, and educators throughout the 20th century supported diverse learning style choices. Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, Charlotte Mason, Ivan Illich, John Holt, Paulo Freire, Roland Meighan, Lloyd Trump, Don Glines, Robert Fizzell, John Gatto, Alfie Kohn, Ronald Miller, Edward DeBono, Everett Reimer, Daniel Greenberg, Jerry Mintz, Charles Handy, Alice Miller, Wayne Jennings, and Edmond Holmes are just a few of the hundreds of writers who have advocated educational alternatives—or at least a move away from "conventional **schooling**" toward "non-traditional **learning**."

To illustrate, in 1911 Edmond Holmes wrote *The Tragedy of Education.* As the Chief Inspector for Schools in England, he had labored for thirty years to implement the then government-mandated one-size-fits-all school system and national curriculum. In despair, he resigned, saying that his thirty-year experience had resulted in "the tragedy of education, for several long-running small tragedies had created the final large tragedy." He stated: *"For, with the best of intentions, the leading actors—the parents and students of each successive generation—so bear themselves...for unobtrusive calamities...which become so familiar that we accept them as our appointed lot...leading to a profound misconception of the meaning of life."* The same problems continue one hundred years later for many students and families. The appropriate response lies in the concept of alternatives.

To change philosophies, problems, and perceptions, educators and communities must be **disoriented before being oriented. They must unlearn before they may learn**. There is a need to understand that the conventional methods have not succeeded for the majority. *The first step is to "unlearn" traditional structures, and the second is to "learn" how to create better learning systems for the future.*

Unlearning Tradition

"Let us think of a school as a social laboratory where pupils themselves are the experimenters, not the victims of an intricate and crystallized system.
Let us think of a school as a place where community conditions prevail...as a real experience... It is then no longer school—it is life."

Helen Parkhurst   **The Dalton Plan--1922**

"The nation seems to be intent on reinforcing a failing system at present. It is no use tinkering with our 19th century model of education. It needs to be completely re-thought and restructured. Gradual reform is unlikely to succeed. Radical change is needed."

Christopher Ball

"Getting more learning out of our present schooling system would be like trying to get the pony express to beat the telegraph by breeding faster ponies."

Edward Fiske

CHAPTER TWO

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The strength and effectiveness of nontraditional school programs can be demonstrated and documented. There is more pure research to support optional learning styles than there is to validate the conventional structure, for the practices of the current majority schooling system are based upon **TRADITION**, not research. There are no studies concluding that the self-contained classroom, ABC report cards, period 1-2-3 or block period schedules, group-paced instruction, required group-curriculum, reading at age six, departmentalized studies, separate course subjects, grade level assessments, nightly homework, algebra, or other conventional practices are the best approaches for **ALL** learners. **The research should cause K-12 educators to question ninety-five percent of the generally accepted education formats.** The same applies to most university structures too, as the "higher level rituals" are also based upon **TRADITION**. Two-thirds of entering freshmen never receive a degree or—even without extenuating circumstances—take many years to complete their programs.

A review of the alternatives literature affecting both the K-12 and college lifespans might begin with one of the most extraordinary—but one of the most ignored—studies in American education. *The Eight Year Study[1]* was launched in April 1930, when two hundred educators met in Washington D.C. to create a research design which was implemented in September of 1933. It involved thirty, by reputation, well-regarded high schools, and three hundred well-recognized universities—the latter of which agreed to exempt graduates of the thirty high schools from all the usual higher education entrance requirements. As part of the research, approximately fifteen hundred students from the experimental schools were paired with fifteen hundred youth from non-experimental schools and matched by gender, age, intelligence, family background, and other influencing factors.

In 1930, in preparation for the study, evaluations were conducted of students in conventional schools. **The findings were clear:**

1. Most graduates were not competent in the use of the English language.
2. The majority seldom read and were judged unable to express themselves effectively in speech or writing.
3. The teachers, as a whole, were not well equipped for their responsibilities.
4. The principals worked hard, but had no real measure of whether they had met the **academic objectives, affective needs, and personal interests of their students.**

Over seven decades later, and into the new millenium, critics of education continue to make similar statements.

In the actual *Eight-Year Study*, the experimental schools used such techniques as schools-within-schools, student-teacher advisor systems, student groupings based on mutual interests, written reports of progress rather than traditional marking (letters or numbers), team planning, independent study, a focus on learning how to learn rather than on content, and interrelated curriculum. In science, for instance, it was difficult to recognize a course on chemistry, physics, or biology, as these were taught interdependently. **There were few requirements; students spent much time in the community.**

After 1940, **when the *Eight-Year Study* evaluations were completed, the findings were again clear:**

1. *Graduates of the experimental schools were not handicapped in their college work.*
2. *Major departure from traditionally required subjects did not lessen the readiness of the student.*
3. *Youth from the schools deviating most from the traditional achieved distinctly higher results.*
4. *The strict requirement of certain subjects was no longer tenable.*
5. *The assumptions of conventional college entrance criteria should be abandoned.*
6. *Students could be trusted with greater degrees of freedom, and*
7. **The courses taken in high school had no relationship to success in college and later life.**

The outcomes proved that the experimental students did as well as or better than the traditional students related to college grades, participation, critical thinking, aesthetic judgment, and knowledge of contemporary affairs. Further analysis proved even more startling. **When students from the six most experimental high schools of the thirty were compared with those from traditional schools, there were great differences in college attainment in favor of the experimental programs.** The two most extremely non-traditional programs—those with extensive learning in the community, outside volunteers working with students, advisor-advisee systems, students teaching other students, interdisciplinary problem-solving curricula, and flexible use of time—were then selected for comparison with the traditional formats. **Graduates of these two schools were found to be "strikingly more successful."**

One of the thirty secondary-level programs involved in the *Eight-Year Study* was the Ohio State University Laboratory School. The students who graduated in 1938 wrote a book titled *Were We Guinea Pigs*? Later a follow-up study of the students was reported in *Guinea Pigs Twenty Years Later* (1961).[2] After two decades, the study found that the "guinea pigs" had been highly successful in life. They were then compared with subjects in the Lewis Terman study of genius and with graduates of Princeton University. **The experimental school graduates were considered more successful** by expressing satisfaction with life, being judged as leaders in their professions, leading more stable

family lives, possessing better self-attitudes, and being mentioned more frequently in *Who's Who.*

Though the study occurred in the 1930 era, the results were not published until 1942; they were somewhat ignored during the more important World War II realities. This was only one of the innovations of earlier decades (Dewey and the University of Chicago laboratory school, and the Dalton and Winnetka Plans), and those following, including experiments at the elementary level. **One of these later studies was conducted at the Wilson Campus School of Minnesota State University, Mankato, from 1968 to 1977.[3] It involved students from pre-school through grade 12, and college teacher education undergraduates and graduates.** Wilson reinvented and went beyond the deviations of the eight-year experimental schools and applied them to all levels of achievement and age groups, including special education. The students had the highest test scores in the district, yet represented a cross-section of every school in Mankato. The program was completely nongraded; kindergarteners, seventh graders, and seniors were mixed together in classes, facilities, philosophies, and choices. **Wilson successfully applied the *Eight-Year Study* to elementary and middle levels as well as to high school youth.**

Even more, they were applied to college students. Undergraduate teaching majors who participated at Wilson took no education classes. They learned to teach by teaching for a year. They could take their three years of liberal arts and science courses in the Experimental College at Minnesota State, which was also based on the *Eight-Year Study.* At the master and education specialist level, students could complete their work in a similar "Eight-Year" manner. Minnesota State offered a North Central Association accredited master degree in Experiential Education—forty-eight quarter hours with no requirements; the program needed only approval by three graduate faculty members, and completion of an individual study plan. This degree is still offered in the twenty-first century with some modifications. **The Wilson program has been archived in Memorial Library, Minnesota State University.[4]**

There is further evidence for options at the elementary level. An international study of mathematics achievement concluded that students who began math at age **eight**, rather than **six**, caught on more quickly and had fewer negative attitudes toward math, self, and school.[5] The famous Plowden Report indicated that students who had part of their primary schooling in the bomb shelters in England during World War II did better than the pre-war students who had traditional lesson plans, books, and schoolrooms.[6]

The study by John Goodlad, *Behind the Classroom Door,* **found that traditional classrooms were inadequately using conventional principles of learning.**[7] The Goodlad and Anderson publication, *The Nongraded Elementary School,* illustrated that **nongraded mixed-age classrooms made more sense than classrooms organized by age and grade.**[8] In an affluent New York suburban district, every traditional school was given thirty-five percent more money each year for three years; there was no difference in student achievement.[9] Paulo Friere helped Brazilian peasant adults learn to read in thirty hours.[10] In a related review, reading was identified as a talent, as in music. **The conclusion reached was that reading should occur anywhere from ages three to fourteen, depending upon the individual.**[11] Further, it has long been known that scores on achievement tests are very stable. Considerable reduction in time spent on reading, math, and spelling did not reduce achievement scores.[12]

An interesting university level investigation showed no difference between graduates of liberal arts oriented colleges and those of technology oriented universities in their values and views of life.[13] At the secondary level, Philadelphia teachers in some schools were on strike for eight weeks; other comparable schools stayed open. It was found that students who missed the two months of "schooling" during the strike did as well in end-of-the-year tests as those who had been in school.[14] These findings were similar in outcome to a Fordham University experiment that permitted some students to **skip grades seven and eight** and enter the university after four years. Those students did as well as those who had completed the traditional six years

The alternatives-for-all philosophy uses such data to support the concept of choice. The outcomes challenge uniform, conventional school proponents to produce similar studies. Traditional reports concluding that those who have taken algebra, geometry, foreign language, and chemistry in high school do well in college beg the question. Most are already "college prep students." More important, many same or similar courses are repeated at the college level; if a student can do them in high school, he or she can do them in college. Successful repetition does not validate the need for these classes for everyone—not even those preparing for university entrance. The *Eight-Year Study* clearly refuted this notion.

Further, the American College Testing Service examined numerous purported success factors:

1. achievement in co-curricular activities,
2. high grades in high school,
3. high grades in college,
4. and high scores on the American College Tests (ACT).

The only factor useful in predicting success later in life was achievement in co-curricular activities.[15] The same proved true in outcomes using the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT).[16] In a related survey, Project Talent interviewed thirty-year old persons twelve years after secondary school graduation. The analysis of the interviews suggested that **a conventional high school education, as a whole, "serves no useful purpose."**[17]

The fallacy of uniform structures for **ALL** students is further proclaimed by citing one of the most **amazing** facets of education history. **The CARNEGIE UNIT, for decades the base of high school credits, originated from a ten million dollar Carnegie grant to investigate how to provide college professors a pension.**[18] Institutions wanting Carnegie money were told to enroll only those who had fourteen "credits." This figure was the outcome of **accidentally** discovering that most secondary level students were in a class subject one hundred twenty hours each year—which was then equated as one "Carnegie Unit." Within five years, the overwhelming majority of 9-12 school districts subscribed to this "pension plan for college professors," without any educational validity.

There have been many more revealing reviews. In one, students made gains in reading after "remedial instruction." However, within a year, these gains had disappeared; afterward the children made only the progress expected without remedial instruction.[19] **A study of colleges accepting every applicant, disregarding high school**

diplomas, found that those without diplomas had a college grade point average of 2.56 compared to 2.51 for all students. When the data were corrected for age, gender, marital status, veteran status, and family income, the outcomes were the same: **nongraduates from high school were doing as well as or better than graduates.**[20] Another investigation looked at factors that make a difference in achievement. Only three were found valid for students:

1. *their feeling of self-worth,*
2. *their feeling of control over their own destiny, and*
3. *their socio-economic background.*[21]

Additional exciting research surveys have been hidden from the public or ignored by traditional educators who find uniformity much easier to control and administer than diversity. For example, by 1920, a major study involving six diverse communities nationwide proved that homogeneous grouping did not improve achievement, but did create very negative social effects.[22] In spite of this, even in 2002, close to ninety percent of the school districts had some form of homogeneous grouping. Related to these observations, researchers have found that under the traditional lockstep system, **student attitudes toward school subjects become increasingly negative in a single year;** students confess to a sense of dullness and boredom in the daily classroom.[23]

It is little wonder that a University of Nebraska dissertation confirmed that high school students from five midwestern states had negative attitudes toward schooling. When asked if some teacher really cared about them, one-third said "no," one-third said, "I think so," and only one-third responded "yes." Not surprisingly, eighty percent of three hundred of the *"Eminent Personalities of the Twentieth Century,"* people as diverse as Albert Einstein and Artie Shaw—but all talented—selected the phrase "loathed school" when interviewed regarding their formal education.

To change this situation, summaries have concluded that help was not to be expected from current teacher education programs, as the results documented that teacher candidates were required to learn what was in the text and thus become versions of their older professors, most of whom supported a simple concept of curriculum: a prescribed pattern of courses covering topics considered prerequisites for later courses. **Teacher education programs did not help improve the learning system.**[24]

The alternatives-for-all philosophy does not incorporate the term "alternative education," nor is there support for programs that cater only to the few and leave the rest in "regular" education. However, the evaluations of even these narrow "alternative concepts" have proved to be generally positive. One of the conclusions reached in a study by the Educational Research Service stated: **"In almost all cases reviewed, alternative schools were successful in the affective domain.** By large majorities, students who chose to attend the programs of choice continued to prefer them to traditional schools. Positive student reaction to freedom from petty rules and regulations, and to the closer relationships shared with teachers was frequently noted. Student attitudes, attendance, and school climate often improved in alternative schools."[25]

In 1993, the California State Department of Education published *Beyond Retention: A Study of Retention Rates, Practices, and Successful Alternatives.*[26] The report was conclusive that retention in education is counterproductive, as were two year

kindergarten and first-grade structures. **Students retained did less well than promoted matched counterparts**; those retained **were thirty percent more likely to drop out of school** by ninth grade. Yet the practice of retention continues in a rampant manner. Why?

A major fifteen-year study on individual differences, directed by Dr. H. Harrison Clarke, was conducted by the School of Physical Education at the University of Oregon, evaluating the Medford Oregon public school children. A total of 82 graduate theses—57 doctoral and 22 master level studies—were completed, focusing on maturity, physique type, body size, gross strength, and relative strength. The spread of individual development was amazing at each age level: 7, 9, 12, 15, 17. These differences affected not only physical performance, but academic achievement and personal-social relations.[27]

Unfortunately, much of the research supporting alternatives has been available but unused for many decades, as evidenced by the outstanding *Twenty-Fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, presented at their February 1925 conference.[28] The focus of Part II was "Adapting the Schools to Individual Differences," prepared under the direction of Superintendent Carleton Washburne, who created the famed Winnetka (IL) Plan. The underlying philosophy of learning in the individualized ungraded Winnetka curriculum sought—through physical, emotional, social, and intellectual education—the development of the whole child.

In this *Twenty-Fourth Yearbook*, Stuart Courtis, Professor at Detroit Teachers College, stated: *"The Detroit results prove conclusively that, whether instruction is individualized or not, children of each level of intelligence, as shown by scores on mental tests, have a wide range of achievement and very different rates of progress in any specific skill."* In one major sub-study based upon the Detroit First-Grade Group Intelligence Test, the time required by individual children to finish the series of reading lessons ranged from 12 to 77 days.

Surprising today is the fact that from 1910 to 1930, the Detroit Public Schools were national pioneers, especially in evaluating experimentation in education. The significant spread within each group in many similar studies proved that neither exceptional children nor any of the others form a homogeneous clan which learns at the same rate.[29] Yet in 2002, ability grouping remained common! Again, why?? As early as 1919 in Dalton MA (moved to New York City in 1922) Helen Parkhurst created the progressive Dalton Plan which tailored the program to the interest, needs, and abilities of each individual student.[30]

Traditional educators are frequently prisoners of their past experiences and have difficulty accepting optional nontraditional programs. Facilitating the learning of young people is hard work, but the major barrier to alternatives for all lies in the states of mind of conventional education leaders. The Research justifies change in the structure of schooling. Through alternatives, dramatic improvement can occur in learning opportunities and outcomes for students in the public and private schools throughout the democratic nations of the world.
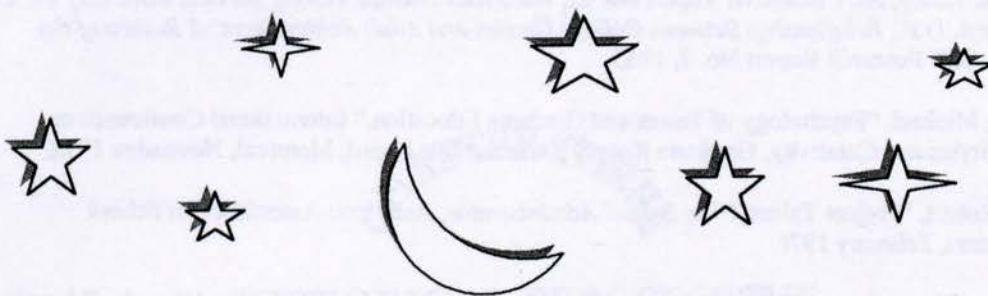
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CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Various forms of alternatives appeared in the United States throughout the twentieth century. Voluntary attendance at university laboratory schools at one time was quite common. The University of Chicago program under the influence of John Dewey was a very different option from the conventional schools in the 1900-1910 period. Even some smaller state colleges were offering diverse campus schools. For instance, in the 1916-1918 era, the Minot (North Dakota) State Teachers College School implemented a choice of calendars by adopting a year-round concept in a wintry, rural, agricultural state. Circa 1930, the laboratory school at Northern Colorado University in Greeley had staff working toward more flexibility and individualization. The Ohio State University School in the 1930s was truly a school of choice, for it offered a very experimental program. The same was true of the Wilson Campus School at Minnesota State University in the 1960s and 1970s. The Laboratory School at the University of California at Los Angeles under Madeline Hunter was a different choice when contrasted with the local public schools in the 1970s and 1980s. The University of Florida, Indiana State University, Ball State University, University of Northern Iowa, Southwest Missouri State University, Louisiana State University, Utah State University, Florida State University, Hunter College of New York, the University of Wyoming, and the University of Pittsburgh were among the many campus sites offering various options different from the local district programs and structures for volunteer students during these decades.

Public schools occasionally were as diverse as the experimental university laboratories. The Walker Elementary in the Amphitheater District of Tucson Arizona was considered in the 1960s as the most innovative elementary program in America, and the Canyon del Oro Secondary School in that district was acclaimed the most innovative in Arizona. Students could opt out of either program to attend a traditional school. During the 1960s and 1970s, Norridge High in Illinois, Abington High in Pennsylvania, Mt. Kisco Middle School in New York, Virgin Valley High School in Utah, Brookhurst Junior High in California, Lincoln Learning Laboratory in Watertown South Dakota—the McKnight Elementary, Brittany Junior High, and University City High School, all in University City Missouri—Jefferson County Open School in Colorado, St. Paul Open in Minnesota, and Mankato Wilson in Minnesota—became examples of creative, change-oriented programs offering choices and giving students non-traditional opportunities. Though not an "alternative school," Wilson High in Long Beach California in the 1940s had a four-day week class attendance pattern with an hour free for every student every day; in 1947 it was selected in a *Look Magazine* survey as one of the twenty-five best high schools in the nation. Burbank Elementary in the same district in the 1930s taught gardening as a basic subject; the time was taken from reading and math, yet the school was

acknowledged as exemplary. The Winnetka Illinois and the Dalton Massachusetts plans were also nationally acclaimed two decades earlier, as was the famous Platoon System and Work-Study-Play curriculum dominating the Gary Indiana school scene from 1907-1937. Though only modified "alternatives" in the pure sense, these programs deviated dramatically from the accepted norm for conventional schools.

There are volumes to be written regarding the pioneering efforts by public institutions to move away from the traditional patterns existing in most school districts from 1900-1970—before the "modern era" of the concept of alternatives began circa 1965-1970. Ironically this new period grew from mistakes made by educational innovators. The school "change agents" of the 1960s were convinced that they had uncovered better approaches to learning and that the traditional system was a barrier to improvement. Therefore, most of them tried to change entire schools or school systems into a one-size-fits-all pattern—only this time the "new" non-traditional system would replace the "old" conventional structure. One motto expressed the idea: **If schools are to be significantly better, they must be significantly different**. One book title reflected this thinking: *A School for Everyone* by Lloyd Trump.

The **concepts involved in the systemic change** attempted then included team teaching, modular scheduling, nongraded age groups, portfolios rather than report cards, student-centered rather than teacher-directed learning, suites and centers replacing self-contained rooms, individualized instruction, personalized curriculum, advisor systems, carpeting rather than hard floors, tables and soft chairs rather than rigid desks, and heterogeneous combinations of multicultural youth, among the over 60 such "changes" which could be listed. These 1960s pioneers were solid "academic" educators, sincere in believing that these "improvements" would benefit **ALL** students.

Two factors intervened:

1. The "innovators" found that politically they could not easily convert entire school systems, or the nation, or even some individual schools at that period of educational history without community conflict, and
2. There were still too many people (30 percent) opposed to such changes, and too many unsure (40 percent).

These figures meant that those who were in favor were a minority (30 percent), while those opposed or unsure totaled the majority (70 percent). Thus with the win-lose political styles which existed in most districts, the 70 percent toppled the 30 and the reform efforts were defeated. **The "hard-core" of the majority would politically not even allow the minority to create voluntary options.** However, after these well-learned lessons, the perceptive innovators realized they had made a huge mistake. They admitted that upon further review, not **ALL** youth, whatever their age and level of development, benefited from one status quo being replaced by another. For numerous reasons, many students, teachers, and families still needed the format of the old system.

Thus for partly political reasons—the reality of the change process—but more truly the result of sincere agents of change understanding that not every student immediately blossomed in the proposed new environment, the response became one of **alternatives for everyone all the time**. The leaders of choice then began to implement schools-and-programs-within-schools as

options, paired schools (A traditional, B non-traditional), schools-without-walls, storefront schools, neighborhood choices of schools in a cluster—each with a different philosophy—academies, magnets, and interest programs—as in fine arts or science-technology.

The important historical pattern was that these were to be alternatives—in the plural—choices for everyone as their "regular" program. There were to be no remedial, at-risk, teenage pregnant minor, gifted, or dropout prevention labels. There were only individuals—Juan, Henry, Mary, Carlos, Mei, Terrell—who had selected their preferred style. Personal options were to include **comprehensive alternatives**—capable of offering "everything" to all who enrolled, from basic reading to advanced science to football teams. Other selections could be smaller and more focused for those who did not care for co-curricular activities or large group curriculum offerings as in band or prom. Some students could benefit from "storefront" facilities to target achievement in English, history, math, computers, sales, accounting, community service, or community learning—programs that do not need special facilities or large numbers of students.

To pilot the mechanics of implementing such options in large school districts, the federal government provided grants to develop educational alternatives in the Minneapolis, Berkeley, and Franklin Pierce (Tacoma) communities. The Minneapolis Southeast Alternatives (with an "s") Project was one of the experimental formats. Initially in Minneapolis, the elementary sites were formed as neighborhood clusters of four schools. One was the Contemporary Model (traditional), one the Continuous Progress model (traditional curriculum but move at an individual pace), the third the Open School Model (student-driven, flexible, innovative but with a structure), and the fourth the Free School Model (student-centered but "unstructured"). **Parents, students, and teachers could select any one of these four alternatives—whichever best fit the family and student learning and life styles.** They could transfer to any of the other three at any time if the initial selection did not seem to fit. All were equally praised and supported. After three years, the experiment was declared a success, made city-wide, and still exists with minor alterations. The secondary schools also adopted this approach on a modified scale. At the same time, the Berkeley education community developed a myriad of programs, K-12, giving students multiple choices of many small programs, including culturally oriented options.

Similar efforts in other cities throughout the nation produced a realization of the need for leadership. In 1971, a group of twenty-five educators promoting alternatives met at the Frank Lloyd Wright Wingspread Conference Center in Racine Wisconsin. Their mission was to consider formulating an association, and to outline methods of assistance for districts wishing to create options for their communities. This led to the first national alternatives federation—a loosely knit group of advocates being housed at the Indiana University School of Education, which had offered support. Thirty years later, the group reformulated to create the International Association for Learning Alternatives (*IALA*). **The goal once again was to promote educational alternatives for all.**

Unfortunately, what was believed to be a beautiful concept and a strong beginning for choice was never accepted by traditional educators and school board members. During the politically oriented "back-to-basics" trends of the 1980s, partially stimulated by the 1983 *Nation at Risk* report (Carnegie Foundation), there emerged a growing sentiment in school districts for uniformity, rigorous programs, and accountability. Excellent alternatives were eliminated. Many opponents of options-for-all campaigned hard against the concept, claiming that schools-

of-choice were a reflection of the 1960 "hippies" and "free school" movements, or promotion of the Summerhill model—student-governed control, and residential living and learning. The very conservative societal factions won.

To survive and keep the alternatives concept alive, many of the affected people—teachers and parents—in the options programs asked for accommodation. The majority of district decision-makers would not allow choices for all to exist. To simplify the issues, the advocates then stated that if they could continue to provide a choice, they would take the "at-risk" youth. To their credit, these teachers saw a need to help those "D" and "F" students who were "behind" in the elementary or dropping out in the secondary. Unfortunately, such commitment led to **alternative education, NOT educational alternatives**. Thus, in the 1980s, alternative education became known by the public for at-risk or discipline or low-performing youth. In contrast, the conventional school became the **regular school**. As illustration, in a high school of 2200, 2000 remained in the "regular" uniform minimal choices program; the other two hundred—the "problem" and "low-achieving" youth—were enrolled in "alternative education!"

These non-traditional program styles never became popular among the "regular population," for they connoted that something was "wrong" with the students—they were the undesirables. However, the police liked these "alternative" programs, for they kept more students off the streets. The unions supported alternative education for it helped keep these youth in a "school" and out of the labor market. The parents liked it for they now had "babysitters" for their potential dropouts, the district liked "alternative" for it provided additional fiscal support, and the volunteer teachers liked it for they could "teach" in their style and they had jobs. Thus, alternative education, alternative school, at-risk program, independent study, opportunity school, and continuation school became the common national recognition. **During the 1980s, "educational alternatives" for nearly all were replaced by "alternative education" for the few.**

Surprising to the options opponents, but predicted by alternatives advocates, the success and popularity of these "non-regular" programs began to grow. Disenchantment with the uniform one-size-fits-all approach increased among numbers of students, parents, and educators, as evidenced by the expansion (percentage-wise) of private schools, home-based education, charter schools, and magnet schools. The better site-based programs soon developed "waiting lists" for enrollment. Supporters began a new campaign for all varieties of choices for everyone—not just for students with problems assigned to a facility for control—partially based upon the higher retention and success rates in the best "at-risk" schools, and the demand for choices by a cross-section of elementary youth. More families were looking at Waldorf, Montessori, multi-age classrooms, charter schools, and home-based education among many potential options.

Entering the twenty-first century, "alternative education" for at-risk students still dominated the majority discussions among politicians and conventional school administrators. However, more persons among the growing numbers of innovators and dissatisfied parents observed and experienced success with diverse programs. The pendulum began to swing in the opposite direction.

When educators search for histories of educational alternatives, they find a flood of documents from 1960 to 2000—prepared by many national leaders—which provided the original

sense of direction: Nate Blackman, Wayne Jennings, Martha Ellison, John Brenner, Robert Barr, Vernon Smith, Allan Glatthorn, Dwight Allen, Ivan Illich, Don Glines, Mary Anne Raywid, Lloyd Trump, Leonard Solo, Don Waldrip, Gardner Swensen, Arnie Langberg, Eugene Howard, Mike Hickey, Jonathan Kozol, A.S. Neill, Roland Meighan, Ron Miller, Harold Howe, John Holt, Mary Ellen Sweeney, Dan Burke, George Denison, Charles Weingartner, and James Herndon.

More prominent individuals are cited in this manuscript in Part D, "Resources for Imagineering." For example, for forty years Nelson Bossing and Gordon Vars promoted the concept of an integrated core curriculum with a focus on student interest and extensive teacher-pupil planning. Herb Kohl eloquently wrote *I Won't Learn From You*—an exposé of classroom practices. John Gatto, three-time New York Teacher of the Year with thirty years of experience, concluded in *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, that school does more harm than good. In *Another Planet*, Elinor Burkett expressed that for most, high school is remote and irrelevant; expecting students to sit quietly all day is totally unrealistic and borders on the inhumane.

As long ago as Socrates, **it has been clear that the health of any society is judged by those who dare to question the status quo.** Sadly, without alternatives for all, the available schools are usually based upon an impositional model. As Roland Meighan has written, "This too often transforms learning from a most rewarding to a dull, fragmented, and sometimes painful experience." Looking at developments and projecting the coming forty-year period—2000-2040—it is clear that replacement leaders are essential; there is a new history to be written.

The education system is in need of a complete revamping of what existed at the turn of the 21st century. **There is a requirement to return to the concept of educational alternatives for all, as was the original intent, rather than continue with alternative education for the few.** Diverse learning and teaching styles, modified school facility environments, and **philosophies which reflect a student-centered concern for the whole person—the spirit, mind, and body**—are required for those who could benefit. By adopting such a commitment, education can turn the corner early in this new millenium.

SPIRIT. MIND.
BODY

As early as 1859, in his book *On Liberty*,
John Stuart Mill
observed:

"A general state education is a mere
contrivance for moulding people to
be exactly like one another, and
the mould in which it casts them
is that which pleases the
dominant power in the government,
whether this be a monarchy, an
aristocracy, or a majority of the
existing generation. It establishes a
despotism over the mind,
leading by a natural tendency
to one over the body."

Uniformity is not Democracy

CHAPTER FOUR

DEFINING PROGRAMS

The American process referred to as school-based formal education has had an interesting historical background. In the early years, "schooling" was optional; there were several choices. The child and the parents could provide learning at home with or without a tutor. Youth could attend one of the many categories of private schools. They could enter an apprenticeship arranged by the parents, or labor full time at work not requiring an apprenticeship. Though selected states and individual communities mandated school enrollment earlier, only in the late nineteenth century did universal required attendance become commonplace for the elementary years.

For most families, **the adoption of compulsory schooling reduced the range of alternatives available to young people**. Private and parochial ventures were—and still are—a legal option, but most could not afford them. For older students, vocational centers replaced the apprenticeship. However, with the arrival of the twenty-first century, enrollment by over ninety percent of the children in public programs had become an American phenomenon—unfortunately accompanied by high dropout rates in secondary schools.

Structured site-based patterns, among factors, led to facilities nationwide becoming copycat in nature; **similarity, not diversity, characterized education. Uniformity received a big boost** in the mid-twentieth century with the movement toward rural consolidation and large city centralization in the belief that bigger schools and districts would be better. In the 1980s, **uniformity was fostered by the interpretation that <u>equal opportunity</u> meant consistency in program offerings, requirements, and structures for ALL students, regardless of individual aspirations.**

Earlier, though, circa 1965, **equal opportunity** was interpreted differently by many educators. Rather than striving for uniformity, to address the increasingly diverse youth on an equal footing, innovators began to resurrect the original historic American pattern. More students, parents, and teachers were given a choice of curriculum and learning styles, but **within** the public school districts. This led to the difficulty of **definition** of these offerings. Were they to be redefined as schools of choice, options in public education, multiple-options systems, or alternative schools. Looking back, unfortunately **the tag of alternative education gained prominence in the media, although almost all the original leaders used only the term educational alternatives**—a philosophy of choice where every program was "regular." They tried to avoid the "non-regular" connotation often given to the "alternative school." Ironically, in 1976 even the National School Boards Association complicated the issue. They selected six

advocates of *educational alternatives* to explain the national movement, but then titled their excellent research report (76-3) *Alternative Education.*

In considering this dilemma, a philosophic question arose: **Are all programs "alternatives," or do only those selected by families fit that definition?** On the one hand, the option chosen by the student was his or her school program; it was one of the many alternatives. On the other hand, what if the "alternative" was not chosen by the individual? Students were often **assigned** to special education as a result of low achievement or a medical problem. They were often **assigned** to a continuation, opportunity, or court school, or other low achievement or "punishment" placement. Were these designated mandates not true alternatives? Did they not philosophically merge with the concept of options? **The purists argued that an <u>assigned</u> program was not a school of choice, and therefore did not fit the alternatives concept**. However, most advocates of alternatives-for-everyone-all-the-time sided with reality and the practical interpretation by agreeing that all options—if they were diverse and different, and met the "at the moment" needs, interests, and learning styles of the student—could be accepted as the best regular choice for that individual. **The key was that there were alternatives**—that not everyone was in the same uniform program—each student had more opportunities than only the option of the "regular" design or a "mandated" alternative.

Much of the definition confusion arose through the growing acceptance that not every child could be successful in the conventional schools. The evidence was overwhelming—embarrassingly high drop-out rates, pregnant minors, drug addiction, alcohol usage, crime, absenteeism, violence, vandalism, adolescent suicide rates, apathy, declining standardized achievement scores, and lack of public support, all of which partially led to the need to break away from uniformity. However, the alternatives "purists" remind that almost all these "troubled" students who were "transferred" from the uniform, traditional structure were **assigned** to an "alternative" school or program; they usually were not given a choice.

Conversely, there was the recognition that many talented students—even those in "gifted" programs—were bored. The realization further emerged that good well-behaved "non-gifted" eligible, or by choice not enrolled in the program—the ABC "regular" students had very limited options from uniformity. Increasingly, legitimacy was granted to what has been observed for years by most parents, teachers, innovative education leaders, and alternatives proponents that youngsters learn in a variety of patterns and that teachers teach in a variety of styles. **When student learning and teacher styles—and personalities—mesh, "good" education is more likely to occur.** Though **no one** could determine the **best** way to educate **all** students, a smorgasbord of potential improvements emerged. The value of alternatives for everyone again resurfaced—for students, families, teachers, and administrators. The concerns continued, however—especially in traditional communities—as to how wise it might prove in the long run to offer choice, and if considered, how to provide diverse schools within the common realities found in most districts.

The International Consortium for Options in Education was formed by a group of advocates. They tried to resolve the definition dilemma by stating: **"Educational alternatives are programs in the public schools and districts which offer a choice of more than one uniform structure to students and parents."** They stated that such offerings as discipline, returning drop-out, pregnant minor, and "at-risk" centers were not true options, for usually students were **assigned** to them. It was these "non-regular" programs that first led to the term,

"alternative school." The reverse term, "educational alternatives," grew from the offerings to all students who were not assigned to a uniform, conventional model, but instead were given true choices in an effort to match them with their best learning styles.

Unfortunately, the definition dilemma continued. The "alternative schools" where students were often assigned, (or they may have chosen to escape the conventional program) generally had lower-than-average enrollment, fewer special facilities (gyms, *et. al.*), a better pupil-teacher ratio, and equal or lower cost levels. They were usually housed apart from the "regular schools," and often utilized non-certificated staff as in aides and community volunteers, and lower salaried, less experienced individuals. These descriptions were not true for those few communities offering alternatives as a choice. The best ones mirrored the facilities, staff ratios, budgets, and certificated teachers in conventional programs, though staffing was differentiated, and curriculum, assignments, and teaching methods were more flexible.

One of the common characteristics among many of the **choice alternatives** programs has been the focus on **individualizing and personalizing learning**. Further, major deviations from the traditional classroom of thirty have included team teaching, flexible scheduling, nongraded grouping, cross-age and peer tutoring, and approaches that enable staff to reinforce that children differ in their way of learning and their rate of growth and development. Staff in these environments believe that **the achievement of the student is defined by what the student does and what the student becomes after the end of all the lessons—not by the score on a "standardized" test!**

Therefore, in defining educational alternatives, "choice" versus "assignment" has been one of the key components in the formulation of options. Several communities have created a myriad of programs to implement diversity, not uniformity. **They have attempted to maximize the learning opportunities for ALL**, not just for "gifted" or "special education" students. The better districts have not mandated which approaches are best—or which way is essential for everyone—but instead have provided a variety of very different options to come as close as possible to **true choice**.

From <u>Letters to the Editor</u>: Chico California *Enterprise-Record*
May, 2002

"I went on a field trip today to the gold mining museum. It was so much fun. It was so great it didn't even seem like school."

<u>Philip Strachan, 3rd Grader</u>
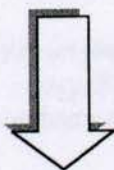
Programs Illustrating Alternatives for Everyone All the Time

- **Continuous Progress Program:** allows each child to learn quickly and progress at an individual pace, most often in a nongraded format based not only on skill curriculum areas, but also on topics of personal interest.

- **Fundamental Program:** provides for graded, highly-structured, teacher-directed, basic skills, homework-oriented approaches, usually accompanied by dress codes and planned efforts to develop character.

- **Bilingual Program:** opens the doors for students to become fluent in two languages by presenting the curriculum in English in the morning and repeating the same lessons in Spanish (or any other language) in the afternoon, or by a 90 percent Spanish—ten percent English first grade exposure, followed by 80-20, 70-30, 60-40, 50-50 percentage leading to bilingual fluency in grade six, as example.

- **Schools-Within-a-School:** creates two, three, four or more—depending upon the enrollment numbers—self-contained, diverse schools in one building based upon learning styles and curriculum options, each with its own staff, but sharing expensive facilities as in swimming pools, all under one roof at no additional cost.

- **School-Within-a-School:** offers the choice of a "conventional school" or a "flexible school" under one roof, while providing both School A and School B with equal praise and support at the same cost.

- **Open School:** gives both elementary—including kindergarten—and secondary students the freedom, opportunity, and responsibility to decide with an advisor and staff members the direction of their education by designing their own activities in a nongraded, noncompetitive, self-scheduled, individualized environment without the traditional school requirements and rituals—though football teams and student activities (preK-12) may be embraced.

- **Fine Arts Program:** enables students who are talented and interested in art, music, drama, or dance to build their schedule first around these fields, and then fill in the rest of their time with math, history, English, and science studies.

- **Research and Development Center:** provides an opportunity for those who wish to be the astronauts of education to volunteer for experimental designs piloting possible new learning systems, methods, curriculum, organization, structure. The center serves as the NASA Space Station for creating preferable educational futures.

- **District Laboratory Center:** enables volunteers to be in a different but designed program that cooperates with a university in preparing teacher interns, offering graduate level research topics, and perhaps reflecting interdependent personalized curriculum, nongraded K-12 mixes, and goal sheets rather than report cards.

- **School-Without-Walls:** creates a non-school for those who are ready to spend the majority of their time learning in the community by using the art museums, research laboratories, government agencies, social services, health care facilities, and neighborhood parks and play fields for their education while reporting only to a downtown headquarter office for progress evaluation or assistance. A similar concept can be established in rural areas, using farms, forests, lakes or other such assets.

- **Free School:** offers the most unstructured of the alternatives by allowing students large amounts of freedom to pursue individual interests and conduct many activities off-campus, with a great amount of student and parent directed governance—using a school building or a non-traditional setting, depending upon age levels and interests.

- **Unit School:** allows students to participate in a smaller environment within a bigger school, such as units of one hundred at the elementary or one hundred sixty at the secondary, and thus in an elementary school of nine hundred, there would be nine units of one hundred students, with each program being very different, or very similar to, one of the other units in the large facility.

- **Academy Program:** creates smaller focus studies, perhaps within a large high school where there might be six or seven "academies" with fifty to one hundred enrollees who may specialize in foreign language, political science, technology, pre-medical, health and fitness, or any other of a myriad of possible small-enrollment special interest academies.

- **Immersion Program:** provides the opportunity in a short period of time to become an expert through the immersion process—such as spending all day in Spanish vocabulary, grammar, culture, art, history, oral and written expression, and reading—enabling students to be relatively fluent in a language in a short period of time before focusing on other studies of less immediate priority.

- **Career School:** gives the students the time to learn and "apprentice" in areas such as computers, cabinetmaking, finance, forestry, lab technician, or medical assistant to the extent they are prepared for a specific job upon graduation, while completing semi-conventional requirements in a non-traditional environment.

- **Program-in-a-School:** allows for perhaps two to four teachers in an elementary or secondary school to create a futures-oriented option where volunteers can learn through a focus on a special futures-centered curriculum theme and learning style while most of the school remains quite conventional.

- **Interdependent Learning Program:** grants the chance for all ages of students who volunteer in any school to study the curriculum entirely through an **interdependent** approach, which eliminates all separate subjects, courses, departments, and segmented requirements in favor of studies integrated as a whole, rather than learned as isolated parts—for a student-centered curriculum integration.

- **Environmental Program:** allows for students who are especially interested in the environment and ecology—at any level—to learn their basic skills and knowledge through thematic instruction with a focus on wildlife preserves, toxic wastelands, oceanography, bogs, lakes, rivers, reservoirs, and consumer recycling—and even taxidermy as appropriate—while spending time in outdoor settings.

- **Charter School:** provides within a school district the opportunity to explore diverse learning approaches with heavy parent involvement, a very different governance structure, varied budget allocation and expenditure methods, and volunteer community projects.

- **Magnet Program:** creates special curriculum opportunities for students within a larger school or as a separate school—to be attracted by unusual or popular studies such as pilot training, airplane maintenance, construction, the arts, drama and dance, science and social science, gardening and horticulture, technology or a multitude of other possibilities.

- **Mini-School:** offers options similar to schools-within-a-school, unit schools, or elementary academies, but the focus is on individuals rather than groups, allowing a larger elementary, middle, or high school facility to have perhaps fourteen mini-schools, each with specific learning styles and curriculum.

- **Private Program:** enables the district or school to offer a public school version of a popular private school approach as in Montessori, Waldorf, progressive, holistic, military, or any other philosophy that can be supported as an option within a public school or district.

- **Interdependent Block:** provides at the secondary level, for example, such as a four-hour block where science, social studies, math, and English teachers can team, with the same one hundred twenty students for four hours, to interrelate curriculum, nongrade, create a daily schedule, and enhance excitement for learning.

- **Team Block:** offers elementary schools the opportunity to provide self-contained classrooms K-5, while four teachers who agree to team and nongrade can create a large "barn" or "suite" facility for parents and students who volunteer for an all day flexible block of time for a non-traditional learning environment.

- **British Infant School:** creates a K-1-2 setting where one teacher has a mixture of those ages for three years in a room with curriculum stations rather than individual desks, thereby allowing students to "teach themselves," engage in cooperative learning, and develop cross-age and peer tutoring practices.

- **Open Classroom:** models the British Infant School for all age levels, except the teacher may have only two or perhaps six "grades" in a classroom, while conducting a very flexible open-ended program with often noisy activities, projects and tables, and multiple learning stations.

- **Unschool Program:** allows the student and family to create a home education program, but with the advantages of utilizing a selected staff advisor from the school, along with materials available, use of the laboratories or other special needs facilities, and participation in co-curricular activities as in football, drama, band, computer club. The school still collects attendance reimbursement, but the family is able to create an "unschool," primarily in the home and community but with the support of the district.

- **One School:** provides for the implementation of most of the alternatives designs as **a separate** school, either in a traditional building, warehouse, storefront, or community center—with a large, medium or very small enrollment. It can also be created as a separate option under one roof, either in a school building or non-traditional setting.

This list can be almost endless, limited only by the vision of school communities seeking ways to improve learning for all students. Many of the overlap ideas can be combined.

The commonly **assigned** programs such as continuation schools, court schools, person centers, at-risk alternative schools, pregnant minor, special education, gifted, dropout prevention, and other existing or potential designs are not cited. The focus on defining and illustrating the concept **of alternatives for everyone all the time is on all offerings as optional choices,** not criteria-based assignments. **They reflect learning styles, brain-based research findings, multiple intelligences, and lifestyle preferences.**

In all the discussions regarding schools, education, and learning, it must be remembered that the movement currently most often referred to as homeschooling is a viable option and has produced many top-quality youth. Families can often do for students what the school seldom is able to accomplish—academically, socially, and psychologically. Though the focus of this Handbook is on the public sector, the contributions and limitless possibilities in the private and parochial sectors should not be ignored, for those who can afford or who select non-public options, the achievement of a positive learning environment for the individual is still the vision.

In the end, definitions are not that important. Instead, the goal for school districts is not to adopt—or limit themselves to—just one or two of the models, but to be eclectic and draw from all the possible enlightenments that can improve the learning outcomes for students. The effort is ongoing to restore education to an exemplary status by leading communities in accommodating the diverse cultural, developmental, and achievement populations found in the majority of the world.

Holistic and Humanistic Learning

Natural Learners

"Children are natural learners. Most of their learning is not the result of teaching, but of a process as natural as breathing. The traditional structure of schooling interferes with the individual program of many students. New learning systems providing choices of humane education free from domination—*thus non-traditional as well as traditional options*—are required for the future."

Roland Meighan

Entrepreneurial Spirit

"The principal must have a bit of entrepreneurial spirit or he or she will just "keep school"; nothing of any real importance will happen, in spite of the best efforts of dedicated teachers. As an entrepreneur, the principal can accept change as future reality and create better individual learning through visionary leadership."

Ann Grooms

OPTIONS — ELEMENTARY / K-12

More options are required for younger children. Though over the years some elementary schools have deviated from the grade-level, self-contained classroom model of twenty to thirty-five students with one teacher, the overwhelming majority have stayed with this conventional format.

The concepts of plural learning styles choices vividly contrasts with the now-traditional elementary grade level patterns first implemented in 1847 at the Quincy Grammar School in Massachusetts. For over one hundred and fifty years, many thousands of often excellent teachers and administrators have tried to perfect this structure, but it cannot be improved. Ironically, the age-level, graded concept was promoted by Horace Mann after observing the Prussian system which originated *circa* 1536 to prepare youth for military service; at each age, the boys were to learn specific skills. Though this model has served a **minority** of the youth for decades, it has failed to meet adequately the needs of the large majority of students—even the "gifted."

This reality is supported by multiple factors. One is the substantial amount of money, time, and frustration on the part of parents, teachers, and students spent on remedial reading classes. Large numbers of youth are "below grade level" and below the fiftieth percentile; many "gifted" students are often held back or are not able to progress at their own pace far beyond the grade level expectations. **The majority of all students, regardless of achievement levels, are usually denied advanced work in their special areas of interest**—as in science or art—the result of everyone being required to spend so much time in reading and math, even if they are far ahead (ninety-fifth percentile) of their classmates in achieving these erroneous but often politically mandated "basic skills." Programs for most students, regardless of interests and personal growth, are out of sync.

Further, no matter how well-prepared or excellent the teacher, he or she cannot teach seven to fourteen subjects in one room. The classroom "box" design seldom has adequate science, art, social studies, or psychomotor facilities. With budget cuts, specialists in music, art, computers, library science, industrial technology, home economics, and physical education have been reduced or eliminated from the school staff. "Pull-out" programs for remedial reading and math have not been successful—nor have they been for advanced students either; self-contained gifted classrooms have been too restrictive. Assigning students to one teacher always creates personality clashes, no matter how talented the teacher. If the instructor is considered weak—or worse, a "lemon"—twenty to thirty-five students will not have a good year. It is not fair to

assign these students to one "below-average" staff member for nine months. Home education has often produced the highest composite test scores.

Research verifies that the spread of individual student development in a year is far too great—even with only twenty—for one teacher to do justice to each person. It begins in the kindergarten, where because of a cut-off entrance date based upon one minute on the clock— children must be five by midnight on December first, or whatever state date. The kindergarten teacher is confronted with an impossible task, as he or she is immediately faced with children who are **chronologically spread by twelve months and increased to at least fifteen months by transfers from states with different entrance dates. When maturity, maturation, home environment, and other child growth factors are added to the mix, there is at least a twenty-four month developmental spread.** One teacher in one-half day cannot meet the needs of every individual and have everyone at the same place at the same time and ready for the "first grade curricula."

Primary teachers are confronted with a most difficult task. **The research confirms that in a "typical" heterogeneously grouped school, at the second grade level, there is a plus or minus four-year spread.** Some second-graders are still at the late kindergarten-early first grade expectation, while others are functioning at third and fourth grade. One teacher must address K-1-2-3-4 achievement level youth while being expected to have all the individuals complete the second grade curriculum. It is obvious that the self-contained room is not the best for everyone.

This structure leads to poor test scores, remedial classes, and frustrated students. It denies individual interests and developmental needs. One student who is "gifted" in reading and math with scores in the ninetieth percentiles has a major interest in science, and has a great need for an individualized instructional physical education program. In the typical self-contained room, opportunities for, and emphasis on, these areas of interest and need can not be addressed. Further, reading is a skill—like learning a musical instrument—and is individual in nature. Given the correct climate and readiness, most students learn to read somewhere between ages three and eleven—or even fourteen. **Not all youth should begin reading at ages five or six. Neither do they all require the same amount of time.**

There are many, many ways to provide delivery systems featuring a variety of learning styles and environments. One resembles the old country schoolhouse, where nongraded age levels are mixed. Older students help younger students; the "gifted" help the "remedial." **Successful one-room schoolhouse teachers talk of a family atmosphere.** Resisting the consolidation push, numerous communities still had one-room schools into the seventies, and even in the nineties in very rural areas. The British Infant School open classroom setting where learning stations replaced desks and where students often taught each other and worked in nongraded groups on a variety of activities at the same time was another successful model from the past.

Therefore, one proposed option for elementary schools involves teaming a group of perhaps five teachers in a nongraded environment where the students stay with the same staff over a period of years. Teachers maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. Students share multiple personalities, avoiding many conflicts while benefiting from strengths. **In this nongraded team setting, there is cross-age and peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and individualized instruction. Students can progress at their own rate without reference**

to grade levels. They can learn math, reading, science, and physical education skills and knowledge at the appropriate maturation stage; they are not forced into a test pattern that asks all students the same questions at the same time. In such a K-4 or K-5 setting, students have five or six years to grow, mature, develop, and perform—with interest, excitement, and success—for those who select such a system as their elementary school alternatives program.

Additionally, options can provide flexible environments featuring more integrated and interdependent curricula and less separate subject teaching. **Knowledge is not segmented; it cannot be compartmentalized**. Further, individualized formats allow for the integration of special education students. **The majority of borderline-needs students are not slow or misbehaving**, according to most research, but instead are suffering from environmental illness—allergies and immune system dysfunctions, and bio-chemical imbalances. This is especially verified by noted pediatrician Doris Rapp, M.D., who reveals double-blind studies confirming these problems in her books, *Is This Your Child?* and *Is This Your Child's World?* Those affected need individual accommodation, which is very difficult to achieve with a uniform school system. Alternatives provide for these youth and can eliminate the special education, gifted, and at-risk labels. Each student is an individual: Sally, not the group or the second grade class, is the center of attention.

In implementing the needed options, one further illustration portrays that an elementary site with eighteen teachers can have at least three (X, Y, Z) district offerings. In Program X, seven (in a K-6 building) teachers can be housed in self-contained rooms, thereby maintaining as one of the three choices, a K-1-2-3-4-5-6 grade level approach. In Program Y, as a second choice, six teachers can modify the self-contained method by teaming and providing continuous progress curriculum. **For Program Z, the remaining five teachers can offer a completely nongraded, individualized, personalized education setting with student patterns based upon interest, success, readiness, and continuous twelve-month learning**. In this Program Z model, one of the rooms can accommodate quiet activities as in reading and math; another can provide for science and social science "doing" activities; a third can foster noisier activities such as shop, kitchen, and psychomotor programs. A fourth can be open space without desks for music, drama, and age-group gatherings, while a fifth can focus on art, clay, and messy activities. The five rooms have holes cut in the walls to create suites and centers to provide special facilities not possible in a self-contained room. These three programs, X, Y, and Z, can be offered at the same cost as only one in a conventional school, while adhering to state laws. **They do not even change the bus routes, except for possible accommodation of a year-round calendar, or for flexible opening and closing times for Program C.**

In one design, an elementary school of six hundred can maintain four hundred students in a conventional setting, and provide for 200 students in a non-traditional environment. In another, districts can offer a cluster of three nearby schools where one is contemporary, one is continuous progress, and one is an open school; parents can select any of the three. Further, a magnet school, or a laboratory research and development center, may combine K-12 students in a "one-room" country school philosophy. An additional method is to offer a non-traditional school-of-choice in each quadrant of the district, while the other sites remain conventional. Communities can provide for options. All variations are selected through a system of volunteering. Students, families, and teachers determine the best learning style match. The traditional pattern of the present majority is maintained as one of the alternatives.

Most any size elementary school can offer such multiple options. Even a K-8 school with only two teachers can design two choices: one can be a conventional K-8 classroom environment with desks and teacher direction; the second can be a British Infant School open classroom style with learning stations rather than desks. Alternatives concepts also relate to the John Goodlad book, *A Place Called School*, where he proposes units of one hundred students with four to five teachers regardless of the school enrollment. There should be a number of such units to provide the socialization and individualization desirable for younger children. Thus, as previously described, in a facility of five hundred, Goodlad would have five "unit schools," each with one hundred students. Large schools often dehumanize the learning process by making the student a "number"—thus one of the arguments for optional learning delivery systems. The units of one hundred can offer choices of five diversified styles:

Fundamental
Contemporary
Continuous Progress
Open
Futures
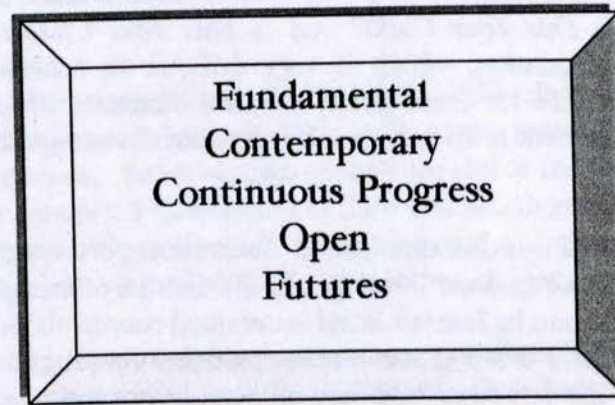
The five are filled with students, families, and teachers who volunteer to participate in one of these "regular" learning style options. **Each one is equally praised and supported as a quality offering.**

There is a strong belief that the best way to improve education nationally is to provide multiple alternatives within each school and/or school district. Those who are happy with the more uniform conventional structure may remain in that approach, but those who would like to deviate should have several choices. Test scores will rise, attendance will increase, discipline will improve, parent satisfaction will be greater, and overall, citizens will see a marked return toward better learning opportunities. This aspiration can be reached with the implementation of well-understood concepts of **alternatives for everyone all the time**.

CHAPTER SIX

OPTIONS – MIDDLE / K-12

It is beyond question: learning alternatives are essential, Pre-K-12, through college—and in fact, lifelong. However, perhaps the greatest current need is at the originally conceived grades five through eight "middle school" levels. Two major studies completed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) help validate this conclusion. The first, in 1961, gathered intermediate level leaders to create the publication, *The Junior High School We Need*, outlining what should be, at that time, for grades 7-9. A follow-up publication, *The Junior High School We Saw*, (1964), reported the results of visits to field sites. **The evaluators failed to find an exemplary junior high. The discrepancy between the "need" and the "saw" was one of night and day**. This led to the obvious: an entirely different structure and a humane philosophy were both required. No longer could districts continue "junior" high schools!

A group of renewal advocates, led by William Alexander of the University of Florida—and the one who coined the term "middle school"—created proposals to completely replace the junior high with a new institution. They believed the old "junior" format was not appropriate for youth entering and advancing into adolescence. **This was the first real opportunity in fifty years to invent from scratch an ideal learning system**. The questions began with what is a middle school? There were no standards, guidelines, legislation, teacher training programs, or requirements. **What would be best for youth chronologically ten to fourteen years old, but who through maturation, achievement, and physical stature factors, were separated over a ten-year continuum.**

The inventors of the new concept reviewed the available **research** and determined that learning should be continuous and not separated by ages. However, if politics required communities to separate children away from a K-12 mix, that the preferred grade-level split, based upon child growth and development and interest factors was K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. **The 5 through 8 "middle" format called for a nongraded structure**, with interdependent curriculum, individualized instruction, no ABC report cards—replaced by portfolios, goal sheets, conferences, and written assessments—pod-oriented more open facilities to ease movement and integrated studies, flexible modular schedules, and learning based upon student interests. The inventors accepted research indicating that only twenty-five percent of the "seventh graders" were ready for abstract reasoning in math—the majority of whom were girls. Therefore, the former "seventh year" was to be the most flexible in the life of the student except kindergarten, as they faced puberty, looked ahead at their futures, and struggled with self-concept, appearance, and social skills.

Alternatives "middle level" research relates to the same test percentiles and readiness deviations found in the kindergarten and elementary studies. **The "seventh grade" had the most pronounced differences of all the grade levels. Basic skills academic test scores in a typical district ranged from grade three to grade thirteen. Only fifteen percent scored at the expected "grade level."** *The other eighty-five percent were either way ahead—tenth to thirteenth—or way behind—third to fifth, or interested in other topics—art or the environment, not "exploratory wheel" or equations.*

Even more pronounced, for it could not be altered by remedial instruction, was **the six-year physiological spread** at the seventh level. Some students were "ninth"—they were men—ready for advanced athletics. Other students were only "fifth" physiologically; the wrist area had not merged. **Medical evidence is irrefutable: it is impossible to have seventh grade physical education requirements.** The youth at this "grade level" are spread over the conventional fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth—with some fourth and some tenth—in their development. **"Seventh graders" may grow seven inches a year; they need to eat more often than one short lunch period each day.**

The research supports that there can be no traditional seventh grade (or any middle school grade level) lunch period, football team, curriculum requirements, or other such categories, mandated for everyone during the pubescent years. The youth are developmentally varied over a wide continuum, though they may all be within twelve to fifteen months chronologically. In a survey of parents and teachers at one school PTA meeting, ten unidentified students were dressed in gunnysacks with bags over their heads. The academic test scores for the ten were placed at random on an overhead transparency. The parents and teachers were asked to identify the grade level of each student, while observing them in person and having access to the test results. Some were tall; some were short. Some had high achievement, while others had lower scores. Though the audience "guessed" fourth grade through tenth grade (in a K-12 school), **not one person came close to realizing that all ten were seventh graders.** Thus, alternatives concepts firmly support the need for choices of programs for students in the middle school years—ranging from very traditional to diverse non-traditional formats.

Unfortunately, junior high schools never moved to the new format. **They may have changed the name over the door to "middle" from "junior" and altered grade levels to include six through eight—not five through eight as designed. However, they continued to assign students to an old junior high program.** The curriculum (required English, history, math, science, physical education, and exploratory), evaluation techniques (ABC report cards), group-paced instructional methodology, thirty desks facing the chalkboard of a room, mandated same-for-everyone homework, period 1-2-3 or two-period block schedules, bells, and assigned instructors remained the dominant pattern. Thus most middle schools, despite some cosmetic changes, continued to reflect the junior high model. Staff were more aware of the needs of these youth, and individually often tried to accommodate individuals, but the school structure and organization prevented significant improvement.

To offset these real and perceived negatives of the junior high format, there should be options and choices which are very much different from the current conventional "non-middle" mold. As at the elementary level, there are multiple ways of offering selections. **One of the easiest is the schools-within-a-school model, which is especially effective in larger facilities,**

as the original design indicated that middle program enrollments should be held to five or six hundred students.

Thus in a building of thirteen hundred students, perhaps four hundred could be in the Washington Center—with conventional grade levels, departmentalized and required separate subjects, period 1-2-3 schedules, and ABC report card formats. Five hundred could be in the Jefferson Center—a modified, team-taught, partially nongraded, modular scheduled, continuous progress, optional report card system. The final four hundred could be in the Lincoln Center—a completely nongraded, individualized instruction, personalized curriculum, year-round, non-scheduled, goal sheet assessment design. These options can be offered on the same budget, with the same facilities and staff, and under current state laws, as can be offered to all thirteen hundred in the traditional format. Some waivers and modifications of facilities may be needed for the Lincoln program.

Such concepts can be available in most any size site. In a small school, only two selections might be offered at the beginning. With a very small enrollment, students can be given the choice of an interdependent curriculum block—four hours for English, social studies, math, science with a team of the same four teachers—or the subjects separately as in period 1-2-3-4. Even two or three teachers can combine to offer an all-day flexible futures design option, with the possible exception of students being "farmed-out" for physical education, Spanish, or agriculture, where there might be only one staff member for such topics. A very large facility can offer five or six basic formats.

As with the elementary level, **such alternatives can be available as separate building magnets, open enrollment selections of choice, laboratory research and development centers, schools-in-a-cluster, a choice option in each quadrant of a district, or a program-in-a-school. Moving away from a one-size-fits-all structure provides the opportunities for students to excel, and very often prevents the beginning dropout decisions formed at this level.** Advanced students may focus more on areas of interest, or complete work at the high or college levels, while enrolled in the 10-14 years chronologically. The middle level may be the key to significant improvement in the secondary institutions globally. Fifty comparative characteristics of one model of alternatives—the schools-within-a-school—provide evidence that choice can be a reality, as illustrated by the three base options at Garden Lake Middle School.

GARDEN LAKE

Schools-within-a-school can be effectively used at elementary, middle, high, and university levels to provide programs reflecting choices of learning and teaching styles by families, students, teachers, and communities. A middle design provides a concrete example, as the accompanying Garden Lake model illustrates the provision of multiple options and three learning styles at no additional expense or changes in the law. It can be an open enrollment district site or a neighborhood center. The "concept" can be used with almost any enrollment—small or large. Here, a building for 1500 students is assumed. Perhaps 600 would *volunteer* for Jefferson, and 450 each would *volunteer* for Lincoln and Washington.

These schools-within-a-school could have three student councils, three basketball teams, three theater performances—providing for more student participation in smaller units—or they could function together for activities. Easiest, though not always best, the first year might be structured to keep the spirit of "our school"—with something for everyone—*one* band, Halloween party, Christmas concert, group of cheerleaders, football team, chess club, and journalism program. Staff can further decentralize after the *choice concept* is well understood—when students, parents, staff are beyond "which is best," "which is liberal," "which is for college," "which is..." This three-in-one plan is accomplished without creating upheaval, through equal support for each choice. *The community is over the competitive phase and has accepted diverse learning and teaching styles and student, staff, and family preferences.*

1. **Choice one**, the Washington Center, characterizes the conventional contemporary program in most middle schools.
2. **Choice two**, the Jefferson Center, identifies modified changes to the contemporary program.
3. **Choice three**, the Lincoln Center, is an open, experiential, individualized, research-and-development option; Lincoln may need waivers for some of the deviations from the conventional.

All three should be excellent environments for those who participate in each program, with the voluntary preferred selection based upon the best learning and lifestyles for each child. The cost, bus routes, facilities, and curriculum materials remain the same, except where adjustments are needed to accommodate specific programs, as in cutting holes through walls in the Lincoln Center to create suites, or materials to individualize curriculum and instruction. This format can be used in elementary, high, and colleges, too. It can be modified in relation to the size of the school by offering two choices—perhaps by combining components of the Lincoln and Jefferson programs—or it can be expanded to five or six in a larger school with additional designs as in a more structured academy or in a magnet fine arts option. **Multiple alternatives can be created within most sites if vision, creativity, commitment, and a willingness to improve education are recognized by the community**.

The best school-within-a-school model for many families is a K-12 program under one roof. All students learn together as individuals, not by grade level or age. The Lincoln Center can be a self-contained program within one building or it can be completely housed in a separate location, as was the Wilson Campus School at Minnesota State University.

On the accompanying chart, cited are 50 of the over 70 components that can be viewed as characteristics to distinguish between individual programs—**whether housed as schools-within-a-school, a one-site facility**—as in an R and D center—or as choices offered in various locations through a district-wide open enrollment policy.

Garden Lake Middle School

Comparative Characteristics in Multiple Categories of Three-Schools-Within-a-School

Lincoln Learning Center	Jefferson Learning Center	Washington Learning Center
1. Overlapped, nongraded, 5th-9th	1. 6th, 7th nongraded; 8th graded	1. 6th, 7th, 8th grade levels
2. Student scheduled—daily	2. Modular Schedule (MTWTF)	2. Conventional periods: 1-2-3
3. Individualized instruction	3. Continuous progress instruction	3. Teacher directed instruction
4. Self-selected studies	4. Modified requirements	4. Required classes
5. Interdependent curriculum	5. Integrated curriculum	5. Departmentalized curriculum
6. Students select facilitators	6. Students select from teams	6. Students have teachers assigned
7. Students select advisors	7. Students assigned to advisors	7. Students assigned to counselors
8. Goal sheets/portfolios—no ABCs	8. Only ABC+ no credit—no D-F	8. ABCDF grades
9. No homework; long range projects	9. Weekly assignments	9. Daily homework
10. Individual YRE calendar	10. 60/20 YRE calendar	10. 9-month calendar
11. No textbooks	11. Reference-only textbooks	11. Textbooks assigned
12. Rooms modified as suites	12. Rooms adjacent	12. Rooms by grade level/subject
13. Tables/flex furniture/some carpet	13. Some tables/some desks/carpet	13. Desks arranged for custodians
14. Affective/psychomotor/cognitive	14. Cognitive/affective modified	14. Cognitive is priority
15. Food service all day	15. Lunch within block of time	15. Assigned lunch period
16. Optional attendance; any 180 days	16. Required track attendance	16. Required daily attendance
17. Flexible hours 7am-5pm	17. Some early/late flexibility	17. Required hours for everyone
18. School in the community	18. Some time in the community	18. Mostly in the building
19. Differentiated staffing	19. Modified staffing	19. Traditional staffing
20. Non-academics are equals	20. Academics and electives	20. Academics featured
21. Designed on student success	21. Designed on success/failure	21. Designed on student failure
22. Self-paced learning	22. Accelerated learning	22. Grade level learning
23. Teachers as facilitators	23. Teachers as initiators	23. Teachers as presenters
24. Students are responsible	24. Students partially responsible	24. Teachers are responsible
25. Experimental school	25. Partly experimental	25. Non-experimental school
26. Community center	26. Limited community center	26. School center only
27. Self-satisfaction	27. Occasional rewards	27. Rewards and punishment
28. Five phase methodology	28. Modified group methods	28. Whole class method
29. Personalized programs	29. Partially personalized	29. Mandated programs
30. Facilitators work in teams	30. Teacher team cooperation	30. Teachers work in isolation
31. Open-ended curriculum	31. Flexible curriculum	31. Required curriculum
32. Technology individualized	32. Technology modified	32. Technology group-paced
33. Environmental illness focus	33. Environmental illness concern	33. Environmental illness doubted
34. Community volunteering priority	34. Limited school volunteering	34. After-school volunteering
35. Open enrollment	35. Modified enrollment	35. Designated enrollment
36. No waiting lists	36. Modified lotteries	36. Waiting lists/lotteries
37. Evaluation as R/D project	37. Some R/D projects	37. Exemplary standard model
38. Early childhood personalized	38. Flexible early childhood	38. Standardized early childhood
39. No eligibility rules	39. Modified eligibility	39. Standardized eligibility rules
40. Human relations priority	40. Human relations considered	40. Human relations mandated
41. Dress as appropriate	41. Flexible dress code	41. School uniforms
42. Concept oriented	42. Concepts and content	42. Content oriented
43. Brain-based learning	43. Brain research aware	43. Traditional courses
44. 1-1 conferences key	44. Student 1-1 often	44. 1-1 for problems
45. Humaneness first	45. Humaneness considered	45. Rules first
46. Individual diagnosis	46. Small group diagnosis	46. Large group diagnosis'
47. Perception as priority	47. Perception awareness	47. Standardized perception
48. Intelligence research applied	48. Intelligence by judgment	48. Intelligence by test
49. Decentralized budget	49. Partial budget control	49. Total budget control
50. Cultural exchange travel	50. Possible cultural exchange	50. Conventional classes first

COMPREHENSIVE ALTERNATIVES

It is essential to offer comprehensive alternatives for all youth, but especially those traditionally considered "regular students." Many who receive A, B, C report card marks and are not a "problem" are discouraged by the conventional formats. Most have absolutely no options; they are not or do not want "gifted" and they are not "at-risk." What choices are available for them? Often the individual "blossoms" if non-traditional options are available offering greater flexibility at all "grade" levels

The alternatives that have been provided most always are low enrollment secondary schools which do not offer football teams, cheerleaders, orchestra, advanced science, and immersion language programs. *Students have been prevented from volunteering for these very small schools of choice, for they want co-curricular and specialized studies opportunities.*

Magnet-style choices—even at the elementary level—are conducted within the traditional structure—not in a preferred or option of an open education environment. Transportation is usually not provided district-wide. Schools-within-schools should allow full participation in all activities—or programs should be large enough to have activities at separate sites. Thus it is mandatory that in considering options, there must be sites—whether separate facilities or schools-or-programs-within-schools that allow students to participate in programs which offer all possible combinations, from **A-Z**, of comprehensive alternatives available for everyone.

Don Glines

CHAPTER SEVEN

OPTIONS – SECONDARY (K–12)

The need for more high school alternatives has mushroomed. At the turn of the twentieth century, only four percent of the population held diplomas; by the start of World War II, it was thirty-nine percent. Early in that century, to complete the eighth grade before going to work in a textile mill, on an assembly line, or on the farm was considered an admirable accomplishment. Though universities have been available for over three hundred years, only the more affluent from college-oriented families or those especially determined to succeed in a college-related career made it through grade 12, until the post World War II "G. I. Bill." **The structure and curriculum established over one hundred years ago to serve university-bound youth has remained the inappropriate core for most students.**

The post-World War II increases in vocational, consumer economics, and business-related subjects came as more youth were being pushed into "schooling." There were fewer jobs resulting from the growth in unions and the effort to return America to a peace-time economy. Employment was needed by veterans; the G. I. Bill increased the emphasis on secondary diplomas and college degrees. At that time, there were **pseudo-options** or "alternatives" for students related to five curriculum choices:

1. Classical liberal arts preparation
2. Technical science-math oriented college programs
3. Vocational programs—auto, electric, wood, print, metals "shops"
4. Commercial offerings to produce secretaries, clerks, and sales persons
5. Consumer emphasis to guide business careers and future homemakers.

However, regardless of the "track" or curriculum focus, the learning style for all high schools was basically the same format: period 1-2-3 schedules, bells, hall passes, required English and social studies, ABC report cards, cheerleaders, football teams, chess clubs, and systems of reward and punishment for citizenship, as in demerits. In the 1940s and 50s, Springfield Massachusetts, as example, excelled in these pseudo-options. Classical High was primarily for liberal arts college prep students; Technical was for math-science college prep; Commerce (mostly girls) was for noncollege office workers; Vocational (mostly boys) was for construction workers; and Trade was for business careers.

Earlier in California districts, *Continuation High Schools* were required by law for youth who did not adapt well to the "regular" high school; later came opportunity schools, pregnant minor options, and independent study. More recently have come charter schools and increasing numbers of individuals selecting home-based learning. Though these developments did help numerous youth, except for home education, most efforts were too often aimed toward low-achieving, at-risk, or "non-regular" students. Many continuation centers were excellent, but a student had to have "problems" to enroll—be "bad" in some way to be assigned to the best programs. These "non-regular" options normally did not have cheerleaders, football teams, advanced science labs, French, specialized art studies, band, gymnasiums, and other desirable assets, thus further limiting enrollments. Those who wanted to play football or be in the band could not select one of the opportunities. The Minnesota Area Learning Centers in 2000 typified the "at-risk" focus. State law spelled out eleven ways to be "bad" before students could enroll, even though these were the best learning environments in the state. What tragedies; **one must be "bad" to have a "good" education**—again with no options.

The gifted programs, although housed within a comprehensive school, still followed the traditional formats; again, there were few options. **Over half of the high achieving youth were bored; they could not advance at their own pace to reach their full potential**. The "gifted" math student had to take algebra for thirty-six weeks, even though he or she may have only needed six to ten weeks to complete the course, while ironically **other college prep but non-math gifted may have needed fifty weeks.** These achieving students had little choice, if any, of learning styles; their only decisions were whether to take French or Spanish, chorus or band, advanced placement English, campaign for the student council, or similar selections.

All this must now change, especially with **POLITICS** mandating exit exams, "world-class standards," graduation requirements, and more accountability, including the elimination of social promotion. **Such fallacies dictate that even more varieties of programs are essential.** Advanced students ought to be permitted to go far beyond current limits. Low achievers should be provided opportunities to find success through varied learning styles as well as through program focus. **It is time to challenge politicians**; they are too often lawyers or farmers, not educators. Maximum learning is based upon individual differences and research in growth and development, not on the whim of a political election.

In the large high schools there very easily can be five to ten options:

1. The contemporary or conventional model
2. The modified conventional
3. The open flexible program
4. The "academies"—a series of smaller specialized efforts such as a Fine Arts focus
5. A school-without-walls program
6. A rigid very structured program, and
7. Other such targeted learning delivery styles.

In a facility of three thousand, seven hundred might be in the conventional house, nine hundred in the modified, six hundred in the open house, four hundred in the academies (the total when six or seven smaller programs of fifty to sixty students are combined) two hundred in the school-without-walls, and two hundred in the ultra-structured fundamental program. **It is easy**

to provide learning alternatives—through creativity, courage, and a willingness to abandon the tidy structure of uniformity.

Where there are such multiple programs in one school, **students and teachers should participate in these offerings by choice—not by assignment.** All the options can provide "basic courses," if essential (U.S. History requirements). Each shares the swimming pool, the two gymnasiums, the one Russian teacher. They can all combine for one large band, or develop several smaller bands from each "house" program. Sports, student councils, and all co-curricular activities can be supported in this "house plan" concept with several teams and councils, or with combined all-school orchestra or football groups. Further, in the more flexible choice, students spend large blocks of time in the community, and community members are always involved in the programs at school. **Much depends upon the learning philosophy of participation—more students involved in activities through small schools-within-a-large-school**—or fewer students provided participation opportunities by offering only one team to maximize the potential for **winning the conference football title or creating an award-winning band**. There can be a combination of both, such as a joint all-school chorus, while maintaining separate student councils with a coordinating council related to decisions affecting the entire school.

John Goodlad, in *A Place Called School*, advocated secondary units of one hundred sixty youth—enabling smaller environments to focus on students as individuals, rather than as one name among many. **Everyone could know everyone** in a home of one hundred sixty, impossible in a group of three thousand. Each unit would serve as a base and could offer integrated English, social studies, and perhaps math and science-related curriculum. Students would interact with those in the other units in specialized but preferably related areas such as physical education, Russian, the library, cafeteria, vocational studies, football, dances, and other social activities. Where learning is personalized, the curriculum "subject areas" are not a concern; the cohesiveness is "automatic."

Magnet programs, open enrollment for diverse style options, and research and development centers are among the many possibilities for 100 percent alternatives choice settings in the high schools. Creativity, flexibility, vision, commitment, and philosophy are needed to change the system to accommodate the needs of the many and not just the few at the secondary level too. Successful businesses and industries all have a research and development component—unheard of in most school districts. While people fly and pilot airplanes, NASA has astronauts exploring space.

High schools—in fact K-12 and college age levels—need research and development centers manned by community "astronauts" who are willing to participate in space-center style education programs. As discussed in detail in chapter seventeen, large industries spend fifteen percent on R and D; smaller ones spend five percent. School districts spend less than one-fourth of one percent. **Choice supporters want the opportunity to volunteer for astronaut programs in education.**

In smaller high schools, at least two or three options can be provided. At very small enrollment sites, students can take junior English period one and U. S. History period four in a conventional setting, **or** they can take a two-hour interdependent flexible block where two teachers combine junior English with an American literature focus, and U. S. History and fine arts perspectives into a two-hour American Studies program. There are over twenty such

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deviations from the traditional pattern available for high schools. Adopting a number of these selections can increase the success outcomes, reduce the discipline problems, and lower the dropout rates. However, curriculum focus choices alone are not enough; learning and life-style options must be available too. **"Discipline problems" are dramatically reduced when students want to be in a program they selected rather than in one assigned by adults who "know best."** The extreme "problems" can be counseled—or "convinced"—into Person Centers to address their **affective domain** development.

The conventional high school, with alternatives only for program emphasis and not learning style, will not enable the diverse populations to witness dramatic improvements in education. Such a desirable outcome is only possible if secondary levels move towards more alternatives for everyone. As not every family is ready for major change, **optional programs should continue to enroll only volunteers.** Many parents feel more comfortable having their children in the familiar school structure. If families are not comfortable in one of the nontraditional alternatives, they should be guaranteed a form of the known. For those willing to explore the unknown, the opportunity should be available to select from several futures-oriented or personalized learning alternatives. As often found in futurist literature, *"It is the known, not the unknown, that scares the innovators."*

Teachers must be included in the choice mix, for they have preferences too. It is an especially important consideration with the looming shortage of facilitators. There are not now enough potential teachers in the pipeline to replace the good ones who are retiring, let alone the poor ones who should not be in teaching in the first place. The need for candidates is approaching the crisis stage. If there are not enough traditional teachers, there certainly are not enough philosophically prepared staff for non-traditional options. Therefore, it is mandatory to revise teacher preparation choices if the demands of alternatives for everyone are to be fulfilled. Even if the teacher numbers are eventually overcome, volunteer programs for learners still require those persons who love children and who understand why innovative professionals should imagine and implement learning style diversities. It becomes obvious that there is only one true need in teacher education: the pre-service and in-service offerings must be significantly different if they are to be significantly better.

Philosophically, then, **every student (learner) and every teacher (facilitator)** must be addressed **personally**, and provided **individual choices**, if there is to be recognizable **progress in education.**

Learner/Facilitator   Facilitator/Learner

"Everyone a learner; everyone a facilitator."

CHAPTER EIGHT

TEACHER EDUCATION

Those who endorse alternatives also stand behind the call for major changes in teacher education programs and credentialing systems. Their reasons are obvious: the huge majority of teachers who receive "training" in traditional colleges are only prepared to "instruct" in the conventional classroom system—to be a "sage on the stage," not a "guide by the side." They have not been exposed to multiple creative methods, or if they have learned a few, the hiring school district or the teacher union does not encourage them or even allow them to make desired deviations from the traditional. Over half leave teaching after five years; large numbers of these individuals are those who scored high on creativity—most of whom cannot accept the rigid uniformity of the ritual-dominated education structure. To create **alternatives for everyone all the time, it is essential to imagineer new modes of and experiences in teacher preparation programs**—especially with the potential shortage of future teachers.

The innovative literature on the process of renewal supports major changes all at once. Piecemeal efforts—one-at-a-time designs—usually do not achieve great long-range success. Neither has district-wide systemic reform been successful, for it has too often led to uniform policies and programs rather than diverse learning style and curriculum options. **Changes must be made simultaneously in at least six components: philosophy, instruction, curriculum, organization, facilities, and evaluation.** Seldom have the few existing choices in a district been so far-reaching; therefore, the options are still very limited. Open enrollment has not helped much where there is little difference in the schools other than the principal, teachers, minor policies, or focus programs. Of the six components, envisioning better teacher recruitment and teaching strategies is the key for providing true learning style options.

The important lesson learned over the years is that it is essential for non-traditional alternatives programs to find "pied piper" teachers. Most anyone can learn the curriculum—as in knowing enough fractions to "teach" elementary math—and can develop teaching methods, as presenting a lecture or engaging students in small cooperative groups. **HOWEVER, A PERSONALITY THAT ENABLES TEACHERS TO LOVE CHILDREN, AND CHILDREN TO LOVE THEM, CANNOT BE "TAUGHT."** Individuals can improve in this arena, but only the special ones have the gift. The latter attract students to non-traditional programs when they facilitate learning by instruction using creative non-conventional methods. **These "pied pipers" have a radiance that attracts youth.** Students *learn* if they are motivated. Teachers do not *teach;* they can only *facilitate* the learning opportunities for individuals and groups.

Surveys have been conducted where candidates to be interviewed are first "turned loose" to visit the school. Candidate "A" is immediately surrounded by students who want to know if "A" is a new teacher. Candidate "B" makes an effort to talk with some, but never attracts a crowd. Candidate "C" avoids students by looking at books in the library and items on the bulletin board. The non-traditional principal immediately knows whom to hire before the interview. "C" probably should not even be in teaching, but if so, only in a conventional setting. The "A" interview discussion **begins with relationships with students**—and toward the end— **"Oh, by the way, you are hired, but what do you teach and where did you go to college?"** *The subject area and certification program are the least important.* **This is why so often the non-certificated "pied piper" teacher-aide is more effective than a certificated person with a Ph.D. in a narrow subject field.** Teachers working in teams help overcome this dilemma. Even then, some students will wait for college student interns to study with each term, though the "regular" teacher of the "subject" is the one who signs the approval for the experience to be recorded on the final transcript.

Major changes in the teacher credentialing system are also required. There are many unnecessary courses mandated that have nothing to do with effective instruction. A number of universities have allowed bachelor and master degree interns to omit all the college teacher education classes and instead spend a year in a cooperating non-traditional school where the interns learn to teach (to facilitate) by "teaching" with supervision by master facilitators. Such alternatives programs are essential to prepare the leaders for schools of choice.

Desired too is the elimination of all the classes that have no impact on the facilitator-learner relationship. The conventional teacher education program may be appropriate for the traditional school—again which in the alternatives concept is just one of the "regular" choices— but there is a need for options in teacher education and credentialing, if the improvement of schools through alternatives is to become a reality.

As evidence, in 2002 the California teacher training programs were cited by the independent legislative analyst as being "in a mess." There were too many, they lacked coordination, they duplicated, and they were a bureaucratic nightmare—an "administrative quagmire." Fourteen years earlier, the Legislature tried to reform the system. One committee report stated: *"The current array of staff development activities and incentives has grown by accretion, without a clear vision, and remains largely unevaluated and unlikely to yield substantial improvement."* At the time, that state had eighteen different special training programs, added on to the already thirty-one separate colleges and universities granting "teacher education degrees."

If the author, with forty years experience, K-12 teaching and administrative certificates from six states, employment as a full professor and department chair of a university teacher education program, and hired consultant to conduct numerous school district and conference in-service teacher sessions were to apply for a California credential now, he would not qualify—the result of all the irrelevant "requirements" suddenly passed by the Legislature. Is it not time to rethink preparation for professional education—Pre-K through university?

Sally would certainly agree on the need to examine the preparation of teachers and judge the effectiveness of the traditional teaching/learning process. When her teacher reveals her art project evaluation, she muses:

"A 'C'? I got a 'C' on my coat-hanger sculpture?
How could anyone get a 'C' in coat-hanger sculpture?

She raises her hand and says to the teacher, "May I ask a question?"
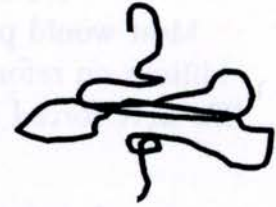
"Was I judged on the piece of the sculpture itself?
If so, is it not true that time alone can judge a piece of art?

"Or was I judged on my talent? If so, is it right that I be judged on a part of
life over which I have no control?

"If I was judged on my effort, then I was judged unfairly, for I tried as hard as
I could!

"Was I judged on what I had learned about this project? If so, then were not
you, my teacher, also being judged on your ability to transmit your knowledge to
me? Are you willing to share my 'C'?

"Perhaps I was being judged on the quality of the coat hanger itself out of
which my creation was made—now is this not also unfair? Am I to be judged by the
quality of the coat hangers used by the drycleaning establishment that returns our
garments? Is that not the responsibility of my parents? Should they not share my
'C'?"

The teacher agrees to re-consider the 'C.' Thus Sally smiles, and says:

"See, the squeaky wheel DOES get the grease!"[1]

The innovators of the 00s, 30s, and 1960s knew that incremental change in school districts
was never successful. They invented overnight radical new structures, and usually acted as
"benevolent dictators" by insisting on creating immediate and different designs. Where the
teachers were involved, understood, and supported the effort, wonderful models of learners as
teachers and teachers as learners and facilitators emerged. Unfortunately most of these sixties
"reforms" were eliminated when the innovative teachers had control taken away by replacement
tradition-oriented administrators, school boards, teachers, and legislative interference siding with
TRADITION! Initial efforts to renew schools were opposed by conventional teachers, were
rejected, or were accepted only incrementally—and therefore failed to gain a foothold.

As recently as October 2001, Joe Graba, former legislator, dean of education, and
director of the Minnesota Council on Quality Education re-surfaced these findings in a speech to
the Rotary Club of Minneapolis. He stated, in reviewing the failure of significant school
improvement:

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[1] *Classic Peanuts* (Charles Schulz)

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"We are part of the problem as we are products of the mainline system. Most would prefer that existing schools just get better...We have recently spent billions on reforms and teacher training and still have ended with the same schools. We were forced into incremental change, as the mainline customers and forces inside the system resisted radical change."

He cited that the Dayton department store chain realized they could not successfully change the Dayton image from inside. Therefore, they went "outside" and created a subsidiary—Target Stores—reporting directly to the corporate board. They were so successful that eventually the parent company changed—even its name. Concurrently, Montgomery Ward tried to change from within and went bankrupt; Sears and Penneys were not successful with the "inside model" and now are closing stores

Graba then concluded:

"I am now trying to convince schoolboards, superintendents, and teachers of the need for a revolution in public education. It is really tough...and has not been an easy journey for me, as I have many friends in the traditional structures. I am not critical of its people, but I am frank that the existing system cannot change itself—but such change is urgent."

If there is to be a new public education system, it will require the support and leadership of teachers. They cannot envision learning systems for the future if university teacher preparation, master and doctoral degree programs, and district inservice workshops continue a 20th century pattern. Teachers must be prepared differently and given leadership responsibilities.

Facilitators in such current alternatives programs as the Minnesota Area Learning Centers are potential models of how this can be achieved. However, they must be further removed from present legislative restrictions; their programs must be opened to all students—not just those who are "bad" by state law. They need to be allowed to imagineer—to move outside the box. There is a ray of hope. Goddard College in Plainfield Vermont represents one of several institutions modeling new approaches for the education of teacher-facilitators. Non-traditional alternatives programs need to hire staff from these few locations trying to lead the creation of schools for tomorrow today.

CHAPTER NINE

LEGAL CODES

Internationally, the legal codes, laws, and statutes regarding education vary tremendously among the many nations. These deviations are further affected by the continuum ranging from reasonably open, democratic governments as contrasted with those of totalitarian state regimes. Using the United States as one country for illustration, in most of the over fifty jurisdictions, there is no need for special legislation for the alternatives concept, though more flexibility for waivers, curriculum requirements, time allotments, and teacher credentialing would be desirable in each of the political entities.

The majority of the individual legislatures have mandated specific segmented subjects and minutes per week in the elementary schools, as in X number of minutes for reading, mathematics, physical education, science, and social studies. They have designated that such topics as state history and United States history must be taught at specific age levels. They have controlled the distribution of textbooks, transportation, and food service.

At the secondary level, the governing bodies have required certain courses, credits, and exit exams for graduation. They have established the length of the school day and school year, the administration of achievement tests at specific grade levels, the number of restrooms, and the required acreage for a school site. All these uniform patterns need to be modified.

Encouragingly though, **there are no legal codes mandating learning styles, desks, exploratory curriculum wheels, period 1-2-3 schedules, ABC report cards, reading at 9:00 AM versus 2:00 PM, the starting times of schools, self-contained classrooms versus teams, graded versus nongraded configurations, carpets versus hardwood floors, or group-paced rather than individualized instruction.** Controlling central administrations and powerful teacher unions are the barriers.

There is no legislation preventing interdependent curriculum approaches or the creation of suites and centers by cutting openings through classroom walls. There is nothing in the statutes to prevent "open space" facilities as opposed to box-design confined space. There are no codes to prevent schools-within-schools, magnet programs, open schools, research and development or laboratory schools, unit or mini-schools, programs-in-a-school, academies, environmentally focused programs, British infant school models, or open classrooms, among the many other currently in vogue—or yet to be invented—optional approaches. Dozens of programs of choice can be offered by all districts based upon learning styles of students, teaching styles of faculty, and administrative and site council options at an

individual school campus. If the concept of **alternatives for everyone all the time** is *accepted*, multiple choices can be implemented in most communities.

Adopting a philosophy of **"EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES"** and not **"ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION"** is the key to public schools of choice. **This reflects the religion model, where the acceptance of diverse approaches to worshipping by the community is analogous to the acceptance of diverse approaches to learning.** Education does not need to be mandated as to style. Specific outcomes may be required—though requiring may not lead to the achievement desired—but school boards **already have the authority** to create innovative, different, interest-oriented choices for those districts and schools wanting to move beyond the conventional uniform system. Administrators can maintain an excellent, high quality traditional program as one option for those who decide to pursue that mode as their regular attendance school or as their program-within-a-school. **OVERSIMPLIFYING IN POLITICALLY UNDERSTOOD TERMS, THE SCHOOL BOARDS CAN NOW CREATE SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER AND ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT LEARNING SYSTEMS**—ranging from slight variations in conventional approaches, moderate differentiations for those who prefer movement away from uniformity, to flexible models for those who wish to create non-traditional approaches now while exploring learning systems for the future.

This philosophy does not affect most alternative education codes, or immediately force change in the majority of the legislation regarding special education, continuation, opportunity, pregnant minor, drop-out prevention, at-risk, independent study, gifted and talented, charter, or other existing programs. Many of these function—whether for high achieving or low achieving youth—under the concept of *alternative education*. The authorizations or requirements, though, now can be housed under a much larger umbrella in the districts which **embrace alternatives for everyone all the time**, rather than **alternative education for the few.**

As to existing specific alternatives authority, each state has different "can" and "cannot" do permissions and restrictions. Educational leaders in every geographical jurisdiction should explore the possibilities. The California Code is presented only as one example. It must also be remembered that new legislation can be created if needed to enhance alternatives, if approached within **political realities.** This illustrative legislation was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

In California, *Education Code* (EC) 58500 is quite clear. It states: *"The governing board of any school district may establish and maintain one or more alternative schools within the district."* The code defines "alternative school" as a school or separate class group within a school, operated in a manner designed to achieve the following:

1. *Maximize the opportunity for students to develop the positive values of self-reliance, initiative, kindness, spontaneity, resourcefulness, courage, creativity, responsibility, and joy.*

2. *Recognize that the best learning occurs when the student learns because of a desire to learn.*

3. *Maintain a learning situation maximizing student self-motivation, and encouraging students on their own time to follow their interests, which may be conceived totally*

and independently by the student or may result in whole or part from a presentation of learning projects by teachers of choice.

4. *Maximize the opportunity for teachers, parents, and students to develop the learning process and the subject matter cooperatively through continuous permanent methods.*

5. *Maximize the opportunity for students, teachers, and parents to react continuously to the changing world, including but not limited to, the community in which the school is located.*

California *Education Code* 58502 **particularly authorizes interested persons to request the governing board of the district to establish alternative school programs.** A copy of this information must be posted in at least two places normally visible to pupils, teachers, and parents in each attendance unit for the entire month of March each year. Further, *Education Code* 58503 states that teachers and students shall be selected entirely from volunteers. *EC* 58504 states that previous classroom performance shall not be a criterion limiting any student from the opportunity to attend an alternative. *EC* 58505 clarifies that the alternative program may be established in each attendance area, or on a district-wide basis with enrollment open to all students.

Further, *EC* 58507 states that alternatives shall be operated in a manner to maximize the opportunity for improvement of the general school curriculum by **innovative** methods and ideas developed within the alternative school operation, and to **improve** the general level of education. Additionally, the alternative must be maintained and funded by the school district at the same level of support as other educational programs for children of the same age levels operated by the district. *EC* 58508 prohibits racial, gender, or ethnic discrimination in the operation of alternative schools.

EC 58509 provides that, upon application by a district, **the State Superintendent of Public Instruction may waive any provisions of the education code other than those pertaining to earthquake safety and the provisions of the alternatives chapter.** *EC* 58510 requires each district to evaluate annually the school or program including testing for basic skills and identifying variables that may have affected student achievement. The process shall include evaluation also by the teachers, parents, and students. Finally, *EC* 58512 authorizes the governing board to provide in whole or part for transportation to the alternative selected, or the board may pay the parents or guardians for actual transportation costs provided the total state apportionment for transportation is not increased by the operation of alternatives.

Other Education Code sections do relate to and somewhat affect alternative programs. In the establishment of alternatives, schools and districts must be cognizant of these potential enhancers, barriers, or considerations. *EC* 44865 further outlines the qualifications for teachers. *EC* 33400 adds clarification to the process of evaluation. *EC* 32255 relates to animal protection from harm during alternative projects. *EC* 52900 cites the qualifications for outreach consultants who might be considered for contract to assist the implementation or development of the planned alternative. *EC* 48209 defines the possible transfer of a student from a home district to one which might have an alternative school of choice. *EC* 35160.5 clarifies state regulations on open enrollment and apportionment. Finally, *EC* 47600 details the criteria for establishing a charter

school, should a district or community members desire to consider this special form of an alternative. Each of these additional Education Codes may or may not affect the implementation of an optional school or program considered for the home district. However, they must be reviewed before a final governing board decision related to the establishment of an "alternative school" under *EC 58500*.

The legal codes of the state of California not only permit but **encourage the establishment of choices for parents, students, and teachers**. Educational alternatives with volunteers and diverse learning styles can be created by districts under existing legislation. If deviation is desired, even the "Alternative Education" codes provide for a multitude of options regardless of the "name" applied to the concept of choice within school districts. **It is clear that a decision to create alternatives is endorsed by the legal provisions of the** *Education Code of the State of California.*

The other American jurisdictions, and those countries on the international scene may have more permissive or more restrictive education codes pertaining to options. The California example proves it is possible to work with the local and national governments to add, subtract, modify, enhance the learning codes to enable schools to follow the church model of choice rather than the prison model of uniformity. **The development of alternatives for everyone all the time is possible throughout the democratic world.**

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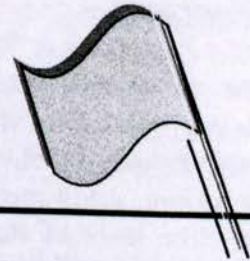
NOTES AND BRIEFS:

Your State Codes........

CHAPTER TEN

CONSEQUENCES OF ONE-SIZE

In the past, the consequences of failing to provide an "alternative" were most always portrayed as negative—usually related to the effect on low-achieving, discipline-difficult, or emotionally-challenged students, or to the expense of educating a youth in school compared with later incarceration in prison. The new concept of "alternatives" looks beyond the *negative* to the potential for *positive* outcomes through optional programs for those who volunteer. The conventional formats prevalent in most districts—whether for low, middle, or high achieving students—all become choices, rather than mandated or very limited structures. However, the current options do not fit everyone; more significant programs are required.

If uniformity is not replaced by diversity, the negative ramifications for most states and the students, families, businesses, and communities served could mushroom exponentially. The traditional system fails thousands of students each year, leading to serious dropout rates in many districts. Further, low reading and math skill test scores hovering between the twentieth and fiftieth percentiles are compounded in numerous neighborhoods by the language barriers.

Conversely, the increasing numbers of achieving youth and families selecting home-based education at all age levels, and the totals of older students who leave school through passing general equivalency diploma (GED) tests attest to the problems. Ironically, many of these equivalency students enter community college courses which they find much more interesting and meaningful—even on traditional campuses—than the irrelevant (to them) mandated high school classes; **they do better in college than they did in high school.** The growth of private schools, despite the drain on the finances of less affluent families, and the truancy figures in many attendance areas are a sad indictment of **public district failures to provide meaningful learning and evaluation alternatives.**

Further deterioration is evidenced by the increase in less qualified personnel in many schools, the often poor physical condition of the facilities, and the glaring need for repairs. Fifty percent of those entering teaching as a career do not stay in education more than five years, partly the result of the inadequate screening processes in the universities, and partly the restrictions on individual teacher creativity in traditional school settings. This uniform system cannot be working well, reflected by the thirty percent who receive unsatisfactory, below average, or failure evaluation ratings on their report cards, joined by the forty percent who receive only a "C" grade point average. Seventy percent of the millions of students represents "the tragedy of education." The majority of those with 3.0 or 4.0 grade averages, or "outstanding" on primary level report cards are often not excited, or would like to study something other than what has been prescribed by adults with little input from the students. Worse is the fact that the numbers graduating in four years—especially urban youth of color—have not improved in spite of Herculean efforts.

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Even more important is the concern that the **uniform treatment of students fails to recognize the human condition in the affective and psychomotor domains. Numerous elementary age youth need physical education, "at a given moment," more than reading or math,** to promote better coordination, posture, strength, and nutrition. Such assistance should be from the best-trained physical education specialists who know how to individualize programs, not from self-contained teachers, many of whom never exercise. The increase in the recognition of students with environmental illness is dramatic; their conditions make it impossible to function effectively in a traditional classroom of twenty or thirty. Toxic art supplies, fungus and mold, dust, formaldehyde, asbestos, lead, milk, wheat, peanuts, and sugar are among the many hazards leading to unsafe reactions which can cause students to perform poorly or react with behavior outbursts. **The percentages of youth with such illnesses, diabetes, or similar health factors, further complicate the search for solutions**—not to mention the sad use of ritalin by four million school children to control behavior! Ritalin is more potent than cocaine and can cause brain damage. Learning alternatives can assist with this issue.

The consequences of not more effectively addressing the failure dilemmas lead to negative school outcomes and increasing costs in human development and fiscal resources. Conversely, the already high achieving youth may blossom far beyond their present potential—often now limited by schooling traditions—if they are offered *options*. Even the "C" students could opt for choices they would find more rewarding than the conventional classroom and curriculum. The low achieving youth and their families could select formats holding far greater promise for positive outcomes. This latter group has not been successful in the conventional school environment; **the chances of ever achieving significant improvement through conditions which have already created failure are, at most, minimal.** The environmentally ill children can receive better support and be housed in protective learning climates.

Alternatives have the potential to reverse the decline in education and return this field of endeavor to a status of importance (beyond test score accountability). If the districts adopt multiple options for all, students can find paths to enhance their abilities. Excellent teachers can stay with the system and bring creativity, passion, innovation, and improvement to their selected learning environments.

Diversity does surface contrasting views from students, families, and community members who participate in programs of choice, but this is healthy in a democratic society. The following are from reviews of actual schools and have been documented in publications. Here, School "A," one of the alternatives, is described by a recent transfer student. Then School "A" is contrasted with School "B"—the conventional format, by a mother of a daughter enrolled in School B. Finally, the benefit of School "A" is described by a community member. The negative consequences of not providing both "A" and "B" programs as schools-of-choice are readily observable—or conversely, **the positive consequences of options are crystal clear.**

Experiencing School "A"—by a High School Student

It is important to realize that the student body at School A represents a cross-section of the community. Within the school, I had friends ranging in age from preschool to college students to the regular teaching staff. My studies included African history, Kite-making, and Law and Ethics...experiences not often found in traditional high schools. Before I came to School A, I had spent a very unhappy year in a traditional high school—hiding out in bathrooms

to escape classes, lying to my teachers, pretending illness...all of the old tricks familiar to students everywhere, except, perhaps, those fortunate few able to attend a site like "A" for all of their school years. I was ready to give up altogether, but the experimental program, based on the principle of providing a humane and positive learning environment for each student, gave me a new interest in my own education.

In the process of doing a research project on School A, I interviewed some teachers, and found that the school was a very different place for them, too. A social studies instructor pointed out that a teacher cannot simply sit back and wait for the students to take the initiative in the learning process, even though they do all the choosing. "I found that you had to continue building relationships if you wanted the students to be interested in studying with you," he said. In this way, respect for student opinion is built into the system. The best thing about School "A" may be its great variety, and the relationships that are formed among individuals.

School "B" vs. School "A"—by a School "B" Parent/Reporter

"The goal of the "School B" school system is to develop good citizens to live in a democratic society." (From the School "B" Handbook for Students)

Conversely, "It is our intent that by providing students with opportunities to make decisions that have an effect upon them, they will grow into value-choosing, self-directing adults." (From an introductory brochure on School "A")

At School "B" there are required classes, bells, and letter grades. Absences from school must be excused. The dress code, emphasized in the handbook, suggests "good taste, decency, safety, and health." Respect for authority is the key to the structure of the traditional system of education. The handbook says: "We expect School 'B' students to be respectful at all times." At School "A," the brochure directly states: "There are no dress codes, no bells, no required classes, and no letter grades; attendance is optional." The advisory system is the key to the structure of the open school; at School "A" it is the primary means by which students receive adult supervision and guidance. One responsibility of the advisor is "to develop a close, personal relationship with each advisee and her/his parents," according to the brochure.

My daughter is a ninth grade student at School "B." One day in October, I attended several of her classes. The following week, we visited "School "A." Both provided students a variety of enrichment courses and activities. The most obvious difference between the two schools was the climate created by the respective approaches to learning. The following are the impressions resulting from a brief immersion in these environments.

School B Report

The structural design of the traditional school makes more visible those few who, for whatever reason, do not conform. The handbook forbids the use of obscene language. My daughter and several girlfriends gather in their homeroom to await the first bell. I find a seat apart from the girls. A boy enters the room. As he passes slowly before the gaze of his audiences, he pronounces, in a monotone, a string of obscenities. One of the girls pushes him through the opposite door. In a few minutes, he is back to repeat his performance.

The handbook states: "Public display of affection between boys and girls is not acceptable." As the students move through the corridors, a youthful couple, on occasion, separate themselves from the crowd; the boy, awkwardly and tentatively, places his hand on the small of the girl's back.

The handbook says nothing about loneliness. Each time I enter the restroom that day, I see the same girl standing there—alone. In a soft voice, she introduces herself, and we talk for a little while. Between classes, as students shift to other rooms, the corridors are filled with sounds of laughter, conversation, and the slams of hastily closed locker doors. The bell rings and, then, for another hour, there is quiet throughout the building.

School A Report

The intent of the open school structure is to provide for the needs of a community of individuals. In such a setting, conformity becomes a meaningless word. Students pass in the corridor, two or three at a time. Several boys and girls of various elementary school ages are gathered at tables in the snack bar. Another group of children seated in an open area is watching the film, Outward Bound. Despite the absence of dress codes at "A," we notice no striking difference in appearance between "A" and "B" students.

The preschoolers are busy in their center. Some are piling huge building blocks up high and then knocking them down. Others are finger painting at a low table. As we continue our tour through "Bach's Box," (music center), and "The Lion's Den," (English and math focus), my daughter observes: "I can't believe what I'm seeing and hearing. Boys and girls are actually working and playing together without name-calling and teasing." A friendly student leads us to a table in the snack bar. She is a sixteen-year-old who has been at School "A" since fourth grade. I ask her about the advisory system. She explains that her major areas of interest, which she would like to continue at college, are music and physical education. Her advisor, whom she had selected from members of the faculty, is the football coach. Remembering the brochure, I ask if "close, personal relationships" really do develop between the advisor and advisee. "Yes," she replies, "they really do." Two other students, a teenage boy and girl who have joined us, agree with their friend. My daughter and I pass an open door and pause to listen to a woman's voice, The square roots you will need to know are 4, 9, 16,... " There has been a steady, but moderate, level of noise throughout the day, with no bells marking units of time. Students learn without conformity.

School A: One Community Member Observation: How School "A" Assists the County Juvenile Court—by a Probation Officer

School "A" has been of incalculable value to the County Juvenile Court. The Probation Department has found that certain youth, largely through no fault of their own, do not fit into the conventional school program; very often they have been battered emotionally. It is extremely difficult for a person who has been raised in a home wherein the "normal" upbringing occurs, to see and to understand the inner feelings of many of these youths. The difficult cases very often, as many social workers can attest, come from homes within which emotional turmoil reigns, resulting in varying degrees of disrupted lives. We believe that School "A" provides the

very often, as many social workers can attest, come from homes within which emotional turmoil reigns, resulting in varying degrees of disrupted lives. We believe that School "A" provides the emotional as well as the educational atmosphere most conducive to healing as well as learning— a therapeutic climate—in addition to the conventional education benefits. **I do not know what we would do in our efforts to assist these youths to reconstruct their futures, without this resource in our community.**

Summary

For most students, traditional schooling has transformed learning from one of the most rewarding of human activities into acceptance of boring, dulling, fragmenting, mind-shrinking, and/or painfully soul-shriveling experiences.

One-size uniformity has led to a need for "Damage Limitation: Reducing the Harm Schools do to Children," the title of an incisive article by Roland Meighan. Though there are excellent educators who attempt to create a humane environment, restrictions and regulations force overall submission to an anti-democratic political (not learning) system. Consequently, the long-term effect of mass compulsory, coercive, uniform schooling is damaging for the great majority. Meighan states that his first principle for parents is never to pretend to their children that the school is right when it is wrong.

Don Glines has continually stated his belief that the required traditional 7th year programs are "awful" for most young people. He recommends that if one can find or create a caring elementary age site, the staff should flunk all sixth graders and keep them in this warm environment! They will not miss out on cognitive growth if they avoid conventional 7th-8th grade rituals. If youngsters are forced into a traditional structure, their parents, relatives, and friends should ensure that the affective domain is nurtured through love, encouragement, and trips to fun learning sites and free centers (parks). They can assure the child that failure to do homework will not limit growth and development. Conventional schooling is filled with toxins; students should have—through alternatives—the opportunity to strengthen their immune systems by selecting non-toxic, "organic," utopian education environments.

The concept of choice has been discussed each decade of the past one hundred years. Now the 21st century—which not long ago appeared to be only a mystical entity on the horizon—is well-entrenched. The implementation of learning alternatives for everyone has the potential not only to reverse the declining status of education, but more importantly **to return the field to a pedestal of honor.** The decisions related to options made by schools and districts can have major negative or positive consequences for students, teachers, families, and communities; the positives can pave the way toward a golden age in education.

Most of us who have tried to apply startling, delightful, neglected research, student-centered innovations, and well-designed change processes in the public schools over the past five decades, if honest, would have to admit we have failed; it would seem to be impossible to create significant, holistic alternatives within the traditional system of schooling. Most frustrating is that we have not tried to change every school, but have only advocated the implementation of same-cost diverse choices of learning/living styles. In spite of multiple and varied proposals, the controlling majority has refused to relinquish the one-size-fits-all mentality. Everyone must belong to the same church (school), for there is only one "correct" way to worship (learn); families certainly cannot be agnostic, for their children are required to fulfill their twelve-year sentence. The fortunate ones can escape to private schools, home schooling, at-risk individualized centers, or even drop out by passing equivalency exams. For the unfortunate majority, through alternatives,

it is time to do the impossible.

Don Glines

EDUCATIONAL ENIGMAS

"Democracy means the absence of
domination: whilst our model of schooling
is riddled with domination, we are
clearly on the wrong track, assuming
that is, that we actually believe in
democracy."

Nelson Mandela

"I believe that the computer
presence will enable us to so
modify the learning environment
outside the classroom that much,
if not all, of the knowledge
schools presently try to teach with
such pain and expense and such
limited success will be learned as
the child learns to walk,
painlessly, successfully, and
without organized instruction."

Seymour Papert
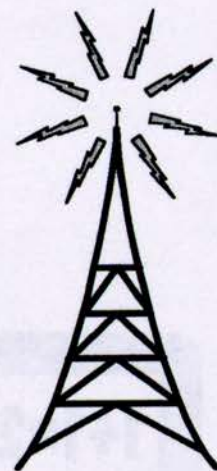
PROGRESS!!

A Mother's Letters to a Schoolmaster

"We, the State, have for a hundred years, gathered our children together in school, from all classes of society, upon a common ground, for a common purpose, and then have rested our case for a democratic education upon the self-satisfied assumption that this democracy of intent is sufficient, even final. We have allowed it to presuppose a democracy applied, practiced, and produced!

"We must be rid of this vanity. An honest analysis will show that the school as a democratic institution has progressed no further than a decree of compulsory attendance."

Rita Sherman
1923

Letter to a Teacher

1+1=2
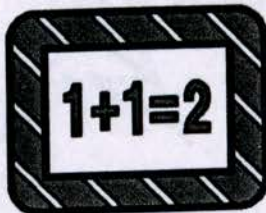
"School is a war against the poor."

...The Schoolboys of Barbiana
1970

PART B

LEARNING ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PRESENT

"Children should not be troubled with the mechanics of reading until they are about ten years of age. Until then they should be engaged in collecting a wide range of experiences of the world and in purposive conversation and debate, to develop their powers of critical thinking. In modern psychological terms, they should develop deep learning of understanding before the shallow learning of mechanical operations."

Robert Owen

"The age of seven may be appropriate to begin reading for most. The current orthodoxy is to start much earlier, ignoring the evidence that this risks early failure, feelings of inadequacy, and a general reaction against learning."

Rudolf Steiner

"The founding principle of critical literacy...must be to develop understanding of the nature of democracy itself, of the duties it lays on us, and the rights we may then claim; the two are inseparable. But the great majority of readers, insofar as they read at all, go round and round, wooed on to that carousel of repetitive rubbish ceaselessly operated by the two-syllabled press and the stereotyped paperbacks."

Richard Hoggart

"The research is clear. Most children learn to read somewhere between ages three and eleven—and up to fourteen. When learning is individualized and personalized, humane schools can easily provide for developmental differences. This is where home schooling parents have a huge advantage over the uniform one-size-fits-all-ages curriculum of the traditional school. Children read when they are ready."

Don Glines

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OPTIONS RATIONALE

"When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies. To surrender dreams—this may be the madness—and the maddest of all—to see life as it is and not as it should be."

Don Quixote (Miguel Cervantes)

This man of La Mancha fought the windmills. At the time of his death, the score was **Windmills 1, Quixote 0**—but there was still the last of the ninth. The hope remained that those batting for Quixote in the final inning could tie or overcome the windmills of bureaucracy perpetuated by tradition, inertia, and political expedience.

Fortunately many have continued to battle the traditional structures of compulsory, uniform schooling. Unfortunately, though isolated persons and programs have had temporary success, their victories have not won the war for the majority, as students do not have true choices. They are limited to "at-risk," "gifted," or career-oriented options. The "regular" achieving, well-behaving youth seldom have a voice in choosing their learning styles, schedules, or classes. A selection of Spanish, French, or an alternate elective for an hour a day does not meet the criteria of *alternatives for everyone.* Private or home-based schooling is not available to most families.

One could go back centuries reviewing the histories of leaders who have tried to renew the schools; examples from the 20th decades validate the statement. These individuals were terribly critical of conventional patterns, but other than forms of private or home schooling, usually offered only uniform change of the existing system; they seldom understood the concept of alternatives for everyone. However, they did lay a solid foundation in clearly denoting what is wrong with traditional education for many youth, and gave credence to the need for non-traditional options for the majority of youth.

One of the whistleblowers who attempted to re-direct education at the turn of the 20th century was **Margaret McMillan,** who spent much of her life trying to affect the schools in England. Her 1904 book, *Education through Imagination* (ironically a futurist theme in 2004), was described by **Rudolf Steiner** (Waldorf Schools) as a "treasure chamber of precious observations concerning the child's soul." She led the campaign for school meals (enacted in 1906) and in 1908 opened the first school clinic. In her 1911 book, *The Child and the State*, she criticized the establishment for concentrating on preparing children for monotonous unskilled work, **arguing instead for a broad and humane education**. Later she led the nursery school

movement. **George Bernard Shaw** described her as *"not only one of the best women of her time and in her orbit, but one of the most cantankerous—a useful quality."* McMillan was also acclaimed for proving what individuals can do to make an appreciable difference in consumer politics—that one need not merely sit back and wait for the government to take constructive action. She focused on deep purposes and wider destinies for the human race.

In the 1960s **John Holt joined the advocacy of A.S. Neill of the Summerhill School** in suggesting that the students should have complete freedom to choose how, when, and from whom they wanted to learn. Joining them in critiquing the schools was **Paul Goodman** who wrote in *Compulsory Miseducation* and *Growing Up Absurd* that compelling children to attend school is not the best use of their youth, and that education is more a community function than an institutional one.

During this period, the nationally recognized **Mankato Wilson public laboratory school** at Minnesota State University, copying many of the findings of the *Eight-Year Study*, implemented the ideas of Holt, Goodman, and Neill. Led by **Don Glines**, this K-12 and college program had no required classes, graduation requirements, homework, textbooks, courses, report cards, or schedules. Optional attendance, open campus, and "the world as the classroom" components were among the choices 365 days a year. It was considered the most experimental **public** school of its time and proved beyond doubt that the **written theories** of the **critics** of traditional schools were correct; they worked in practical reality with a cross-section of diverse students. **Wayne Jennings** developed a similar public school of choice at the **St. Paul MN Open School.**

Holt became the most prolific writer of the era. In *Why Children Fail* he observed that forcing children to learn makes them unnaturally self-conscious about learning, and stifles their initiative and creativity by making them focus on how to please the teachers and the schools with the answers they will reward best, a situation that creates "fake learning." Later, in *Freedom and Beyond*, Holt wrote that people, even children, are educated much more by the whole society around them than they are by what happens in schools.

In 1971, **Ivan Illich** wrote in *Deschooling Society* that school serves a deep social function by firmly maintaining the status quo of social class for the majority of students. Schools view education as a commodity they sell, rather than as a life-long process they can aid, and this creates a substance that is used to judge people unfairly—preventing them from assuming roles they would be qualified for with the "proper credentials." In 1972, **Everett Reimer** (*School Is Dead*), an associate of Illich, visited the Mankato Wilson program. He stated, "If you have to attend a school, this is the best one I have seen." Successful renewal is possible.

At the turn of the 21st Century, the most exciting critique of the traditional schools and the need not only for renewal but for alternatives has come from **Roland Meighan** of Nottingham, England. He has been a true "vice-president for heresy" in calling attention to the numbers of students the conventional schooling structures fail. Perhaps the most practical yet inspiring message with a 2001 print date was his little book, *Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum*. His formula for a natural curriculum is simple: **anybody, any age; any time, any place; any pathway, any pace.** *Natural Learning* clearly defines the rationale for options, curriculum in a flexible school, changes in traditional schools, the merits of home schooling as a learning alternative, and the roles of parents, students, and educators in not just reform, but in creating new learning systems for the future. In a few simple pages, Meighan provides the treatise for learning alternatives.

Another major turn of the century influence has been the efforts of **Ron Miller of Vermont, founder of the Foundation for Educational Renewal**. His emphasis continues to be holistic education concepts, as clearly stated in the *Paths of Learning* journal and the Holistic Education Press publications. His classic, *What Are Schools For?* also provides the foundation for learning alternatives, while his 2002 book *Free Schools, Free Society* documents the efforts of education critics in the 60s and 70s to move away from "compulsory mis-education."

Both **Meighan** and **Miller** believe that education in a democracy means working with people who have choices. An imposed curriculum denies people their right to choose and select their own learning plans. **Hitler and Stalin** required a national curriculum with all its trimmings—as did the pre-World War II rulers in Japan. **A democracy is supposed to be different, tolerating variety, diversity, and choices while observing human rights.** In return, learners have a responsibility to ensure behavior that will respect and protect the rights of others— thus alternatives in education.

Earlier, **Paulo Friere** recognized that traditional "schooling" removes people from their families, communities, society, and nature to prepare them for jobs in the corporate/factory/industrial world. **John Holt** promoted that people learn all the time—not just in school. **Peter Drucker** drew attention to the emerging age of information, which requires life-long learning. **Margaret Mead** and her twenty-four hour society concepts also supported the notion that home schooling can provide a superior education when compared with a bureaucratic school system.

Research studies, opinions, quotations, insightful analysis, and sage advice abound related to a rationale for more options for learning. They range from the simple to the complex, but they all move together. Large numbers of the population are ready for changes and alternatives in education. For example, a 2001 poll in England commissioned by the Campaign for Learning group found that 90% of the adults were favorably inclined towards further learning for themselves—in the right environment. The bad news is that 75% of them said they were unhappy and alienated in the school environment, and therefore they preferred to learn at home, in the library, at work—anywhere other than a school-type setting. Such surveys resurface classics like *The Saber-Tooth Curriculum* (**Harold Benjamin**, 1939) which 60 years earlier described irrelevant school studies.

They also reflect many similar stories of the animals and birds who decided to create a school. In one, those gathered determined the core subjects for study would include climbing, flying, running, swimming, and digging, but they could not agree on which was most important. Therefore, everyone had to do everything—in case they needed these things in the future. As might be expected, the rabbits were expert at running, but failed swimming. The eagles were terrific at flying, but failed digging—and had to enroll in remedial digging classes. The moles could dig but not fly. And on goes the story… **Roland Meighan** notes how they could have solved the dilemma by adopting natural curriculums tailored to the wide diversities in the school. Unfortunately, **the concept of a uniform program for all transforms learning from one of the most natural and rewarding of all human activities into an unnatural, fear-laden, and often alienating experience.**

Related to *The Saber-Tooth Curriculum* descriptions and the animal school stories, John Holt presents in *The Underachieving School* the interpretation modeled by the traditionally imposed curriculum: **"Your experiences, your concerns, your hopes, your fears, your desires, your interests—they count for nothing. What counts is what WE (adult authority) are**

interested in, what WE care about, and what WE have decided you are to learn." Police cars are used to round up truants who are alienated by the **adult-we-know-best compulsory attendance,** schedules, age level separations, and inappropriate curriculum. It is little wonder **Nelson Mandela** asked why we tolerate a totalitarian-style domination-riddled system of learning heavily rooted in fear—while a democratic system is characterized by an absence of domination.

To track and promote all the current national, and many international, efforts to create options for learning, **Jerry Mintz** created AERO—the **Alternative Education Resource Organization.** His *Almanac of Educational Alternatives* provides the most comprehensive directory of sites, choices, and individuals available in the United States—with contact addresses for persons, organizations, and schools in numerous countries. Denmark, Russia, England, Israel, Germany, Japan, Argentina, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, and Mexico represent interest in alternatives internationally. The AERO quarterly publication, *Education Revolution,* continually updates international developments, and the AERO data-base offers ongoing lists of leaders and programs for learning alternatives.

In developing research experiments to find better ways, it is clear that educators do not know how to educate children in a complex and changing world. If the process were known, there would be no need for further research. Unfortunately most of the investigations now are just an effort to try to find "useful clues." **If the traditional uniform schools knew how to educate, there would be no D and F grades and the "gifted" would not be bored.**

The case for options away from compulsory uniform structures overwhelmingly supports a rationale calling for flexible learning systems. The original concept of "school" reflected a **voluntary association of learners asking questions and seeking the truth.** *Educational Alternatives for Everyone* proposes the expansion of choices of learning styles and content—away from the conventional model—for all who care to create non-traditional environments.
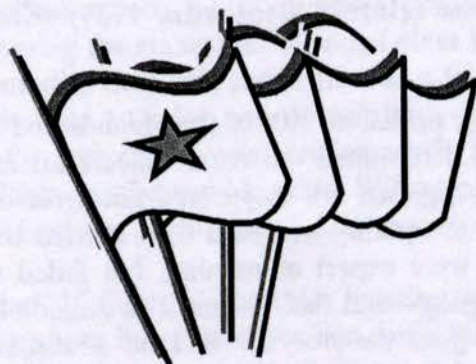
ALTERNATIVES INTERNATIONAL

CHAPTER TWELVE

CHOICE METHODS

Schooling is wrong. Learning is right. Education is wrong when a uniform structured marine/prison style regimentation is forced upon everyone in the same manner. "Schooling" may be acceptable to some, but for the majority, more "learning" alternatives are required to meet the preferences of the greater number of students.

In a beautiful autobiography of his life and career, nationally recognized education leader and curriculum specialist, William Van Til, wrote in *My Way of Looking at It* the following description of his early learning experiences.

> "Flushing High rote taught me. School was a place where you gave them back the facts they told you. School had nothing to do with living, thinking, feeling...and as for the teachers, I jumped through the hoops they set before me, except for math...where I sprawled. What little education I received during my high school years I owed to the public libraries."

The mechanisms of changing public schools (and private too if they desire)—in structure, content, assessment, and even philosophy—are easy to accomplish; they are no more difficult than falling off the proverbial log. **It is the politics involved that prevents significant change**.

Conventional parents and teachers who support one-size-fits-all schooling think the answer for **everyone** is to improve the quality of the teachers and require more rigorous basics. *Entrenched school board members, control-minded superintendents, army-style principals, and benefits-oriented teachers—when attacked—merge to create a monopoly and maintain the status quo.* They form the majority of those who "vote" or "decide" issues in the community, district, school. They block sensible, research-based change.

A simple illustration is the grade level concept—grade 1, grade 2, grade 7, grade 10. There is no research to support such a structure. All the research available indicates that is the worst way to organize for instruction, yet the system remains, blocked from renewal by the power brokers. Related to age levels, retention has been proven to be wrong, grade level sports are physiologically wrong, grade level standards are wrong, grade level assessments are wrong—the list goes on to infinity.

The self-contained classroom is not the best practice, nor are separate subjects and courses, departmentalized curriculum, or uniform requirements. The opportunity for significant

improvement appears to be a lost cause. The hope is to enlist a "critical mass"—not the majority but large enough to be heard—with demands for options, choices, alternatives. The key is to mount pressure for a win-win philosophy. Illustrating with year-round education, if 51% want to continue nine-month September to June calendars they should have that selection. However, the other 49% should be provided the opportunity for continuous learning twelve-month calendars. Most districts are win-lose—thus the 51% "stomps" the 49—the opponents really "stomp" if they win 70-30. A win-win district would cite how beautiful that 51% of the families can be helped by remaining on the agrarian calendar, while 49% can benefit from year-round learning schedules and opportunities

Dr. Morrel Clute, former national curriculum leader and professor at Wayne State University, often lamented the long-range outcomes of **a significant pilot in Detroit** in the early 60s to provide better programs for "non-conforming" teenagers. Students from the inner city who had failed junior high were given the chance to proceed to the high school if they did well in a special summer study program at Wayne State, which included transportation and meals. The first day, the staff asked those who enrolled what they wanted to learn. The youth were smart; no one responded. This continued for three days, as they did not want to do "schooling" assignments. Finally, after much boredom and sitting quietly, a student challenged the staff and spoke out: **"We want to learn about sex."**

The communication line was opened. What did they want to know about sex and why? Their responses were strong. "We live in an environment with drug pushers, pimps, prostitutes, and vice. We want to know more about these conditions." Soon the "curriculum" was established with daily flexible scheduling. The **sociology** aspect was paramount, as was human **psychology**. **Health** issues and **home economics** were involved, **science** through the drugs used, **political science** and **citizenship** via the laws and efforts of the police. Students read about these topics, did **math** related to the individual and societal costs, conducted for **English** audio interviews, and kept written journals. **Art** was involved through street murals and drawings of the children. It was a wonderful display of **integrated, interrelated curriculum that was relevant to the students**. They all received As and Bs and were promoted to the high schools.

Sadly, the follow-up studies revealed the worst. **The Detroit schools did not learn.** They again placed the students into required English with an assigned teacher to learn "split infinitives" and all that "stuff," world history with no immediate significance, and math out of the textbook via period 1-2-3 schedules. The students fell back into the pattern of rejecting irrelevancy; they received poor grades. Some became discipline problems again, and many moved toward dropout status. The Detroit system would not even hire a former Peace Corps worker who had spent two years in Africa, was a university intern in this summer project—who was wonderful with the students and had a degree in geography—because he had not taken "Methods of Teaching Social Studies." If ever a case study proved the need for learning alternatives, this 1960s project at Wayne State removed any doubt.

It has been known for decades that the 7th and 8th grades are a waste of time for most students. In one Fordham University study, volunteers were guaranteed admission to Fordham even if they skipped those two years entirely. Participants did as well in college after **four** years of secondary school as others who had suffered through that "awful 7th-8th grade syndrome" and **six** years of secondary school. **At the Wilson School, Minnesota State University, when all requirements, K-12, were removed, students created their own studies. The students who deviated most** from the standard curriculum requirements were the 7th, followed by the 8th, and then the 6th "graders." They knew the regimentation of previous courses was wrong. When a

follow-up study determined **which were most engaged in learning** activities, the 7th grade led, followed by the 8th, and then the 6th. They wanted to learn—and learn they did—but not the irrelevant requirements and programs of the traditional junior high/middle school patterns.

Any discussion of rationale and methods related to learning alternatives must include reference to Black Mountain College—a true alternative learning experiment in education. A 600-acre rural campus in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Black Mountain, North Carolina, Black Mountain College was a unique experience. **Centered on the arts and creativity with a focus on the individual, the student was pulled into an intensive self-directed education in living, learning, and creating.** Though in existence only from 1933 to 1956, it was a magnet for artistic and academic pioneers, and was a free-form pressure cooker for new ideas and concepts.

Black Mountain was a school of rebels that attracted rebels. Joseph Albers here advanced his color theory, Buckminster Fuller built his first geodesic dome, Robert Harshenberg made paintings with shadows, John Cage composed music with silence, and Merce Cunningham began to revolutionize modern dance. It was a search for freedom that attracted a handful of radical educators and European dissidents. **Founder John Rice believed tradition-bound education imprisoned potential and that classrooms were a poor atmosphere for learning and living.**

All educational alternatives leaders should read and learn of the 23 years of Black Mountain. Two books, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* by Mary Harris and *Black Mountain—An Exploration in Community* by Martin Duberman, should be on the agenda when planning methods for programs of choice.

In expanding optional choices, envisioning is required. Following is just one example of a different learning system. It is not intended as the approach for everyone to follow; rather its citation is to serve as a catalyst for communities to create new and better learning options.

One Learning Alternatives System

Organization

1. During the transition, the learning system would be community-and world-based. There would be no required hours. Students, even the very young, would spend time outside the building in appropriate settings.

2. The learning system would provide continuous year-round, full-day programming to meet the educational, recreational, work-related, and child-care needs of students and parents; it would operate either at a site or in the community 365 days.

3. Learners of traditional school age would mix with preschoolers, parents, college students, family members, and senior citizens; there would be no separations into elementary and secondary schools. The programs and facilities would truly accommodate learning from birth to death.

4. Everyone would share the same staff, facilities, equipment, and interest areas. There would be no grade 1, no grade 7, and no "sophomore" literature classes.

5. No one would be marked for special, gifted, bilingual, or compensatory education; no one would be classified as at risk or as a member of a racial or ethnic minority, nor would anyone be deemed too old to go to "school."

6. There would be no formal schedule; students and staff members would develop their own learning patterns. Daily attendance would not be required; participation would remain voluntary.

Instruction

7. Students would choose their personal relationships. No one would be "assigned" to an advisor or to an instructor, but each learner would have a trusted adult outside the home in whom to confide, plus self-selected facilitators.

8. Students would plan where and when to study; whether to come to the "school," stay home, or venture into the community; or whether to join a learning center with a particular focus. The same freedom would be extended to 5- and 6-year-olds as to 17-year-olds, although the younger learners would have more direction and supervision from parents, staff members, and older students.

9. Independent study would be featured in the new learning system, but so would peer and cross-age tutoring, cooperative and collaborative interaction, small-and-large-group instruction, and team projects.

10. Instruction would be individualized and personalized to match the learning and teaching styles, strengths, and preferences of each student and mentor. There would be no mandated traditional group-paced classes. Students would function together as desired.

11. Core sites would resemble a home, a working laboratory, a service center, and a resource house. Traditional classroom furniture and textbook sets for every student would be seen as hindrances to learning.

Curriculum

12. Students of all ages, genders, classes, and races—working with their advisors, parents, teachers, and peers—would select their own activities, attendance patterns, learning partners, and mentors. Interactions with a variety of individuals would reveal opposing values, provide opportunities to resolve conflicts, and develop respect for diversity.

13. Curriculum development would be true interdependent learning. There would be no separate courses in subject areas; knowledge is not segmented, but interrelated. There would be no high school departments and no compartmentalized teaching of the "basics" in elementary schools.

14. Activities would focus on the creation of "future histories" for all individuals, communities, and societies and for world understanding and pluralistic interpretations of opposing ideologies.

15. Resource materials, electronic aids, and the option of home learning via computers and satellite connections would be available to students, along with examination of media criticism.

16. There would be no core curriculum or required subjects, classes, and courses. One student might concentrate on a single area; another might choose to experience 15 different activities; a third might select four or five interrelated components.

17. There would be "early life studios," designed so that parents, young children, and staff members could interact regularly, and to enable older youth to learn about the young.

Assessment

18. Students, parents, and staff members would meet regularly to determine interests, goals, and needs. Individual progress would be judged against the standard of what a student had learned, not according to the assumption that there exists a definable body of knowledge that all must acquire. There would be no group assessments or standardized tests.

19. Evaluation devices would be tailored to individual needs. There would be no report cards—no letter grades and none of the proxies for letter grades, such as "needs improvement," "satisfactory," or "outstanding."

20. For admission to universities and for scholarships, students and their families would collaborate with the learning centers and the universities to establish individually tailored learning plans. There would be no class ranks, no grade-point averages, and no Carnegie units.

Community

21. The concepts of school and community would be mutually embedded. Adults would be in the "school"; young people would be in the "community." Adult education and early childhood education would no longer be separate entities.

22. In cooperation with employers, more parents would work fewer days per week at the traditional workplace. Much adult work and student learning would occur at home.

23. There would be extensive use of existing community facilities, such as parks, businesses, industries, open areas, homes, and government offices. The more students would be away from the "school site," the greater their chances for significant learning.

24. Family life studios would focus on human services, information, and group meetings. Activities would include tutoring, community interaction sessions, personal conferences, and health care.

Support

25. Each adult would be an advisor. Six "matching" factors would dominate the selection process: age, gender, interest, perception, skill, and personality.

26. Funding would be the same as that available to other alternatives programs for the support of the students, faculty, and parents; it would also be extended equally to those who chose to remain in a traditional school setting. Reallocation of resources would be the key.

27. Laws would be interpreted creatively during the transitional period. Provisions exist in most state codes to waive requirements to facilitate the creation of pilot programs.

Environment

28. Traditional school spaces would be redesigned to include open areas, small cubicles for up to 10 participants, larger gathering places, and a multiplicity of individual and independent learning stations.

29. "Stimulus studios" would provide a constantly changing array of prompts to provoke and extend learner perceptions and thinking, and to arouse curiosity.

30. "Gaming studios" would offer old and new games, simulated design opportunities, computer animation, and mapping facilities. These would allow learners to confront complex realities in simpler forms.

31. "Project studios," staffed whenever possible by volunteers, would provide increased opportunities for all students to work on real-life projects.

32. Varieties of "learner banks," stocked with tools and equipment otherwise not available to students would be featured. Books, magazines, journals, reference tools, lists of local resource people, and video- and audiotapes would be offered, too.

These 32 visions are not futuristic fantasies. A few are modifications of components of plans for the Minnesota Experimental City, but many were featured in two laboratory programs: the Ohio State University School of the 1930s and the Minnesota State Wilson Campus School of the 1960s and 1970s. As research and development centers for their respective eras, both facilities successfully piloted significantly different and significantly better learning situations for those who volunteered to participate.

The practical implementation of these suggested transitions can be accomplished in a variety of formats:

- *select an individual school as a pilot site*
- *create a district complex*
- *begin with a series of schools-within-schools*
- *refocus individual classrooms*
- *organize clusters of schools of choice*
- *identify pods, rooms, or teams within a school*
- *design new community facilities*
- *make use of non-school sites*
- *become part of a technology center*

The most important change is to make a commitment to move away from traditional schooling toward a new concept of learning. **There are many efficient schools, there are a number of effective schools, but there are very few that are significant.** Conventional schools make adult decisions for "they know best"—not the students. *Frank and Ernest* (Thaves) reminded schools of this when at Sheldon's Fast Foods, the hare was complaining about the slow service, while the previous customers—two tortoises—waited patiently. In responding to the complaint, the manager stated: *"What's your problem. The food is plenty fast enough for everybody else!"* **Good win-win alternatives provide for individual differences.**

When all seems hopelessly mired in theory, futurists admonish people to **do the impossible, because the possible is no longer working.** The industrial era has expired and with it the industrial model of education. The transition to future learning systems can be accomplished by moving further away from uniformity and toward choices for all. **No one system is best.**

Communities need to be reminded that Orville and Wilbur Wright—**two bicycle shop proprietors** without high school diplomas whose first plane flew only 3 ½ seconds—**revolutionized transportation and changed the world.** Taking risks is now a requirement. Imagineering is crucial for educators. The Wrights of every class, gender, race, and ethnic background must be encouraged to **imagine, invent, and implement learning systems for a new global society.**
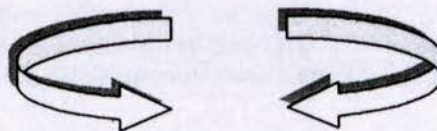
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

By implementing all the possible educational alternatives, districts can increase success levels for most students. However, there yet may be youth who are not reached, challenged, or fulfilled related to their potential. Further, creative educators want to try new approaches to develop better learning systems. These two factors require the imagineering of additional options for the future.

Alternatives are intended as choices for everyone. Therefore, the range of students encompasses all who are enrolled in the school district programs, and involves the diversities of individual learning styles, achievement outcome disparities, home environments, socio-economic, language and ethnic factors, interests and strengths as well as weaknesses, child growth and development physiology and psychology, and brain-mind research. **The confluence of the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive must be considered essential in addressing the desires of these youth.**

More options are needed for those labeled **"gifted."** Many of them are not challenged, or are desirous of pursuing special interests; they benefit from a choice of traditional approaches or flexible open-ended pursuits. They reflect the multiple intelligences and learning styles maps— varying from responding best to teacher-directed programs to being self-directed and responsible for their own learning.

The **"C" students** certainly need choices, for the programs that label them "C" are not exciting learning environments. They survive, but they are not motivated; they are not ecstatic about their schooling. Given the option of moving away from the conventional uniform structure, they often blossom, have fun, and achieve better marks. However, offering only one alternative is not enough; **"C" students benefit from several choices of instructional styles and curriculum options.**

Most obvious, the **"D and F"** (or equivalent marking assessment) report card labeled students are not functioning well in conventional environments. Patching up or improving programs that exist will not work for youth already failing in the system. New, different, and diverse choices are required to meet this end of the student continuum.

Related to determining other program alternatives, beyond the A-F report card criterion, consideration must be given to those students identified as having special concerns which should mandate accommodation. Educational options based upon different learning styles, interests, and needs overcome *a system that too often has failed these youth.* Conversely, those who classify

students with concerns as belonging to one or more "at-risk" or "special" categories *blame the child for the failure*. Among educators, this distinction has been a difficult gap to close.

The great majority of these youth can be served more significantly without a stigma created by identifying them with a label. Families should have the choice of a non-branding education system. Unfortunately, too often by placing the burden on the child, the one-size uniformity schools assume they have relieved themselves of the responsibility to consider a different environment. Viewed from a choice of alternatives perspective, at-risk or similarly conducted programs have not been especially successful.

To address the range of students with special concerns, changes in the current structures are essential. Several possible directions for consideration are illustrated by the varied approaches discussed in the following conventional trademark categories: **(A) Disruptive Youth, (B) ADD and ADHD Youth, (C) Foster Youth, (D) Angry Youth,** and **(E) Transient Youth.**

A. Disruptive Youth

Advocates for uniformity in schooling often state that students and their families who are disruptive *are* the problem. The school must "fix" the student by forcing the individual to conform to one-size-fits-all mandates. However, instead, the problem is often caused by or aggravated by the school. When students are placed in different learning environments, the disruption may cease or diminish over a period of time.

"Disruptive youth" may deviate in the cognitive, psychomotor, or affective domains. **The overwhelming failures for those combating difficulties are usually related to the affective.** The concern must focus on finding success, building on student strengths, improving self-esteem, addressing interpersonal relations, and developing personal and social responsibility.

One approach through alternatives is to form "Centers for the Person"— preferably untitled, but if named, with titles that focus on the individual. Students are enrolled based upon such human factors as self-discipline, self-image, responsibility, courtesy, and social interaction. Most traditionally trained teachers are not prepared to handle difficult "discipline" or "emotional" cases. Therefore, the Centers are staffed by the few faculty who can reach these youth, assisted by sociologists, psychologists, police officers, health and medical personnel, community agency workers, and parks and recreation employees. These outside specialists can be full, part-time, or on-call resources, depending upon the number of students participating, the problems to address, and the capabilities of each team member.

Disruptive youth usually do not do well in traditional settings. However, in excellent non-traditional alternatives, they are *not* labeled as at-risk, gifted, or under or over-achievers. They have personal and family dilemmas that need a focus. **The cognitive curriculum is never the issue.** Traditional topics can be included if they are part of the solution, but otherwise "subjects" and "credits" are ignored. The content can always be learned, when the affective and psychomotor domains are righted, and the cognitive pursuits are presented at the appropriate moment related to child growth and development, interest, and willingness to pursue the field of learning. A Center for

the Person concept provides one of the alternatives beyond the existing which can fit the student, rather than forcing the individual to *fit* the "regular school" or even a continuation school or traditional gifted track program.

One autobiographical excerpt documents the need for alternatives to accommodate individual youth.[1] It begins: *"I often look back on the journey with incredulity. Today I am a qualified teacher, professional musician, and writer. Sixteen years ago I was discharged from a psychiatric hospital at the age of fifteen with no academic qualifications and few prospects. But I did want to inform people what had been responsible for my condition—* **school phobia** *—and the danger of mistreating the victims—which for me started before age eleven.*

"I was unable to conform with the rules of the school system. I was conditioned to believe that I was a maladjusted problem child. The school counselors were irritated; the teachers were angrily challenged by my non-conformity. School just felt too much like a prison. We as students were to behave and conform. There was no joy or value of learning. The school was a place you had to go or your dad would be sent to prison. The faith placed in the school system was misguided and very costly. Later, as a teacher, I realized in that role I was only a figurehead responsible for the dispensation of enough facts for the students to pass the exams. The curriculum was stifling the progress of individual students.

"To overcome these conditions, the willingness to create alternatives to mass schooling is the key. Those volunteering for diverse programs usually find that their individuality is accepted. Student differences are celebrated; they are not an inconvenience or abnormality. Such a journey requires only a single step for schools: forward."

B. ADD and ADHD Youth

Youth are often incorrectly labeled as ADD or ADHD students.[2] [3] Many of these individuals are suffering from a form of environmental illness, according to Doris Rapp M.D.[4] They may not be ADD as medically diagnosed beyond a doubt. Instead they may have sensitivities and intolerances to chemicals, foods, and inhalants. **These persons should not be on ritalin or similar drugs, nor should they be in a special education program.**

As illustrations, milk may cause one student to erupt in rage while putting another to sleep. A third "milk student" may become "flaky" and unable to concentrate. A fourth may have a compromised nervous system and thus after drinking milk cannot write clearly—or even sign a legible name. A student confronted by a teacher or another student wearing strong perfume may develop a severe headache from the phenol and heavy fragrance. Inhalants such as weeds, trees, and grasses can blur the eyesight, create sneezing and wheezing, and make concentration on school subjects nearly impossible. Foods, chemicals, and inhalants can create ADD or ADHD symptoms. Diagnosis by a specialist who is a member of medical groups as the American Academy of Environmental Medicine can determine the extent of the problem, and

then advise as to whether prescription drugs are needed or whether a change in diet and home living can help overcome the majority of the dilemmas.

Schools can ensure that there is mold control, bacteria-free ventilation systems, an allergy-free restroom, a glassed in portion of the library with only hardwood or metal furniture and hardwood floors, access to refrigeration for special meals brought from home, no carpets (especially new ones), no fresh paint, guarantees of teachers using only unscented cosmetic products, and alternate courses to avoid chemicals such as formaldehyde in science. Schools must accommodate these increasing numbers of students diagnosed as ADD or ADHD or with similar symptoms. **Many "borderline" special education students are not "problems" but are suffering from forms of environmental illness.** Caring educators, through alternatives accommodations, can make a difference in the lives of children.

The behavior of youth labeled with ADD or ADHD and of those not so labeled is often the same in two different settings. It is the social interpretation of the behavior that varies. Under certain conditions, almost any child can be improperly diagnosed as ADHD. If a child is not "achieving" to the political standards, a label can be easily applied. Alternatives provide a better opportunity for children to grow and learn without labels.

C. Foster Youth

These young folks especially benefit from individualized learning environments in a very supportive climate. They often are transferred from one family to another. Though occasionally a foster child may find an almost permanent home—or at least a long term arrangement—others may move to new families three or four times in a year. This requires changing schools. They are barely enrolled at one campus before they move again. Alternatives that can assist each student with short term accomplishments—while looking ahead—are usually the best learning environments.

Further, foster youth often feel insecure and sometimes unwanted, as they are shuffled among families and schools. Thus a home-like caring climate with a focus on the affective domain is most desirable. Though they may be behind in reading or math, their "needs" are usually much greater in the person-centered aspects of life. They can "catch up" the cognitive when they are in gear in the affective and when they find a school with a compassionate program.

Some districts have established foster and homeless centers to better address in an almost home schooling atmosphere their special needs. This is not necessarily the desired arrangement, but perhaps the best a given community can provide, especially if the remainder of the schools are rigid institutions where "rigorous curriculum," mandated adopted textbooks, and minimal flexibility are in vogue. These young people are bewildered trying to stay abreast with class assignments that allow no deviations.

Foster youth benefit from caring staff, personalized counseling as needed, flexibility in requirements, and programs that fit their immediate status. Students who are lucky enough to be with one family and one school over a three-year period

usually can fit into a "regular program"—assuming the home environment is positive. However, the wide discrepancies in the status of each foster child create one of the great selling points for encouraging a district to offer multiple learning alternatives. Many foster children have difficulty in one-size-fits-all programs of "schooling."

D. Angry Youth

The public is well aware of the embarrassingly high dropout rates, drug addiction, alcohol usage, crime and violence, vandalism, growing adolescent suicide rates, learning apathy, declining achievement scores, and the need for police officers on campuses, all heightened by school shootings involving angry or troubled youth. The community is willing to support educational alternatives if they might reduce the percentages of these negative statistics.

For students who are serious threats to themselves or others, traditional teachers and courses cannot make a difference. These youth need specialists as in psychiatrists and physicians, psychologists, sociologists, mental health counselors, family counseling, and similar support personnel. The Center for the Person concept can serve the angry as well as the disruptive youth. **In spite of the odds, schools can help prevent serious crises from exploding, and even assist in reversing the trend through alternatives to the uniform school structure.**

One of the first important changes in creating viable programs is the abandonment of the traditional counseling system with a ratio of 300 to 600 students to one professional, and in its place, create a Teacher-Advisor System. Identifying individuals early and seeking immediate assistance are key components in recognizing angry youth.

In the Advisor System, every student selects the adult in the building with whom he or she can best relate. This "advisor" acts as a mother/father/brother, lawyer, advocate, counselor, prodder, friend, conscious reminder of commitment and responsibility, and communicator—the person most loved and respected by the student. No pupil is ever assigned to a teacher; no teacher is ever assigned to a pupil. It is a mutual selection. Further, the numbers of advisees enrolled with advisors are not always equal, for ten difficult students are a heavier load than thirty excited, achieving youth.

Even the "hard core" students who "hate" school and everyone in it can find one adult who is at least tolerable. Most always there is one whom the student actually admires. In a caring advisor-student match, it is amazing what students are willing to discuss— things that they will not mention to parents or even close friends. With such a relationship, the advisor is the one who knows the individual better than anyone in school. He or she is most often the first to spot the signs of an angry advisee.

The advisor communicates with the student daily, meets with the family as needed, and confers with all the teachers working with the individual. Anger at school is usually diminished by allowing the person to select his or her facilitators. Further, the curriculum is adjusted to build on strengths and interests. The cognitive requirements at a given grade level are not important when the young person is about to explode. **There**

is no research indicating that all "ninth graders" need two semesters of math and no art. For some youth, art is the most important outlet. Therefore, a student spending all day in art with the favorite staff member for the time needed to overcome the animosity is the best prescription. For another student, spending two hours in art, two hours in industrial arts, and two hours in physical education or individualized reading—all subjects the student likes or agrees to take with teachers also chosen by the individual—is the appropriate personalized school program at "this moment in time." The key is the affective domain; therefore, such curriculum opportunities are more than justified. "Credits" and "required courses" are irrelevant at this phase of individual human development.

Where there are excellent professional school counselors, (essential, but hard to find) they spend most of their time helping advisors learn to use individualized and small group discussion techniques effectively. They find needed resource persons who can assist, as perhaps a psychologist or psychiatrist. They work with the family situation to determine if the parents are making changes to accommodate the child and alleviate anger reactions in the home. When there are serious community concerns, they contact the police or other social agencies for assistance. Educators cannot prevent or overcome all angry youth dilemmas, but through flexible forms of alternatives, they can do much to create a happier, more successful school and home environment. Personalized programs can reduce the potential for outbursts, and increase the opportunities for positive individual and social transformations.

E. Transient Youth

Alternatives should be designed to relate to the increasing global conflicts, societal changes, and technological revolutions. With the transition to the Information Age from the Industrial Age, corporate mergers, Enron-style "bankruptcies," and company "downsizing" have produced thousands of unemployed who are then forced to migrate to a new region and different schools. Further complicating the future of education are such factors as the statistics—using California as an example of trends in large urban communities—documenting that thirty-one percent of the births are to women without high school diplomas; the figure is near fifty percent in Los Angeles.

Worldwide migration and transient families always have been factors in global history. Even the "new" United States was created through immigration and mobility. From the years of the colonists, the Oregon Trail, the Great Depression, and World War II, the country has withstood or benefited from family movement. In days past, when jobs were available, they were often where people could grow roots—through farming, factory, and textile mill employment; if possible, they stayed in communities with families and friends.

Mobility is often caused by upward job opportunities, unemployment and underemployment, restlessness, war, new immigration, and the great increase in racial and ethnic minorities who move with their culture. Ironically, many are returning to voluntary segregation by creating neighborhoods of all Hispanic, all Southeast Asian, all East Asian, all African-American. The percentages of minorities moving to integrated communities, have been on the decline in the United States. Though these or similar

conditions existed during the 20th century, the early 21st century is witnessing the emergence of new patterns.

The technological revolution is changing societal conditions. Electronics are increasing the have-have not gap economically. The affluent have greater abundance; the less affluent have fallen further behind. The quest for material possessions and the "good life," accompanied by migration from the snow and the rust belts—toward the South and West—are factors that have propelled major changes in lifestyles and geographical development. As housing costs escalate and traffic conditions in many cities become intolerable, daily stress challenges families. All these considerations have affected many schools, especially those serving English language-deficient, low-achieving students, and low-income families; numerous attendance areas are witnessing more than a fifty percent turnover rate in annual enrollment.

Enter the realm of educational alternatives. Those districts offering year-round calendars, extensive intersessions, nongraded schools, individualized instruction, personalized curriculum, and teams of teachers—for example—can much better accommodate the needs of a transient neighborhood. With the school continuously open twelve months, with extended day programs, and with individualized intersession offerings, students can come and go more easily, become known as persons while enrolled, and can progress through the curriculum at their own comfort level.

In transferring into such alternatives, students are assessed as to their development in the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive domains as well as possible; based upon the assessment, they select programs that best fit their immediate interests and aspirations. They learn and grow, with flexible teachers and environments that accommodate the mobile child. **Neither the standard, uniform self-contained structured textbook-oriented elementary, nor the semester course-oriented secondary schools, address the realities of transient families.** Flexible alternatives reduce frustration for students and teachers, and allow youth to move from community to community while still making progress toward the ultimate achievement of successful learning experiences.

It should be assumed that in this early phase of the 21st century, **educators, who are to educate the communities**—including the politicians—could envision and invent "pied piper" programs for students and develop certification for exciting facilitators. Alternatives leaders have an obligation to remould—with the assistance of understanding legislators—the "teacher preparation" and student choice options throughout America.

Conclusion

"I love learning; I just hate being taught."

Winston Churchill

As a concrete example of the need to rethink all current special concerns programs, Japan, the nation near the top of student suicide rate statistics, is moving toward dismantling its post-

World War II system. Uniformity-oriented educators have esteemed Japan for years as having exemplary "schooling." Though their orderly and unimaginative schools have excelled at producing the pliant disciplined workers needed to rebuild the nation after World War II, evaluations reveal that they have failed to produce the problem-solvers and innovators needed for the future. Japanese Ministry of Education officials have determined that their structured schools have destroyed creativity and individual initiative. They state: **"Our current system of telling kids to study, study, study has been a failure."** This dilemma in Japan reinforces the need worldwide for educational alternatives for everyone, not uniformity for all. It also vividly points to the requirements for new and better patterns of evaluation.

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[1] McGowan, Joe, "The Journey," *Education Now*, Spring 2001.
[2] Armstrong, Thomas, *ADD/ADHD Alternatives in the Classroom*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria VA, 1999, and *The Myth of the ADD Child*, Plume/Penguin Books, New York, 1997.
[3] Reif, Sandra, *How to Reach and Teach AAA/ADHD Children*, The Center for Applied Research in Education, West Nyack, NY, 1993. See also Grossman, Herbert, *Emotional and Behavioral Problems in the Classroom*, Charles Thomas, Springfield IL, 2000.
[4] Rapp, Doris, *Is This Your Child's World?* Bantam Books, New York, 1996, and *Is This Your Child?* William Morrow, New York, 1991.

Grandparent's Letter:

"My grandson freaks out on sugar and milk. His school principal insists he should be put on Ritalin."

William Douglass, M.D., replies:

"He wants WHAT? This illustrates the mess we are in with the public school system and the many insensitive administrators. Your grandson has hypoglycemia and lactose intolerance. He should not be on Ritalin for it is a narcotic and has all the dangers of cocaine and heroin."

Education from the Heart

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

K-12 STUDENT VIGNETTES

A series of six vignettes depicting descriptions of the implementation of individualized programs, interdependent curriculum, flexible schedules, and nongraded structures involved in the daily lives of students enrolled in one non-traditional, year-round, K-12 model of alternatives—The Community Learning Centers.

Vignette #1	SALLY	
	Age 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	(a young new student)
Vignette #2	SUNG	
	Age 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	(an entering pre-teen student)
Vignette #3	RAMIRO	
	Age 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	(a recent transfer student)
Vignette #4	KEVIN and LATISHA	
	Age 15, 16, 17, 18, 19	(students with a focus)
Vignette #5	JESSIE	
	Age 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18	(a student with concerns)

Vignette #6	NANCY and BRIAN	MEI and CARLOS
	WILLIE and RYAN	TERRI and JUANITA

Age 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

(nongraded mixes of students)

VIGNETTE #1

SALLY—AGE 4, 5, 6, 7, 8—A YOUNG NEW STUDENT

School Opens: First Four Weeks

Sally arrives for her first day of "public school life" at the **Community Learning Centers (CLC).** She and her mother, who has accompanied her today, report to the Early Life Center (ELC). This is a facility consisting of three former classrooms that have been connected through open arches for free flow as one "suite." In this remodeled arena are all the essentials and desirables for children in the old pre-K, K, 1, 2, younger 3 "grade levels." The Center is staffed by three professionals: one, a man as a "daddy" figure or older brother, one a "grandma" with loads of hugs and a great cookie jar, and a third, a younger fun "mother." All three love kids and kids love them. **They are "pied piper" personalities,** but well-prepared, excellent early childhood-primary level (traditionally) facilitators (teachers). They are assisted by student teacher and master degree interns who have been invited to experience the Center, and older students who volunteer and who learn more regarding the development of young children. Usually, there are parent or community volunteers and other staff who conduct special activities, as possibly a music oriented individual who comes to the site to assist students as they learn music appropriate to and of interest to them and their cultural background.

Sally can spend all day every week in the Center if she desires. There are reading materials, building blocks, dolls, animals, science projects, math skills, history stories, art corners, physical activity areas—a complete self-contained environment. One of the rooms is carpeted but with minimal furniture. It is a large open area for group gatherings, gymnastics, singing, drama, art projects, story telling, videos and movies, and other sit-on-the-floor or move-about-in-open-space activities. A second room is more oriented to quieter projects as in beginning and early advanced reading, math projects, computer interaction, audio and video tapes with earplugs, enclosed "hearing" studios, and other such individual and small group more passive learning engagements. The third room perhaps reflects noisier science, social studies, art, industrial arts, home economics style stations. There are real science laboratory facilities. Several animals are housed there too, and are in need of care; students learn how to handle them. A covered wagon can be built while learning history of the pioneers and using psychomotor skills tools to construct the wagon. Brownies can be made in the home economics corner (learning to read recipes—mix, stir, blend become meaningful reading vocabulary; math is learned too, as in 1/3 cupful). "Sets" can be painted for the play, which will be rehearsed in the "open" room. The areas of this "Primary Center" are established to address the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor developmental needs and *interests* of each child.

The first days/weeks there are more "group activities," but always with the individual in focus. A 1-10 or 1-5 ratio is sought—at the same budget as 1-20 or 30—through the involvement of interns, older students, and volunteers. Sally and the other young children are "taught" how to create a daily schedule; the older helpers explain to them what is being written on the schedule pinned to their sweater or shirt/blouse so they can ask for assistance if they choose to move to various locations during the day. They are encouraged to learn to tell time; **they are helped to understand the possible choices in the Center and in the school-at-large.**

They are shown how and what to do in the quiet area (reading, computers, math), they are shown the possibilities in the "noisier" room—what/how/why (science, social studies, home economics, shop tools), and they are engaged in group functions in the activity area (large group singing, rehearsing a play), gymnastics (forward rolls on the mat), and climbing (including safety rules). They can bring their lunch and eat and snack in the Center—so they never have to leave the three rooms—or they can be shown how to obtain food service at any time in the Student Center—which is open all day and serves the entire school (K-12).

They can begin reading, math, art, science, physical education—all fields—as designed by the instructors or initiated by their own interests. Growth and development instruction and activities are available for everyone in a nongraded, continuous move-at-your-own-pace process without the pressure of "passing" Book I reading by February. They might do Book I by November, or perhaps not until two years later; **the key is for them to be successful and want to learn more when they begin a field or skill or study.**

During this time, on a small group basis, they are taken to other areas of the school, as in the *Environmental Center* (old science, social studies, home economics, health, physical education). There the instructors explain what to do when they arrive, what they can learn, where to find materials, how to seek help, how to do things in a group, how to work on their own, how to... In other words, Sally learns how, what, where, why to come to that area and how to feel comfortable—including gym and playground activities (how to go directly to the area, safety rules). **Their early learning is as interdependent as possible so that the concept becomes "regular" as they grow through the years.**

The same group instruction occurs for the *Systems Center* (old math, language, business, industrial arts, computers, VCR), and in the *Creative Center* facilities (old "English," stories, literature, writing, reading, art, drama, music). **They "unlearn" whatever they knew about school before,** (sitting in one room where a "teacher" tells them what to do) and "learn" the new system—how to be responsible, decision-making, self-directing learners (for their age expectations—much higher than believed). **They must be *disoriented* before being *oriented*.** For first time entering 4-5-6 year olds, with no older siblings to influence their views of "schooling," this system only needs orientation. This is, to them, school. They have not attended another format.

Thus the Early Life Center is a place where students, if they choose, can stay for four or five years and never leave, unless as part of a group activity. They can participate in all traditional childhood and primary learning activities in an area of stability. However, they can also leave as soon as they are comfortable, and then move throughout the building on their own daily designed schedule, or on a schedule devised with assistance from professional staff.

Beyond Four Weeks

Sally is 5 ½ and one of the students who immediately feels comfortable and knows what she wants to do now. After her orientation, on the first Monday she is given the opportunity to design her total schedule, she sits with one of the older student volunteers and has a 3x6 schedule sheet completed—with help from her advisor as needed. She says she first wants to go to home economics to make some brownies; then she wants to go to the creative art center to paint her picture; next she wants to go to science to see the chinchillas. Following that she talks about reading in the Early Life Center, and maybe working on the covered wagon. She wants to go to

the group sing-along, and she also wants to go to the gym. Therefore, her helper writes on the schedule and pins it to her sweater, explains what is on it and how it is color-coded too (yellow for science, blue for art)—there is a chart in the ELC with pictures which describe the Center Studios opposite the color. Her modular-oriented schedule for that day then reads 9:00-10:00 Home Economics, 10:00-10:45 Art, 10:45-11:15 Science, 11:15-12:00 Covered Wagon, 12:00-12:30 Lunch, 12:30-1:15 Reading, 1:15-2:30 Group Singing, 2:30-3:00 Gym, 3:00-3:15 Advisor. *Later such set times are not established.* **She can stay in art all day if she wishes.** This early "tentative structure" is to help orient her to moving to stations throughout the building and being with a variety of age level groups, as well as being comfortable in specialized facilities with multiple instructors.

Sally completes *goal sheets*—for each of these areas of activities she selects for her program—why does she want to come there, what does she want to learn, how does she want to learn these topics. **Her facilitators (she has chosen all her own teachers) help her construct plans for the fields of study—with interdependent curriculum, not "subjects," the focus.**

Tuesday, Sally found her art project so exciting that she spent from 9:00-2:00 in the art studio—with a mid-morning snack break and a lunch break sandwiched during that time. She went to the gym from 2:00-3:00 PM. Wednesday, she spent all morning reading, then in the afternoon went to science and home economics. **All these learning activities are as interrelated as possible for the age**, to move immediately away from learning "reading" toward focusing on how reading relates to science, home economics, and life.

Thus Sally can be gone from the ELC most of the day, perhaps returning only for her lunch or to look for a friend. **Young children (most of them) learn quickly to tell time, be self-directing, and make decisions.** They can stay all day in the ELC, can leave for brief periods as to art or gym, or never be in the Center except for the beginning and end of the day. Students have choices—depending on their interests, maturation, motivation, stage of development, and desire on any given day. *Most do fine with major amounts of autonomy*

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VIGNETTE #2

SUNG—AGE 8, 9, 10, 11, 12—AN ENTERING PRE-TEEN STUDENT

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Beginner

Sung arrives the first day and reports to the room of his temporarily assigned advisor. Other students already know how to function at the Community Learning Centers, but Sung is new. The advisor explains that Sung should "window shop" for several days, or a week or two, to determine what he would like to study, where he would like to spend his time, with what facilitators (teachers) he wants to share learning, and the person he would like to select as his permanent advisor. Sung is told if he becomes "lost or confused," to return immediately to the advisor for assistance.

Three boys who attended the CLC last year take Sung in tow. The group first goes to the computer room where Sung is shown how to access the machines, select a computer game or disk, or other activity. They spend over an hour in this facility. Next they decide they want a snack, so they go to the Student Center for hard-boiled eggs, carrot sticks, and apple juice. Then the group goes to the Systems Center "math lab" to decide what topics they will tackle first. Two of the boys know where they want to begin, so they meet with one of the facilitators to complete goal sheets. The third knows he will take some math, but as he is not yet sure where to start, he discusses several possibilities. Sung is not excited about taking math, at least not immediately, but he does learn of several possible areas of study and how he might interrelate them with his other interests.

After the "math lab," the four cannot agree on what to do next. One of the boys decides to go to art, one to industrial arts, and one to music (traditional labels—most studies are interdependent). Sung determines to go on his own to the Environmental Center to check out the "science labs" and animal collection, as he has heard of the 57 varieties of living creatures in the school. He especially wants to see Ferdinand (the boa constrictor), and consider a study of reptiles. The four agree to meet in the Student Center for lunch at 12:30. At 1:15 they decide to go to the gym to see if they can join a soccer game, or at least play 2 on 2. While there, one of the instructors notices that all four are having trouble with kicking the ball straight with force; he takes the four aside and provides drills for them to practice. At 2:30 Sung returns to his temporary advisor to discuss what he learned, how comfortable he felt, whether he had decided on studies or completed goal sheets, or perhaps met a possible permanent advisor.

After a week of such exploring and doing several activities—a science experiment, biscuit making, singing in a potential boys choir, working on fractions in math, trying basic trampoline in the gym, visiting the "Spanish Village" in the Systems Center—he finally decides what he will study for the opening weeks or until completed or changed. He has also asked for either Orv or Gail to be his permanent advisor. **His completed goal sheets—all of which are full of interdependent projects**—find Sung learning more computer skills, science with a focus on reptiles, a joint math/industrial technology/shop project to create a reptile home for a zoo, soccer with a group interested in the sport, and a writing lab to continue improving his written English. He is far ahead in his reading skills at this time, and therefore decides not to enroll in formal instruction now, as he will continue to read on his own at home and in the Media Center.

The first day of this plan, Sung becomes so involved in his reptile project that he spends almost all day in the Environmental Center, with short trips to the industrial shop area of the Systems Center to see what materials are available for his proposed reptile home. His new friends talk him into enrolling in the choir too, so he decides he will add that to his program. He can find time for the group singing when it is scheduled; he can go to his other involvements at most times of any day. All his goal sheets, except for the choir, primarily call for individualized and small group study sessions.

Veteran

Daily, Sung decides what to study that day, when to see his facilitators, whether to seek assistance, work individually or with a group, stay home to rest, or work on his computer learning at home. He will have a conference with his advisor after two or three weeks to check on his progress, success, and happiness in this selected learning plan. He has also learned that there is a "hidden schedule" at the CLC, for if he wants to see a particular instructor

or advisor for a conference, he probably needs to make an appointment (unless it is urgent). He knows he can always informally see these staff members or ask for assistance whenever they are available to all students—or immediately if there is an emergency.

Sung also understands that if he enrolls in taxidermy, if the taxidermy group decides to meet on Thursday at 10:00 AM, he probably should write it in an "appointment book" and remember to attend. There is structure and planning at the CLC, Sung has learned, but it is often "hidden" and is flexible based upon the events of the day/week, and the desires and requests of groups and individuals. Students are on their own—but always with support from advisors, facilitators, volunteers, student interns, and fellow students. While still in "elementary school" traditionally, Sung has become, for his age, **a very responsible, self-directing, decision-making learner**—one who can work alone, but who also can participate as a contributing member to both small and large groups. Sung feels very comfortable at CLC.

VIGNETTE #3

RAMIRO—AGE 11, 12, 13, 14, 15—A RECENT TRANSFER STUDENT

Transfer

Ramiro had transferred this past April to the CLC from a very traditional junior high (erroneously named a middle school) where he was learning to "hate" school and was becoming a low achieving student with discipline problems. He disliked several of his assigned teachers there, and in his past 7th grade year, he had no desire to study "story problem" and "abstract reasoning" math from a book, or earth science, among other requirements for all students in the assessment "grade-level."

At CLC, **with its continuous year program**, he had remained in school through most of the summer and had learned how to function in the non-traditional learning system. He was able to select all his own teachers and focus on the topics of his primary interest. As Ramiro had the potential to be a promising artist, he had become very involved in art-related activities. Over the summer he had completed a beautiful mural (for his age level) depicting families with plenty and families in poverty, as he had become concerned over the plight of many of the new immigrants in his neighborhood. Though Ramiro was about to be expelled from the traditional junior high, underneath he was not a "bad lemon." He had tasted enough negativism at the former school to begin to rebel against authority. He was also tremendously affected by the death of his father in the past year. However, his concern with poverty reflected his potential.

Now in August, for his current studies at CLC, Ramiro had decided to spend most of his time in art and industrial arts. He also agreed to a language arts program to strengthen his reading and writing skills. **He usually began each day in the Creative Center Art Studio** where he was working from photographs on a painting of his father and another of the neighborhood where he lived. He spent some time each week in "shop" working on a chest of drawers the family needed but could not afford to buy at this time. When not "immersed in paint or wood," he ventured to the "English" studio of the Creative Center where he read agreed-upon books and wrote critiques of the literature. In all of this work, he was receiving the equivalent of an "A" grade (if grades

had been given—CLC does not award them), for he was good in art, good in shop, and was doing well (B grade) in his efforts in reading/writing projects. He liked the three teachers—all men/father figures—as he had selected them. As might be expected, he asked the "art teacher" to be his advisor. He liked the subjects too, so with a focus on these three areas, he had moved from a potential dropout and discipline problem to a well-behaved achieving student. **The difference was that at CLC, his program was based upon his strengths and successes, while his old junior high had focused on his failures and weaknesses.**

Later he was asked to be a set designer for the Wizard of Oz—the all-school play to be performed in the spring. He agreed and with the "set design team" began work on the scene paintings, set structures, and even the costumes to be worn by the Tinman, Scarecrow, and Lion.

During this period, his advisor asked him to consider some "math work," as his skills in that field were not as sharp as desirable. He finally agreed to an individualized math plan (not that old math class where one train leaves the station at 7:00, one train leaves the other station at 8:00, when do they meet, when do they get to the next station—who needs to know except those who computerize the train schedules). For his project, Ramiro was to design a horse farm drawn to scale, and then paint a mural of it. To do this he had to learn square feet for the corral, angle of the bunkhouse roof, circumference/diameter of the workout track, board feet of lumber for the track and corral fences, amount of hay and oats for 20 horses, and cost of the construction and monthly maintenance of such a facility. He learned meaningful math in an enjoyable way, and achieved an "A" in that topic too.

At Home

The staff at CLC were not worried about a balanced curriculum as viewed from traditional adult thinking, for they found that given the opportunity over time and with help from the advisor and the influence of friends and parents, students finished school with more complete, well-rounded learning experiences than are ever possible in a conventional school. **Further, they knew that there was almost nothing in the traditional curriculum that was essential to learn to survive—not even reading.** This concept was clearly evidenced through an in-service session where staff had created five categories regarding knowledge and skills to be "learned" by the students: (1) Essential for *All*, (2) Desirable for *Most*, (3) Desirable for *Many*, (4) Desirable for *Some*, and (5) Desirable for *Few*.

The "Essential for *All*" column (along with the "*Few*" column) had the least number of requirements—and most of them in the "*All*" category were of the health and safety nature (do not put your fingers in the fire, or do not drink poisonous liquids). In the "Desirable for *Most*" column came subjects such as reading, but even that was realized as "not essential" when the blind person—with hand deformities preventing Braille—was the most intelligent person, with knowledge gained by listening to books and the use of other audio devices. Algebraic equations were in the "Desirable for *Some*" category—who really needs the knowledge, except for perhaps math experts? In the "Desirable for *Many*" category came knowledge of using basic small construction and repair tools, while in the "*Few*" category came the ability to do clay sculpturing. Knowledge of U.S. history and the democratic process were desirable for most, but certainly not essential, nor was *math*, beyond the rudiments of adding, subtracting, dividing, and multiplying. Even the mother of Ramiro, who wanted to become a United States citizen, was "schooled" at CLC. She was not put in a "grade level" and tested before she had the necessary time to study thoroughly and learn the contents covered on the citizenship test.

Ramiro could—with a semi-controlled comfort level and safety zone—skip many of the traditional required curriculum rituals such as scope and sequence to focus on building upon his strengths and successes. He could avoid the destructive nature of programs built upon his weaknesses and failures, and a cruel reward and punishment system. **The CLC became for him a Camelot**; Ramiro became a successful Knight of the Roundtable.

VIGNETTE #4

KEVIN AND LATISHA—AGE 15. 16. 17. 18. 19—STUDENTS WITH A FOCUS

Latisha

Latisha and Kevin are continuing students at the Community Learning Centers. They have adapted well to the environment and are basically self-directing, responsible **teenagers, with some sense of their immediate future goals.** Latisha knows there are no standardized graduation requirements at CLC, and that she can enter the best universities without the usual "badges of courage": high grade-point average, class rank, Carnegie units, 20 credits, algebra, geometry, and French. However, she has decided to "play it safe" because she has her eyes on a scholarship for a competitive, academic-oriented traditional university which mandates for all students—regardless of prior accomplishments and recommendations—high scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). She has learned that one-third of the entering freshmen from traditional schools drop out of college after the first year, and that two-thirds of the college students—the "cream of the crop"—do not complete their degree in four years. She believes CLC will help her to be self-directing and able to stay with a graduation program.

In conjunction with her self-selected advisor and facilitators, she creates interdependent goal sheets interfacing with the Environmental, Systems, and Creative Centers. In traditional terms, she is learning much of the content taught in conventional settings. The difference for Latisha from her previous school is that she can move at her own pace in a continuous progress climate. This not only allows her to speed up or slow down an area of study at any time, but also provides opportunities in the Fine Arts Studios—she joins the all-school choir, earns a support role in the first school play of the year, and creates the wardrobe for her dramatic appearance.

On this particular day, Latisha feels a need to touch base with almost all of her learning activities. Therefore, she first meets with a small group cluster of eight other students and an instructor for a discussion related to their American Studies—called an experience, not a class or course. They had met last week and decided they needed to meet again soon; they self-scheduled the time for 9:00 AM today. After 90 minutes with this session of nine students, Latisha goes to the "math lab" for 30 minutes to take an available individual practice "test" located in a file drawer. As no class tests are given, this is one way to check her own progress. Next she takes time for an oatmeal muffin and juice in the Student Center, followed by 60 minutes in the language lab listening and speaking with the use of audio and videotapes, and 45 minutes in the "chem lab." She meets 30 minutes with the journalism facilitator, and ends the day with a large group choir practice. Though leaning toward a journalism major in college, or perhaps nursing,

she is not positive and therefore has decided to be broadly prepared for other paths. Latisha has been so engaged today that she does not find time for lunch, so after choir she stops for a snack in the Student Center before heading for home.

Kevin

Kevin, meanwhile, is torn between engineering and architecture or just forgetting college and heading toward a trade school where he can specialize in carpentry—especially cabinetmaking. He thoroughly enjoys working with the tools, designing interesting pieces of furniture, and then seeing them to fruition through his own construction.

On this day, Kevin and three future engineering students are dressed in "grubbies" and are hard at work in the "woodshop." They are constructing a large scale model house. All four are good at math—they are completing six years of math (conventionally) in four years. The three friends of Kevin are planning on challenging upper level engineering school math classes as college freshmen. Meanwhile, all of them have decided they want to see if the "theory" learned in math enables them to build a solid structure. They bring their own lunch in sacks so they can stay in the shop, and while eating, evaluate what they have accomplished during the morning and what they want to accomplish in the afternoon.

After almost seven hours in the shop (7:30-2:15), Kevin leaves for basketball practice, as he is on the starting five for the CLC team. He does not worry about other "courses" or experiences during the week (he goes to no other "classes" for five days), for he can work on them at his own pace as soon as the house is completed; they are all anxious to accomplish the task soon. **He cannot be "behind," for he has not yet started planned new work.** Today Kevin role models a carpenter—a field he is seriously considering—maybe someday opening his own cabinet shop. CLC provides him the opportunity to explore his current interests while examining possibilities for the future.

Few other schools would offer potential engineering students an environment which permitted them to spend this much time as practicing architects, contractors, and carpenters whenever desired. These options are available when industrial arts and mathematics are considered as equal interdependent fields of study. This is but one of the major benefits Kevin discovered as a student who chose to enroll in the Community Learning Centers for his school.

VIGNETTE #5
JESSIE—AGE 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18—A STUDENT WITH CONCERNS

Person Center

Jessie has agreed for now to be housed in one of the Centers for the Person; otherwise there existed a strong chance of dropping out of school. An emotionally quick trigger has landed this adolescent in several fights and profanity-laced outbursts. Before entering CLC, Jessie had been a "hellion" in the former school—truant, rebellious, angry at the world—with

extremely difficult problems in the home environment. The Community Learning Center is possibly the last chance. Jessie has long been a below average achiever; the test scores have been in the lower quartile, without knowing for sure if it was rebellion and failure to study, an emotional block, or the lack of ability to handle "academic work" easily.

The staff considered the situation and realized that if "turned loose" at CLC, Jessie might initially have difficulty adjusting and could create serious personal situations, perhaps involving other students. Therefore, the Person Center seemed the best current approach to try to reach Jessie—personality, attitude, self-image, knowledge, and interest—for the focus of the Center is the **renewal of the confluence of spirit, mind, and body for those youth** entrusted to the available services.

The Person Center is led by sympathetic staff who can understand the dilemmas in the lives of the students. These resources are augmented, as need and budget are balanced, by full, part-time, or on-call psychologists, sociologists, mental health workers, police officers, medical personnel—MDs who will work with referrals—and homeless and social service specialists, among others. The priority is on the **affective** domain. **Almost always, that is the greatest need for these youth—to improve the affective areas of their lives—their spirit.** The psychomotor—the body—is terribly important too, as often this is an area of underdevelopment or remorse. The cognitive—the mind—comes into play as an adjunct or in conjunction with improving the affective area. **When there is not confluence, the affective should be considered first.**

All of these Person Center students want to learn. If they enter "behind" as labeled remedial readers, almost always the history documents that they were forced into an inappropriate reading program at the wrong time related to maturation, motivation, family environment, and growth and development factors. Introducing reading again is not as "remedial reading," but usually through the backdoor—a desire by the student to read information on how to overhaul a television set, control asthma attacks, or cook his own meals.

Assessment

The students are assessed as to whether concerns are primarily "discipline," "self-image," "self-control," "attitude," "lack of cognitive or psychomotor skills," "family home environment," "poverty," or other similar conditions. If it appears they cannot be helped in one or more of the diverse Centers for the Person, the situation is usually beyond the capabilities of the CLC. The students are then referred to other agencies, or the courts, or special homes or schools.

In the case of Jessie, the assessment concluded that the family condition of an unemployed father and financial woes, and the resentment against his environment related to clothing, food, and self-worth were complicated by an uncontrolled temper and anger against authority, compounded by a refusal to study or "learn" much of the traditional, school-mandated curriculum.

Today, **Jessie first met with the advisor for 45 minutes to review and adjust the previously prescribed self-renewal program.** Next came a group therapy session for two hours with a mental health specialist. This was followed by a session with a visiting nutrition expert on the need to eliminate sugars and caffeine (soft drinks, especially), milk products—including ice cream, and "fast snack" foods—all of which related to possible allergic reactions and a weight

problem—followed by lunch under supervision. After lunch, Jessie had a 30-minute meeting with a police officer regarding an outburst of barely controlled behavior in a local drugstore. Finally, Jessie spent the remaining time with supervised work on the computer— backdoor entrance into not only improving computer skills, but also creating an internet/writing/reading project on the topic of domestic pets, as Jessie had expressed a desire to have someday an animal companion much like a seeing-eye dog who would serve a blind individual.

The day passed with no serious incidents. Staff felt some signs of progress had emerged during the six hours and throughout the previous week. All were anxious to have Jessie eventually reach a point of enrolling in the self-directed centers of the CLC. However, many more "good days" were essential before this goal could realistically be achieved. **The Person Center was a ray of hope for Jessie.**

VIGNETTE #6

NANCY AND BRIAN   MEI AND CARLOS
WILLIE AND RYAN   TERRI AND JUANITA

AGE 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19—NONGRADED MIXES OF STUDENTS

School Opens

The students enrolled in CLC **interact in a completely nongraded pre-K through grade 12 multicultural learning environment including college interns.** Six, nine, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, and twenty-one-year-olds have interchangeable philosophies, programs, facilities, facilitators, curricula. They engage in peer and cross-age tutoring and cooperative learning, separating only when appropriate or desired. **CLC is a family of learners. Students help each other,** share investigations, and progress at their own rate, by themselves or in small groups. **They create most of their own curricula,** in conjunction with their advisors and facilitators. Progress is reported to parents via goal sheets, portfolios, family-designed conferences (advisor, student, parents together), demonstrations, video and audio tape interviews, and other similar outcome summaries. **Much of the learning is off-campus in the city, state, nation, world.** The more learners are out of the building, and the more community people are in the building, the better the program. Volunteering in a variety of community efforts, especially social services, is strongly encouraged.

Nancy and Brian

Today, Nancy (a "1st grader" traditionally) and Brian, (a senior traditionally) have independently chosen to be in the Environmental Center first thing in the morning. Both are sitting at sewing machines (in the old home economics suite) which face each other due to the location of the floor plugs. Brian, a star football player, is taking an experience titled "Bachelor Survival"—before he goes to college. Nancy is learning more about sewing and improving her fine motor control. Suddenly the machine Brian is using jams. He cannot seem to fix it. In desperation, he sees that at the moment all the other older students and the instructors are

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busy. Out of amused frustration he says to Nancy, "Could you help me?" To his surprise, Nancy says, "I think so." She gets off her stool, climbs in his lap, and proceeds to adjust the bobbin. Then she says, "Try it." To his amazement, the machine again works. He then asks Nancy to show him what she did. First grade Nancy has "taught" senior Brian. Older students can learn from younger. **At CLC, everyone is a teacher; everyone is a learner.**

Mei and Carlos

Mei, a traditionally labeled "6th grader," and Carlos, a "4th grader," are in the Environmental Center where both are in a small group studying taxidermy. Carlos just wants to know a little about the topic to see if he would be interested later. Mei, a science "bug," wants to learn over the next two years enough taxidermy to be able to "stuff the bird." Studying taxidermy, the group discovers that many animals die of pollution. Several decide to explore this problem further, so early today they meet with the instructor. Afterward they begin individual activities related to the topic. Carlos has trouble with mixing the right chemicals for his experiment; he asks Mei, who is in the lab working on a project, for assistance. Mei (the older teacher) helps Carlos (the younger learner) understand the fermentation process and together they prepare his experiment. Carlos is just beginning to become a "biology/zoology bug," so he appreciates the help from Mei who is far advanced in the "science fields" for her age.

Willie and Ryan

Willie ("8th grade") and Ryan ("9th grade") are involved in a Systems Center project and have decided to study together. They find during their pursuits a need for a basic grasp of statistical analysis. Though they are able to understand by themselves most of what they need, they arrive at a concept that is causing them difficulty. As the "advanced math" students in the lab that they might ask for help are busy at the moment, they decide to go to the teacher/facilitator as soon as she finishes with her current one-to-one with a student. However, they then see that a college intern is available, so they ask him for assistance; the three of them engage in solving the learning puzzle. This accomplished, they notice the time and realize they need to head to the Environmental Center for their discussion on Dream Reality.

Three students had read a short piece regarding Dream Reality. They desired to learn more about it and mentioned the topic to several others. Before long they had nine—including Willie and Ryan—"8th to 10th graders" who wanted to be part of the group. They found an instructor who admitted he knew little about it, but would be willing to learn with them. The ten, including the "teacher," begin to search for information on the topic. Maria, one of the group, decides to approach dreams through **the eyes of a poet**—I dream of being in the clouds. Willie decides to view it as a **sociologist**, as in the Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" speech.

Ryan, who is interested in science, decides to learn about dreams from the standpoint of the brain—**the physiology/neurology** which creates dreams. The six other students pick their own similar topic approaches. Today they are meeting to discuss what each has found to date regarding the concept of Dream Reality—**a nongraded group of students individualizing a common thread topic.** Dream Reality is a "fun break" compared with Statistical Analysis. Willie and Ryan work together and share interdependent views with the group regarding **dreams, science, and sociology.**

Terri and Juanita

Sponsored by the Creative Center in conjunction with the other Centers, a mixed-age group of students is soon loading on a bus to go live for four weeks with Native American families on the Choctaw Reservation in Mississippi. Though usually CLC students visit first, in ongoing cultural exchange programs, in this case the Indian youth made the initial trip to CLC. Several of the older students thought it would be good to know some basic tribal language before departing on their trip to experience the Native American culture, such as "how are you," "where is the post office," and "thank you." They organized a class in Choctaw and opened it to everyone, expecting the enrollment to be primarily students going on the trip. To the surprise of all, a large group attended the first session, ranging from "K-1" students like Terri, to the "10th-12th" students like Juanita.

The "class" was taught by reservation youth without a teaching certificate or even a high school diploma. They did an amazing job. When it was time for the visiting students to leave, an evaluation of the progress of each CLC student was undertaken. To the surprise of only a few, by far the best students in speaking the language were the K-3 "primary youth." The worst were the high schoolers, who were "tongue-twisted" with pronunciation, and with obvious memory difficulties. The younger students imitated the Choctaw youth beautifully and were excited.

*This experience helped the staff realize more than ever that there was **no** need to separate learners by age levels, except for certain topics where interest, maturity, strength, and previously acquired skill made a difference.* Separation by school year ages is not the key; overlapping groups based upon maturity are more appropriate. In this case, if grades had been given, Terri the youngster who was not going on the trip, would have received the "A" in the class, whereas the high schooler, Juanita, who was going to the reservation, would have received only a "B-minus."

Nongradedness, peer and cross-age tutoring, learning together in small groups, everyone a teacher, and individualized programs based upon interests, strengths, and successes make it fun for both Terri and Juanita as students at the Community Learning Centers.
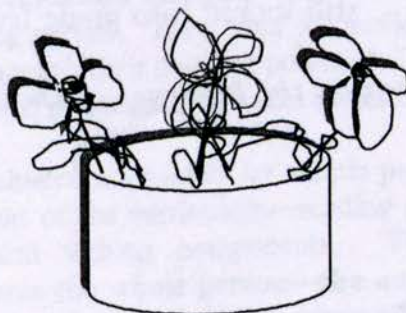
"School is controlling and coercive, but it worked for me. Now I am a teacher!

Wayne Jennings

A SCHOOL FOR EVERYONE

J. Lloyd Trump, one of the ten most outstanding educators of the twentieth century—who had the weight of the National Association of Secondary School Principals with him—wrote in the early 1980s shortly before his death that "we were witnessing the most disappointing time in his fifty professional years." He died discouraged, because twenty hand-picked Trump Plan model school project sites—with planning and staff training partly financed by the Danforth Foundation—had disintegrated. Unfortunately, the 21st century arrived historically even worse. If the successes of the 1900 Dewey era, the 1930 decade Eight-Year-Study, and the correctly implemented open schools of the 1960s are reviewed, **there were absolutely beautiful environments of choice—true Camelots.** Most eventually fell prey, but not to program difficulties. They were crushed by vote-seeking politicians and past-oriented "school people," none of whom were risk-takers or visionary Lloyd Trump educators. Robert Anderson of the famed *Nongraded Elementary School* publication (1959) witnessed similar reactions in spite of all the research and common sense dialogue he and John Goodlad documented. Over forty years later, schools are still locked into grade levels.

Reflections on the Influence of Dr. J. Lloyd Trump

For a complete story of the professional career and personal life of Dr. J. Lloyd Trump, see: Shields, William. *J. Lloyd Trump: An Historical Perspective*. Dissertation, Loyola University, Chicago IL: 2000.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

EVALUATING PROGRAMS

Process Designs

Excellent non-traditional designs functioning under the umbrella of educational alternatives are usually the most accountable, assessed, researched, and evaluated in the school systems. They go far beyond state expectations in determining the success of their students and the validity of their offerings. **The commitment is to assist each person as an individual; the level of responsibility accepted to achieve this challenging task is seldom matched in schools measured by group-paced uniform procedures.** However, it must be recognized that under the total umbrella of options, **traditional programs are supported as one of the many choices** available to all students, and thus are still also carefully evaluated for success.

This reality appears contrary to popular opinion. Programs deviating from the "regular" norm to become one of the non-conventional "alternatives" are immediately suspected by traditionalists, for many of the diverse offerings do not follow "standard patterns." The nonconformist leaders often refuse to provide ABCDF style report cards, grade-point averages, Carnegie Units, and categories which segregate students as "gifted" or "at-risk." They oppose grade level assessments and often boycott group-comparison achievement tests. As a result, these schools are often mistakenly tagged as ones trying to avoid accountability.

Ironically, the better programs of non-traditional alternatives begin with a mission to far exceed conventional evaluation systems. Those involved want to know if they are succeeding with the youth being served. They want to provide environments and opportunities enabling students to continue to reach their ongoing potential. They build self-confidence through student strengths and interests, not by focusing on weaknesses and test scores.

Students cannot be evaluated adequately by simple paper and pencil tests recorded by a machine covering only two areas of the curriculum—reading and math—sometimes joined later by social studies, science, and writing components. **The outstanding non-traditional alternatives staffs want to assess the whole person—the mind, spirit, and body in a holistic concept**—not just one small part of the brain/mind connection. They support evaluation from early childhood through adulthood, but they disagree with conventional "standardized" methods.

The facilitators in these schools share through <u>team discussions</u> the strengths, aspirations, goals, weaknesses of every student to determine how they can try to assist in improving the lives of each individual—both daily and long range. Working together in this manner, the faculty know more regarding each student in a larger team group than ever possible in

a smaller but isolated self-contained room environment. As discussed in previous chapters, creative educational alternatives leaders do establish assessment in three broad areas: the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive domains. The limitations of the **traditional tools** are not acceptable, for with the primary focus on pieces of the cognitive, the profiles **do not present the total person.**

Confluence is not theory, but is truly sought within each individual; if there are discrepancies, **concentration on the affective has priority, followed by the psychomotor.** If students are "in gear" in these two domains, cognitive growth is not a problem—**if the student is in the right program with the best learning style match.** He or she can begin a learning activity at the teachable moment. Students are given the appropriate amount of time as individuals, not as a group, to master what is being pursued. A continuous progress, self-paced philosophy can create greater success for the majority.

In ***the cognitive arena***, growth and development factors should be reviewed in all curriculum fields. Though preferably studied interdependently, in traditional subject terminology, alternatives programs should evaluate total progress. Reading, mathematics, English, science, social studies, drama, art, foreign language, music, home economics, industrial arts, technology, health, and physical education are equal. Written evaluations (even diagnostic "tests"), skills and abilities demonstrations, oral interviews, performance, observation, participation, and expression of interest and satisfaction are assessment tools. **It must be remembered that 90% of the students excel in one or more areas, but the same 90% are deficient in one or more areas.**

To illustrate through just one field—drama—student growth, creativity, problem solving, decision-making, and other desirable traits in this realm can be tested by reading plays, knowing playwrights, and analyzing plots to identify the inciting factor, climax, and denouement. Further, interest and progression—or the lack thereof—can be observed and demonstrated by writing, directing, or performing in a play, building or painting the sets, designing the scenery, creating the costumes, determining the lighting, coordinating the stage management, marketing the production, promoting advertising, arranging for facilities, and leasing space or equipment as necessary. **All curricula can be examined in as much depth as desired to determine the individual interests, strengths, knowledges, and abilities for each student in the learning field being judged.**

Measurement in ***the affective domain*** includes growth in the **acceptance of responsibility, courtesy, self-direction and motivation, self-esteem and image, feelings of success and control, happiness, satisfaction, and love of learning.** Social skills, interpersonal relations, and home environment factors are also "measured." Where there are no "objective tools"—tests, surveys, interviews—evaluation of the affective domain is completed by observation, student self-assessment, attitudes expressed, team judgments, parent assessment, performance, relationships with peers and older and younger individuals, and community commitment as in volunteering for social service. The "orchard test" is also valid: "By his/her fruits, he/she will be known."

Psychomotor domain assessments are accomplished in both fine and gross motor control categories. These can include hand-eye coordination, ability to do motor tasks (as in tightening bolts and screws), coordination activities (jumping, hopping, skipping), reaction time, nutrition intake, health knowledge and practices, physical fitness, strength, and posture screening. Where "tests" are available as in the Physical Fitness Index (PFI), they can be used as indicators

when appropriate. Most psychomotor evaluations can be demonstrated through physical education game and individual sport skills, industrial technology and home economics abilities, drama, dance, art talents, science laboratory experiments, and computer proficiency. Again, where no "tests" are available, observation, parent insight, student self-assessment, staff judgment, and attitude can be considered as valid criteria.

Thus, **good** programs of alternatives—both traditional and non-traditional—do complete evaluations that far exceed state requirements and standardized test accountability. **Alternatives staffs want to know that the program fits the child; they do not want to fit the child to the program**. They desire the climate to enhance the potential for success in an environment where the individual can be the best he or she can possibly be, including an excitement for learning and the development of skills befitting a life-long learner.

Individual School Designs

Every program under the "alternatives umbrella" **designs an evaluation system that fits the objectives outlined in the statement of purpose for the option.** A review of the commitments and formats from just one of an actual existing alternatives program illustrates how a variety of comprehensive records may be accumulated documenting the progress of each student. This design includes the following nineteen components:

1. **No A,B,C or outstanding and needs improvement style report cards are issued.** Assessment is made on what the student knows now and eventually needs to or wants to know. Letter grades or group-comparison value judgments are not marked on submitted papers, demonstrations, or performances. Instead, evaluation focuses on where the student has been, is now, and desires to be in the future.

2. **"Tests" are primarily given for individual diagnostic purposes—what the student knows now.** Tests are not focused on comparisons between students or between schools, nor are they used as the basis of competition. They are never marked "passing" or "failing," for a student does not fail with a score of 69 and pass with a score of 70. One student knows 69 out of 100 items; the other knows 70. Do both students need to know more of the other 30? If so, how can they best learn the information? If not, one question is the result: why ask for it on the test in the first place?

3. **There are no school grade-level assessments, for the program is nongraded.** There are no 2nd, 4th, 8th, 10th benchmarks, for the research is clear that only fifteen percent of the students score at their traditionally assigned "grade level." The others are ahead, behind, or interested in other pursuits. In most conventional school situations, there is a plus or minus four to ten year grade level gap in both mental and physical achievement. In recognition of this factor, the evaluations are individualized.

4. **There is daily and weekly assessment by the teacher facilitators.** There is ongoing assessment by the advisor of each student and several family designed conferences involving the parent, student, and advisor and sometimes one or more teacher/facilitators. Everyone discusses strengths, weaknesses, objectives, dreams, aspirations, outcomes in the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive realms.

5. **Students complete goal sheets when tackling learning projects.** These are assessed formally every three or four months to determine overall progress in each domain. Informally they are used on a daily/weekly/monthly basis to provide ongoing guidance. The goal sheets include what the student desires to know, the process for learning the content, and the methods for determining the outcomes. These can be adjusted as needed, dropped, or expanded, but they must be completed with success before the experience is recorded on the transcript.

6. **Portfolios are kept on each student in areas of study.** These are joint projects of the student, facilitator, and curriculum team. They include the goal sheets, evidence of work completed, a continuum of activities in progress, and documentation of completed accomplishments. One student may have ten to fifteen portfolios in different fields, or may have only three, if all fifteen fields are interrelated into major integrated studies. There is also a master portfolio summarizing the annual work of a student, and eventually a final portfolio covering all aspects of what the student has accomplished. In the beginning, "everything" can be in a "subject" portfolio, but as the weeks/years progress, these are culled to keep manageable records by eliminating the non-essential pieces, while recording priority data on a disk.

7. **School transcripts are kept on each student for ease of transfer or admission to some colleges flexible enough to accompany them with an individualized evaluation if requested.** The transcript sheet lists all fifteen traditional "subjects." As students complete experiences (not courses), they are recorded under the most appropriate column, but without a grade or number of credits. Where the work has been interrelated, part of it can be listed under one subject, while the remainder may fit two other subjects. The school records file the interdependent studies, but the traditional "by subject" transcript assists "outsiders" evaluate student progress. This compromise also creates a profile of interests, strengths, and weaknesses for the staff and does help in the advisory process.

8. **Groups of 20-30 students do not meet as a class, as this is not the best size for learning.** Large group presentations can be made to any number. Most learning, and the evaluation of it, occurs in small groups of five to eight students who meet, work, and evaluate together on a voluntary basis related to needs and interests. Open lab involvements and independent study are primarily individual in nature, but can function as small group activities too.

9. **One-to-one conferences are the heart of the evaluation process.** These are conducted between the student and each of the facilitators involved in the learning activity, all of whom the student has self-selected. They are ongoing and can be scheduled whenever needed. As the teachers are not conducting a daily "class" third period, or a self-contained room all day, they are available much of the week for such conferences. One-to-one meetings with the self-selected advisor are the key ingredients in committing to and completing learning and self-development engagements. Small group interaction, cooperative student-with-student assessment of the quality of the work, and product demonstration (display of paintings, skill on a computer, written story) are also utilized.

10. **The students are on a continuous progress continuum.** They may go as fast or as slow as desired, can furlough from a study for a short or long period, and can tailor the timing of learning to match both interest and maturity. They may go as far forward in a field as they desire as fast as they want, or they can ignore a field for a considerable period until they are ready to tackle a project—usually through an interdependent experience. This is all possible, for the curriculum is individualized.

11. **The curriculum is also interdependent—going beyond interrelated or integrated—as much as possible.** In studying the History of Ireland, the student learns of the art, music, culture, geography, games, literature, scientific research, crafts, economics, industrial production, agriculture, health care policies, and popular food dishes of Ireland—which involves other teachers and "subjects beyond social studies." The information and the implications can be contrasted with neighboring European countries or another country worldwide. The goal sheets may reflect that perhaps seven facilitators are helping this one student study the "complete" Ireland.

   Taxidermy can be learned in detail, as a specialty, or it can be learned interdependently along with other aspects of preserving animals, all species, and the biological and anatomical differences from humans. Environmental science, political science, economics, art, literature, and mathematics are among the old separate topics which must be merged for taxidermy.

12. **Knowledge is not segmented in this personalized alternatives curriculum approach but instead is interrelated.** Thus there are no separate "course subjects" to be "passed" by all students. **Health and safety issues receive priority.** However, possible learning skills, knowledges, and activities can be and are assessed as appropriate on an individualized basis.

13. **Overall schoolwide program evaluation is conducted by staff, and students evaluate each teacher.** Outside evaluation is sometimes completed by a hired professional or team. The large segment of the program evaluation is completed through master and doctoral theses conducted by graduate students from cooperating universities which are developing alternatives in teacher education; students annually evaluate the staff.

14. **Teams of advisors meet periodically to assess individual students in a group review.** They also evaluate how effective the various programs are in meeting the desires of the involved students. In this manner, three to five faculty members provide insights into the progress in the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive domains for each student, as well as the programs hopefully contributing to individual development.

15. **Every three years—or one, two, or four for some, depending upon the student—there is a formal review** of what has been accomplished, where there are gaps, and recommendations for what ought to be in the future. Though graduation requirements are flexible, individualized, and general, before a student receives a diploma, a Review Committee interviews the person, addresses the transcript, discusses long range aspirations and immediate goals, and suggests possible areas that might be considered before graduation.

16. **The assessment process is over a longer period.** Johnny will read—maybe in Pre-K or maybe in his 4th or 5th "school year." Traditionally speaking, 2nd grade Clarissa may be reading at 3rd grade level, but classmate Mei is at the 6th while classmate Juan is only at the 1st in formal reading structure. This is most acceptable in good alternatives, for the research indicates the majority of students are ready for reading somewhere between ages 3 and 11. **The key is starting each person when ready and then progressing at the appropriate speed in the appropriate program** (for the individual student—not the group) to find success in reading (or any subject) at an individualized pace.

17. **The student has 12-13 years to develop the skills, knowledges, passions, interests, and products desirable for that individual.** Therefore, there is no rush to "force" Johnny into the 3rd grade book if he is not ready—especially if it is the wrong book for him. Marie may have already "finished the 5th year," even though only in her "2nd year." Those who transfer into this alternatives program after kindergarten or enter later in their school career are assessed as to where they are upon arrival; they then select an environment which allows them to move as fast or slow or in whatever direction needed to progress as far as possible.

18. **In spite of the best efforts of everyone involved to create alternatives that fit all students,** and in spite of very flexible or very rigid assessment tools, there are a few students who do not fit. They have emotional, social, discipline, drug, home or other factors that create problems for teachers not trained with the needed skills. Thus the assessment program also finds a place in a "Person Center" where these youth can be assisted by the few teachers with special talents for these conditions, augmented by psychologists, sociologists, police officers, on-call medical personnel, and community agency and social workers. **The focus of programs for the students so assessed almost always falls in the arena of the affective domain.**

19. **The school staff members want to know how they are succeeding.** They do not want to hurt students. They want to assist in improving the lives of youth by facilitating their learning experiences. They want to export good ideas. Therefore, **such a comprehensive student and program evaluation process is absolutely essential to fulfill the expectations of this optional opportunity.**

Focus Designs

It is easy to validate that **outstanding examples of educational alternatives do provide more accountability, assessment, research, and evaluation than existing traditional formats.** As alternatives encompass a wide range on the continuum—from very flexible and open to very uniform and closed—**it is impossible to establish one assessment system that fits every school.** Fortunately, even the better very structured "regular school" alternatives broaden their own evaluations beyond state requirements to include some of the affective and psychomotor factors.

Conventional criteria—standardized tests, the number of books in the library or computers in the school, the provision of textbooks, college entrance data, Carnegie Units and grade-point averages for transferring student records—may have a place in some alternatives, and may even be required to exist. However, as emphasized over and again, the **outstanding alternatives are not content with minimal assessment.**

The total student (except private information) must be considered, including health factors. All aspects of the available learning programs must be constantly reviewed to ensure quality, and documents kept recording the accomplishments of each individual. Learning experiences are reflected on transcripts; the exemplary alternatives programs can supply more individualized information to a college, employer, or transfer school than any traditional system of uniformity.

It is up to each option to establish its own system of evaluation, but ideally it should be one that considers the spirit, mind, and body rather than a segment of the individual based on paper and pencil tests. The blind person can be the most intelligent individual in the "class" through listening and discussion skills and the use of talking books, among other assets. Reading is important, but it is not in the best interest of all weak readers to be placed in remedial classes. Not everyone can kick a football 70 yards. Not everyone can read at the 99th percentile. Good alternatives programs do not rest laurels on a fiftieth percentile system where half the students must always be "below average" to validate the test.

When choices are provided, the evaluation processes and desired outcomes do not diminish, but instead are enhanced. A variety of models of alternatives assessments, rather than a uniform mandated-for-all system, has the potential to increase markedly the effectiveness of school programs and the outcomes for thousands of students. Choice can reduce both the frustrations and excessive unwarranted elation of both parents and teachers.

Excellent voluntary learning systems do not assess only on the basis of statistics produced by a teacher, school, state, or testing company. **Comprehensive evaluations exist because the leaders of the alternatives movement are committed to eliminating failure and instead creating the best possible opportunities for success for all youth.**

College Entrance

The fact that colleges will work with a variety of evaluation systems is evidenced by the following samples of responses from the forty public and private universities surveyed by the **public** Mankato Wilson Campus School of Minnesota State University when the staff abandoned ABC grades, Carnegie units, credits, and state-developed standardized tests:

"Suffice it to say, however, that you can rest assured, as far as _____ is concerned, that the absence of the usual badges such as rank and grade average will not work against your students—we lean heavily on other evaluations anyway, so that your own recommendations, and those of your staff, CEEB scores, and particularly achievement tests, can help to provide many of the answers we normally seek in the usual fumbling of the admission process.
"I think we would be interested in joining with you and other colleges to pattern some kind of program; certainly if we cannot do this institutionally, I can work with you personally, for I am much interested in the directions in which you are moving (indeed, your letter did much to destroy some stereotypes I had about places like Mankato, Minnesota!)"

"Please know that this institution would give every consideration to graduates of the Wilson Campus School who might seek admission to the University of _____.
"We realize you would not be furnishing us with grades or class ranks in the usual sense.
"We would have to know the specific pattern of subject matter the student has completed. We, of course, would have to have test data (we require the ACT). The key thing we would have to know is whether or not this student is recommended to us. In other words, do you believe he would be successful in his academic endeavors at the University of _____? We would insist that you give us such a statement, in the absence of grades and class rank which we have been using as predictors for success here."

"Thank you for your letter of December 12 in which you have described your efforts to revitalize the experimental nature of the Wilson Campus School. I assure you of our enthusiastic support for your activity and our willingness to cooperate in any way possible.

"Specifically, we would be more than willing to consider applicants for admission to _____ from your school even though they might not present the traditional credentials. I assume you would be able to provide us with sufficient information concerning such candidates and their academic achievement so that we might make appropriate evaluations of their eligibility for admission. We would continue to require them to complete the Scholastic Aptitude Test and three achievement tests of the College Entrance Examination Board.

"We would be willing to consider joining you and others in the development of a program leading to more meaningful ways of college admission. I hope you will keep us informed of your progress from time to time."

"Many of the points you have raised in your letter have also been discussed by the faculty and administration at _____ concerning educational programs for young men and women entering college; therefore, I think that there should be no problem in working with you in having your students accepted at _____ based upon your recommendation. We are attempting at _____ to de-emphasize the grades similar to your program; therefore, we do not figure a grade point average on any of our students here at _____."

"There would not be any difficulty in _____ accepting Wilson students on the basis of an evaluation presented by the school supplemented by the student SAT scores and an interview by an admissions staff member. We would also be interested in joining other colleges in an attempt to improve the admissions process."

"Thank you for your information concerning the program at Wilson. You have prepared a very interesting and provocative statement of your plans and procedures. _____, too, is an institution interested in innovative and experimental procedures. We therefore look with a great deal of favor on your type of program, and would be happy to work with you on college admissions that do not include conventional requirements.

"I would be happy to further explore the problems and possibilities of your program as a college admissions concern. Frankly, if we have a reasonable description of the type and amount of work attempted by the student, plus your own evaluation and anecdotal records, plus the CEEB, SAT, or other standardized test score, I think that a decision that is fair to all concerned can be made.

"I am certain that our Committee on Admissions would be most willing to consider your students on the basis of an evaluation which would not include the conventional class rank and grade point average. In lieu thereof, I am sure that we will find much additional data to assist us in evaluating these students.

"I am certain that we would be very interested in at least discussing the possibility of joining with you in an effort to pattern a program which may lead toward different and more meaningful ways of admitting students to college."

"I was most interested in your recent letter telling us about the Wilson Campus School. The program sounds exciting and I feel sure that the youngsters going on from their education from your institution will have benefited greatly from their experience there. _____ is attempting to put into practice on a somewhat larger scale what you are attempting to do in your laboratory school. I am taking this opportunity of inviting you to visit the _____ for I am sure we can both grow through the exchange of ideas."

"Any university will take an anecdotal record in lieu of As, Bs, and Cs. *The Eight-Year Study* (the Harvard Report) indicated this many years ago. All a university would like is an accurate description of the student accomplishment performance levels."

"In our admissions program, we are not inflexible regarding secondary school transcript requirements, and over the years we have had a considerable amount of experience with so-called unconventional secondary schools that follow a system of written evaluations rather than grades and no ranking procedures whatsoever. We can work with this kind of unorthodox reporting system quite satisfactorily, and the candidate in question is not in any way handicapped as a result. I might add in passing that _____ has moved away from a conventional grading system this year, and we are now operating entirely on a credit-no credit plan."

"Thank you for your truly enjoyable letter. Even though your students have not applied at _____, we would be happy to accept them. I only wish that more educators would try some of the things you people are doing. Keep up the good work."

Conclusion

Outstanding learning alternatives programs take a chance. They follow the advice of Mark Twain, who offered, *"Why not go out on a limb—that is where the fruit is."* Innovators need to develop creative methods of evaluation for now—ones that can lead toward imagining the possibilities for the future.

Heartfelt *Change*

...or....
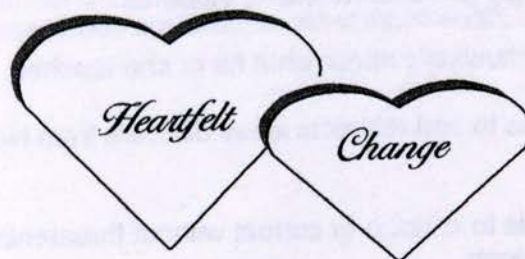
Cold-hearted Education Vision

"The passage of the 2002 ESEA (Title I) Program represents the most expensive and intrusive foray into public education ever embarked upon by the federal government, and further undermines what little remains of public school autonomy.... It puts teachers under the gun of a misguided testing and accountability program."
Bhawin Suchak

"The 2002 ESEA bill is a bad piece of legislation that will do more harm than good."
Monty Neill

"The 2002 ESEA bill will triple the windfall profits for the testing industry giants...creating corporate-driven public education policy."
U.S. Bancorp

Students Evaluating Teachers

In a good non-traditional alternatives program, teachers not only evaluate students, but students anonymously evaluate teachers. A short form—3,2,1—can be developed for the youngest students; impartial interns can ask the questions orally for non-readers.

TEACHER EVALUATION

_____

Name of Teacher

_____

Date

INSTRUCTIONS

A. Write the name of the teacher at the top of each sheet
B. Read each question and think how it applies to that person.
C. Then react to each statement by circling the appropriate number according to the following plan.

5 = Strongly agree	YES	
4 = Agree	yes	
3 = Undecided	?	
2 = Disagree	no	
1 = Strongly disagree	NO	

1. This teacher willingly gives extra time to students.   5 4 3 2 1

2. This teacher is enthusiastic about what he or she teaches.   5 4 3 2 1

3. This teacher listens to and respects ideas different from his or her own.   5 4 3 2 1

4. This teacher is able to criticize or correct without threatening or embarrassing students.   5 4 3 2 1

5. This teacher makes his or her evaluation of student work clearly known.   5 4 3 2 1

6. This teacher treats me as though I am a very important person.   5 4 3 2 1

7. This teacher is available to students most of the time.   5 4 3 2 1

8. This teacher is interested in the problems of students.   5 4 3 2 1

9. This teacher makes an effort to treat all students fairly.   5 4 3 2 1

10. This teacher has a good sense of humor.   5 4 3 2 1

11. This teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject he or she teaches.   5 4 3 2 1

My age: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

My gender: Male – 1   Female - 2

Evaluating Students and Goal Sheets

Following are samples of one evaluation summary used by an advisor, and one goal sheet used by the facilitator and student to plan and record progress.

ADVISOR EVALUATION

Date_____Student_____Advisor_____

This is a subjective evaluation prepared by a teacher-advisor in conference with the student whom he or she has counseled during the past year; it is cumulative in that it reflects previous evaluations by advisors.

1. **Growth and Development in the Affective Domain**: (Examples: self-image, responsibility, self-direction, motivation, creativity, person relationships, critical thinking.)

2. **Growth and Development in the Psychomotor Domain**: (Examples: physical maturity, handicaps, fine and gross motor coordination and skills, strength, athletic ability.)

3. **Progress and Achievement in the Cognitive Domain**: (Examples: knowledge, interest, skill in curriculum areas.)

4. **Growth in Interdependent Thinking**: (Examples: comprehending the whole; the primary, secondary, and tertiary factors—fields within fields within fields.)

5. **Observations Regarding Future Interests and Goals**. (Examples: interests, work, volunteer service, arts school, large university, small college, financial factors, marriage.)

STUDENT GOAL SHEET

Student_____Field/Center_____

Advisor_____Option 1 2 3 4 / F W Sp Su_____

Year

Instructor(s)_____Approval Signatures_____

_____   _____

Dates   / Goals, methods, adjustments, and comments as viewed by the student and teacher.

Dates /   Accomplishments as agreed upon by student and instructor.

Dates   / Advisor comments

Dates   / The following should be recorded on the *Experience Record*

_____   _____
Student Signature   Facilitator Signature

Note to Parents: If you wish to hold a conference with the above-named advisor or instructor(s) regarding this report, please call the school with your request. If you prefer, you may respond with a written statement.

Copy   1 office   2 transfer or college   3 parent   4 advisor   5 team   6 preliminary

FREEDOM
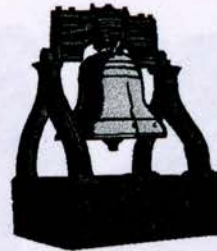
"What is meant by non-interference of the school in learning? It means granting students the full freedom to avail themselves of teaching that answers what they need and want--not forcing them to learn what they do not need or want...It is not likely that schools based on student freedom of choice will be established even a hundred years from now."

Leo Tolstoy

"We make realities out of dreams and dreams out of realities. We are the dreamers of the dreams"...for the future of learning

Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory
(Roald Dahl)

HOPE!

Linus: "I guess it's wrong always to worry about tomorrow---maybe we should only worry about today."

Charlie: " Nope, that's giving up. I'm still hoping that yesterday will get better."

Linus and Charlie Brown
(Charles Schulz)

"We are at the dawning of a Golden Age---maybe---but only if we can change our values, lifestyles, priorities, and INSTITUTIONS."

Buckminster Fuller

"It is time to do the impossible. The possible is not working."

Robert Theobald

PART C

LEARNING ALTERNATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

We will move away from a system that assumes every child of a particular age moves at the same pace in every subject, and develop a system directed to the particular talents and interests of every pupil.

Anthony Blair, Prime Minister of England

In South Africa, we will move away from a bureaucrat-driven imposed, uniform curriculum towards a totally learner-driven curriculum...

S. Bengu, South African Minister of Education

What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge—not knowledge in pursuit of the child.

George Bernard Shaw, Playwright and Philosopher

Children are people; they grow into tomorrow only as they live today.

John Dewey, Educator and Philosopher

When you come to a fork in the road, take it.

Yogi Berra, famed New York Yankee Ballplayer

<center>*CHAPTER SIXTEEN*</center>

ENVISIONING TRANSITIONS

"Futurists, you will soon surmise, appear to be masters of unrealistic theory—until the futures they forecast begin to impact.

Earl Joseph

Societal Change

"It is time to do the impossible; the possible is no longer working." This global futurist vision is essential in education. Many agree, as expressed by Charlie Brown and his friends.* In one of their philosophical discussions, Linus said, "Maybe we shouldn't worry about tomorrow, but only worry about today." Charlie quickly responded, "No, that's giving up; I'm still hoping that yesterday will get better." Lucy, the "psychiatrist," needed clarification. She asked, "On the cruise ship of life, Charlie Brown, which way is your deck chair facing?" Charlie thoughtfully replied: "I don't know; I've never been able to get one open!"

Charlie and his difficulty with deck chairs suggests the problem that traditional educators have with opening their own educational deck chairs; also like Charlie, school people have continued to hope that somehow yesterday would get better. It has not nor will it happen, but tomorrow can solve many educational dilemmas—if the impossible is challenged. Most futurists agree: new twenty-first century approaches are required in the design of **significantly** improved learning alternatives. Communities need to envision **A Rainbow of Options.**

In *Critical Path*, his last great book, futurist Buckminster Fuller, the creator of the geodesic dome, stated, "We are at the dawning of a golden age—maybe—but only if we can change our *values, lifestyles, priorities*, and **institutions**." Fuller, an eternal optimist, included the "maybe" to stress that unless people are willing to make these personal and societal changes, the coming years could be much more gloomy than sunny. The fabulous potential for a golden age could disappear through wrong decisions or lack of significant action. **Fuller believed that people have the power to create a preferable future if they so desire**; they can control their own destiny and avoid massive destruction or gloom from nuclear war, world famine, the have-have-not gap, environmental pollution, electronic overload, multi-million dollar athletes, and the corporate mentality excess profit marketing. They can, instead, partially through education, create the golden age envisioned by Fuller.

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* *Peanuts*, Cartoon Strip by Charles Schulz

That innovation can occur, in spite of the power of the conventional skeptics, is evidenced by the vindication of **Jules Verne**. He peered a century into the future and saw the streets of Paris jammed with automobiles. He described mass transit systems, the electric chair, electric monorails, telephones, fax machines, and a society run by bureaucrats trampling classical culture through their frenzied pursuit of money, technology, and power. The publisher reviewed his proposed 1863 book, *Paris in the 20th Century,* detailing these visions. He told Verne to scrap it; no one would ever believe such wild prophecies.

Verne later wrote *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *Around the World in Eighty Days,* among over 60 novels in which his forecasts included moon travel and the submarine. In the rejected *Paris in the 20th Century,* he even imagined the construction of the Eiffel Tower, and **sadly prophesied that huge corporations would not consider the public good.** His 1863 views of the frightening consequences of modern technology were not made public until the late 20th century. The failure of societal leaders of that earlier era—and even worse, now in the new millenium—to consider long range outcomes has led to the negative results of one-size-fits-all schooling—which requires *Algebra* but fails to include courses in *Common Sense, Social Justice, Sustainable Environment,* and *Business Ethics.*

The next learning systems must envision and address the coming decades. It is almost certain there will be increasing global conflicts, societal dilemmas, technological revolutions—and questions regarding the long term effects of technology on young children. To confront, overcome, and be successful in the years ahead, there is without doubt a serious need to rethink the structure of education. **This view is not merely the result of turning the calendar from one century to another, but instead reflects the relationship of education to a potentially very different world.**

Global Responsibility

Declaration by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)...November 12, 1997
Article Ten

"Education is an important instrument for the development of persons
and societies. It should foster peace, justice, understanding,
tolerance, equality, and health for the benefit of present and future
generations... It is important to ensure...that present and future
generations be able to enjoy full freedom of choice as to their
political, economic, and social systems...and...that they be able to
preserve their cultural and religious diversity."

*(...from the Declaration of the Responsibilities of the Present
Generations Toward Future Generations)*

Freedom of choice, preservation of life and species, protection of the environment, cultural diversity, perpetuation of humankind, peace, and common heritage, were among the focus topics of this UNESCO document. The full concern involved promoting these ideals and responsibilities through education. The General Conference participants reinforced that the worldwide network of educators does have a global responsibility for ensuring and safeguarding the requirements of future generations.

Freedom of choice in education advocates do not believe the current learning structures worldwide are appropriate for all persons for the present, and certainly not for the future. The lofty goals of UNESCO cannot be accomplished to the desired levels under what is perceived to be the **competitive, repetitive, cognitive-focused nineteenth and twentieth century systems still dominating most nations of every continent. "Schooling" as it exists in the majority of the world jurisdictions, only continues to widen the disparity between those who master the demands successfully and those who do not adapt well to the uniform patterns.**

There are well-accepted documents in support of these views. In 1977, the Stanford Research Institute compiled a list of forty-one "global problems." Included were such topics as natural resources, pollution, nuclear weapons, poverty, crime, population, and the have-have-not gap among people and countries. The report cited that these were not **forty-one separate microproblems**—each to be solved independently—but instead were actually **one huge macroproblem**. For a preferable future for humankind, interdependently resolving the macroproblem was the major concern for everyone. Similar lists consolidated forty-one to twenty-two components, while others further sub-divided the topics to identify sixty-four "global dilemmas." However, agreement was reached on the concept of macroproblem. Whatever the accepted number of categories, **the learning system—not only for young students but for adults as well—was the key for a near-term "golden age."** Education could be the major factor in avoiding gloomy negative consequences.

Harland Cleveland, writing for the World Future Society, stated the broad picture:

> "Most people do not understand why it is critically important to look ahead. We know in our hearts that we are in the world for keeps, yet we are still tackling twenty-year problems with five-year plans, staffed with two-year personnel, working on one-year appropriations. It is simply not good enough. It explains why we lurch from crisis to crisis...It will not be easy to change the present mind set, which focuses on short term fixes for long term problems...but change it we must."

Analysis by many observers concluded that those who were most responsible for the serious state of the global concerns were not the poor, or the criminals, but instead **college graduates, for they controlled the decisions through their corporate and government positions.** They could determine whether microproblems would be addressed as one macroproblem and solved as a whole, or whether the global conditions would be allowed to grow worse and thus more serious. Most well-educated individuals have continued to ignore the forty-one dilemmas, or only have addressed them one at a time, still trying to resolve separate microproblems. The common bond of learning systems continues to be the hope for future

generations. **Educators must think globally and then act locally in transferring visions of tomorrow to practical applications in the schools today.**

Education Implications

> "Tomorrow's school will be a school without walls—a school built of doors which open to the entire community.
> "Tomorrow's school will reach out to the places that enrich the human spirit—to the museums, the theaters, the art galleries, to the parks and rivers and mountains.
> "It will ally itself with the city, its busy streets and factories, its assembly lines and laboratories—so that the world of work does not seem an alien place for the student.
> "Tomorrow's school will be the center of community life, for grownups as well as children—a shopping center of human services. It might have a community health clinic or a public library, a theater, and recreation facilities.
> "It will provide formal education for all citizens—and it will not close its doors any more at three o'clock. It will employ its buildings round the clock and its teachers round the year."*
> *(Lyndon Johnson, President of the United States)*

This portrait of the future was drawn **before** the world of computers, email, internet, cell phones, and "smart" electronics. It was **after** previous calls from the past for community-based schools. In 1970, as the result of the Johnson comments, "yesterday" was revisited by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), with the publication of *Year-Round Community Schools: A Framework for Administrative Leadership*. Certainly "tomorrow," as clarioned by this AASA document three decades earlier, *"requires that educators abandon schools based on a bygone era...for the changing fabric of the American society demands that we must find ways to improve education."*

Additional AASA publications in both 1970 and 1972 stressed that the decade of the 70s presented a *"rare opportunity to exercise educational leadership"* and that *"unless educators do so immediately, citizens will almost surely accept over-simplified solutions by others."* **This scenario is unfortunately what happened: legislatures assumed the role that belongs to educational leaders, supported by diversified groups of parents and community members.** The lament is that leadership should have led to the creation of alternatives and year-round community programs several decades past. There should be no need now for *Educational Alternatives for Everyone* except as a historical reference.

In this 1970s era, based upon their beliefs, the AASA leadership did try to effect change. Their recommendations concluded that nongraded environments, individualized instruction,

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• Lyndon Baines Johnson, President of the United States, addressing 10,000 members of the American Association of School Administrators, Atlantic City NJ. February 16, 1966.

personalized curriculum, continuous progress, self-directed evaluation, open-space facilities, twelve-month learning, affective domain—caring, food, and clothing priorities—psychomotor domain concentrations, and personalized rehabilitation plans for students with problems should be reflected in the school districts at least as options. For volunteer students, one of the alternatives foreseen was the creation of programs that better reflected these deviations from conventional formats. Beyond, there was still a need for leaders to envision future societal and educational paradigms. Such a process must begin by disorienting away from the current required structures for all, while orienting toward diverse options for the majority; it is essential to "unlearn" the old before "learning" the new. This task is accomplished by **accepting a philosophical base for education that is individually student-centered rather than group-paced, establishing research learning communities with volunteers, creating images and actions toward what is desired, and identifying charismatic but alternatives-oriented facilitators who will provide choices for families, students, and faculties.**

As early as 1907, William Wirt, superintendent of the Gary Indiana schools and inventor of the famous **Platoon System** of scheduling, and **Work-Study-Play** curriculum offerings tried to move the existing present into a different future. He stated:

> "The city school is like the old woman who lived in the shoe and had so many children she did not know what to do. The schools are overrun with children merely because we have been trying to provide facilities for all the children to study at the same time for a few hours each day. The rest of the time, facilities sit empty."

To correct this dilemma, the Gary schools became a community; they offered public libraries and playgrounds, fine field houses, gymnasiums, swimming pools, gardens, print shops, and "academic" learning centers for everyone. By lengthening the school day, Gary schools became a **Child World** within the adult world of the city. By opening to adults and families after the 8:00 to 4:00 hours, the school plant also became a **Clubhouse** for the adults. From 1907-1937, the Gary school facilities were open 50 weeks a year, 12 hours a day, 6-7 days a week. Dr. J. Lloyd Trump, creator of the famous Trump Plan and author of *A School for Everyone* and *Images of the Future*, was a principal in the Gary system. He included many of these concepts in his 1970s Model Schools Project, partially funded by the Danforth Foundation and endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

In the more recent era, Ron Miller, founder of the Foundation for Educational Renewal and the Holistic Education Press, and publisher of the *Paths of Learning* journal, has promoted holistic education as holding the potential for significant renewal. The *Paths* magazine features writings describing humane, heartfelt teaching and learning. He defines holistic education with the following clarity: *"The vision of holism is a vision of healing. It is a vision of atonement between humanity and nature. It is a vision of peace. And it is a vision of love."*

Creating a holistic personalized learning plan from the heart can eliminate cheating. When students select their own goals, work with appropriate materials, and are afforded time to accomplish the task, select their own facilitators, do not receive "report cards," and have irrelevant topics removed from their studies, they have no need to "cheat." Conventional schools cause dishonesty by placing everyone in the same required subjects, with mandated books to be digested at the same time, to meet the pre-established exam schedule. The student who is not adept at keeping pace in a given field either fails—or for self-protection from the pressure placed on the

individual to attend a "good" university—is forced to copy homework, plagiarize answers for group assigned same-topic papers, and use hand signals or "cheat cards" to answer enough true/false or multiple choice questions to skim by with a "passing mark."

Cheating is an adult-created societal problem. Donald McCabe, Rutgers University professor—in a 2001 study of high school students in conventional programs—found that 74 percent had fudged or plagiarized during the prior year. Students cannot be blamed in most situations when they are faced with impossible time-limited projects, **observe continued corporate fraud**, see parents "skim" on their income taxes, and know that many college athletes seldom attend class.

The implications of these diverse historical educational realities are clear: choices of varied "school communities" are needed for students. An open mind regarding multiple involvement styles is a place to start, as Ronald Barnes so eloquently wrote in *Learning Systems for the Future* (Phi Delta Kappa Fastback). **The current uniform structure sees "schooling" as preparation FOR life, whereas many alternatives concepts envision a system that believes learning IS life—for people never stop learning.** Further, learning occurs everywhere, not just in school; people often excel on their own—without teachers—who in the existing formats are only the specialists who impart knowledge. Everyone is important regardless of how much he or she knows; the traditional structure is based upon the premise that people with knowledge are better and more powerful, a conviction which is wrong in the broader alternatives philosophy.

New systems would reflect that learning is lifelong and tailored to the needs of individuals. Parents should not accept the idea that "education" occurs only in a building called "school," built upon a foundation of a prescribed group-curriculum. **Most students can make their own decisions regarding what to study and how, refuting a concept that indicates people do not and cannot learn on their own.** People will form positive social networks without formal schooling. Conversely, *gatekeepers of the common conventional model* believe that schools are necessary to socialize people to become responsible members of the community.

Two thoughts seem appropriate:

"Go Against the Flow"   *and*   "Hookt on Foniks Wurks Fur Me."
(Alternatives T-Shirt Slogans)

Conventionalism says "go with the flow"—non-conventional options go against the current—and of course, phonics is the cure for the reading ailments of everyone.

There are clear-cut divergent opinions. The solution—the concept of choice—creates multiple learning systems, the majority of which are built upon a student-centered foundation supporting a "non-school" environment. **If individual differences are accommodated, the future can be glorious for education.**

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

During the twentieth century, opportunities for true innovation and experimentation in education were limited by adherence to **TRADITION.** Even in the exception periods—**the 1900s, 1930s, 1960s**—less than five percent—more often only one percent—of the students were able to participate. The nontraditional approaches that were proved to be better for many students—usually determined by university or foundation studies or the few lighthouse school districts—were not widely adopted. Significant research from the past—as the advantages of nongraded learning environments for the majority of youth—has remained dormant. **It has been hard to change tradition—even when the research supports a different structure.**

Seymour Papert, commenting on the relationship of education and technology, stated:

"I believe that the computer presence will enable us to so modify the learning environment outside the classroom that much, if not all, the knowledge schools presently try to teach with such pain and expense and limited success will be learned, as the child learns to walk, painlessly, successfully, and without organized instruction."

He questioned whether schools had a place in the future or whether they should transform themselves into something new. The Papert forecast remains to be proved, but the message supports the need to identify new research and development (R and D) studies related to the future of learning systems.

In the coming years, education technology will explode. Current electronics are yet in infancy. In the 1960s, pioneered by the Open University in England, distance learning through television brought new opportunities to thousands who otherwise could not have benefited. It eventually forced universities to develop satellite campuses and centers and dramatically changed the previously longstanding correspondence school system.

Now NASA will have space stations and an eventual trip to Mars. With such developments will come online universities and more online home learning, great advancement in the capabilities of computers, virtual reality, internet, cable, fax, email, television, DVD, telephones, and the yet to be perfected additional or replacement electronics—standard use laptops rather than desk-size personal computers. **Not long ago, 78 RPM records and multiple play**

phonographs were the rage. Turntables are now almost impossible to purchase except as part of a larger sound component, and those available play only single platters. *Yet algebra is still taught the same way it was even before record collections were popular. In spite of contrary research, the seventh grade still exists with the same requirements.*

It is clear that R and D in education must include studies in the utilization of technology, but **the human, not the machine, must remain the center focus in the development of learning.** A *Blondie* cartoon reinforces this priority. The installer explains to Dagwood that the new phone has call waiting, call forwarding, call blocking, special call assistance, caller ID, conference calling, call tracing, speed dialing, busy redial, VIP alert, and after three rings transfers to an automatic answering service or to a fax.

The installer leaves with a parting comment: *"Enjoy using your new phone."* Mr. Bumstead stares for several minutes, and then says, *"I'm afraid to touch it."* This Dagwood Bumstead reality should remind everyone that learning is still a human process.

☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎
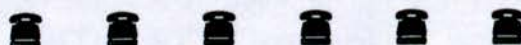
One day, sites and facilities now called schools, and yellow school buses may not exist. However, while they continue, the concept of learning alternatives challenges educators to discover advances which can make schools significantly better. In the United States, California, for example, with approximately one thousand school districts, could easily create over five hundred R and D centers in the larger districts in that state alone. Each could try different approaches, while still working on similar improvements, as technology companies do in developing their own versions of market-driven next-generation computers.

The research models could be patterned after NASA. While the majority of students, teachers, and parents may choose to continue to fly in or pilot various versions of the airplane, (analogous to alternative's choices in schools), **volunteer "educational astronauts"** could offer to participate as crew of the spaceships—the Columbia, Endeavor, Atlantis versions—to experiment with new designs, refine innovations, seek new education successes, and strive to find methods for improving the learning systems.

When combined, the explosion of knowledge from over five hundred such visionary research, development, and evaluation centers, could vault the state into worldwide prominence. **These R and D centers could and should examine every facet of the structure—curriculum, facilities, instruction, organization, philosophy, and evaluation.**

Testing itself needs major scrutiny. Even "long ago"—in 1967—noted educational researcher Michael Scriven wrote:

"Testing for the extent of learning of certain rather delicate
and pervasive concepts may be itself destructive, in that it
makes the student too self-conscious regarding the role of the
concept at too early a stage, thereby preventing its
natural and proper development."

In need of alternatives, Charlie Brown reinforces Scriven.   Charlie is holding his returned test. He muses:

> We just got our test back. I hate to look...I hope I didn't get a D-minus. They say a D-minus can impair the function of your immune system and disrupt the chemical balance of your body...........

> *Oh... Sorry, Body*
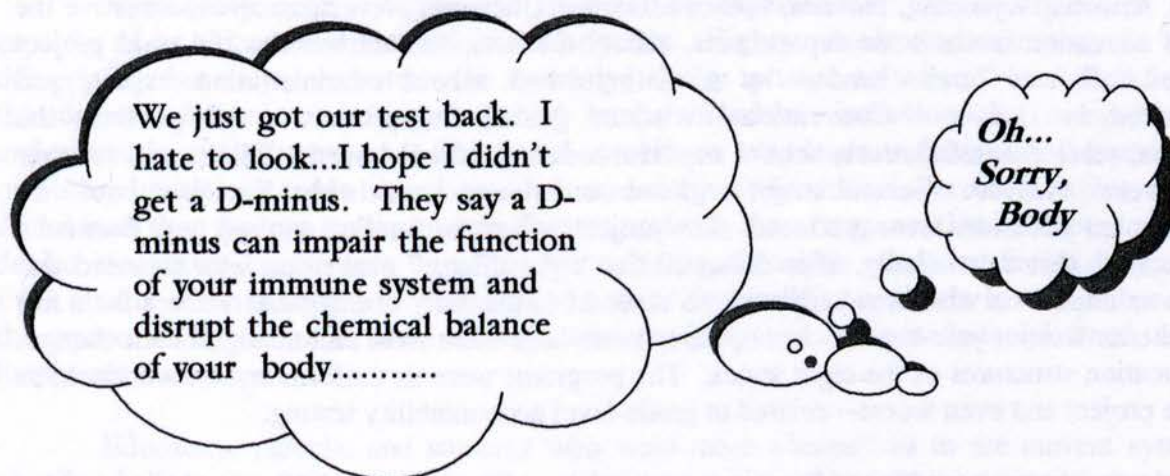
Peanuts (Charles Schulz)

The perception of Scriven did not even mention the understandable paranoia of teachers, administrators, and board members who are being judged by student scores on what are grossly-flawed tests. Testing itself is in need of R and D to reformulate the evaluation process. Before jumping to conclusions and quick-fix political solutions, further evidence is absolutely required in education. As illustration, studies on class size reduction have called it an expensive policy that promises only modest gains in student achievement; class size may not be, in itself, a particularly important factor in improving overall student success. The research on retention has been ignored too; the findings clearly indicate that **retention of students increases the likelihood that they will drop out of school, while not raising their achievement levels.** Reinforcing the conventional mindset of "schooling," October 25, 2001 (in the "enlightened" 21st century), a judge in Lerida, Spain condemned a boy of 15—charged with breaking and entering—to six months in school; the court learned that the lad was illiterate. The judge further ordered that if he failed to study and pass, he would face a stiffer sentence.

Respected research underlines that political responses or ease of administration should not be quickly embraced by thinking educators. The flurry from 1957 to 1965 in response to the launching into orbit of the Russian Sputnik resulted in a rush of federal funding for the BSCS biology series, the SMSG math, the PSSC physics, and the Chem-Study curriculum, plus all the teacher training and new books. **The evaluations of these new programs concluded that only changing the textbooks and requirements did not make a real difference; the same percentage of students still received D and F report card grades—the instructional structure remained group-paced.**

Homogeneous grouping—as opposed to heterogeneous grouping—**was shown to be wrong after major research conclusions** were published in 1924 resulting from a four-year study, 1916-1920, involving six major nationally recognized diverse school districts and a cross-section of students and communities. Eighty years later, into the twenty-first century, those findings had not been adopted by the great majority of mainstream conventional educators. The outcomes of major studies and experiments have been ignored for decades. Advocates have a great need to highlight the research that enhances the strong arguments for choice.

Long-term planning and more "change process" studies, however, will not lead to the near-term establishment of alternatives, as evidenced by the 1965-1968 era federally funded *Designing Education for the Future* project. Money was given to the eight Rocky Mountain states— Colorado, Arizona, Wyoming, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and New Mexico—to improve the quality of education in the state departments, school districts, and universities. A paid project leadership staff was hired, headed by a distinguished school administration expert, and headquartered in Denver. Conventional wisdom guided the process. **All parties—the legislatures, state commissioners, school superintendents, school boards, PTAs, and teacher groups—were involved.** Several major regional conferences were held. Excellent books by change-oriented educators were produced. The project, when the funding expired, was deemed a huge success to that date. Sadly, after doing all the "right things," evaluation later revealed that there was no impact on what was happening to students in the daily classrooms. Except for a few isolated alternatives, or year-round schools, thirty years later there were still no significant changes in the education structures of the eight states. The programs were as uniform and conventional as before the project and even worse—related to grade-level accountability testing.

As an illustration of R and D centers, a district could select one K-12 school site, or three separate sites: elementary, middle, and high school programs. The **Minnesota Experimental City (MXC)** could provide one vision for experimentation. The MXC was planned for 250,000 people on 60,000 acres of virgin land, only 10,000 of which were to be cemented; the remaining land was left open for gardening, play areas, and green belts. The city center was to be partly covered with a geodesic dome; no automobiles were to be allowed in the city. Waterless toilets were to be a feature, along with all the latest technological equipment—and this was 1970.

The importance for education was that there were to be no schools or universities. The city was to be the living learning laboratory. Everyone was to be a teacher; everyone a learner. Individuals and groups were to be electronically connected by a sophisticated computer network (LORIN—Learning Options Retrieval Information Network) to enable learners everywhere to communicate, seek assistance, or partake in discussion, when needed or desired, with knowledgeable and interested persons living, learning, and facilitating in the MXC. Learning was often to occur at home, in businesses, or in other community facilities and agencies. In addition, centers were to be available—not a school to attend daily, but specialized environments—where people could participate at will for as long as essential to complete their studies. These included the Family Life Centers, Learner Banks, Stimulus Centers, Gaming Centers, Beginning Life Centers, and Project Centers—each with a focus, design, and equipment for the purpose it was to serve in the learning system. Four decades later, "classrooms" prevail.

Noted futures-oriented thinkers, most belonging to the scholarly World Future Society, generally agree that powerful new forces are altering society and the global perspective. The merging of humans and smart machines, biotechnology, robotics, medicine, and space represent a few of the impact fields. E-cybernation, the bio-age, personal robots, intelligent chips, outer space exploration, holodeck computers (eventually one billion times more capable than those existing in 2002), interactive TV, nonlethal weapons, redesigned humans, and doubling the human life span are among the top ten 21st Century developments expected by many professional society members.

As open land dwindles worldwide, a logical next frontier is the high seas. The U.S. Navy has been contemplating building a mile-long floating base. Shipping companies have been drawing plans for floating ports that could handle oversized cargo ships, and prototypes for a floating airport have been completed. The Japanese have for twenty years contemplated underwater cities. If the dream of the Freedom Ship is ever fulfilled, a complete city of 100,000

people would be housed on a 4500 foot vessel (the *Titanic* was 882 feet) that could tour the world every two years. **Would this city-ship have classrooms with 30 desks facing the chalkboard?**

Democracy cannot be taught; it must be experienced. Society is reliant on the capacity of its citizens and institutions to cooperate. Higher examination scores do not address this priority, but only demonstrate the increasing ability to teach to tests. "Necessity" has been the defense for every infringement on human freedom—including the compulsion for undemocratic school structures. The focus on uniform tests leads to "skin-deep" learning, and reliability limitations create situations where one-third of the students receive a higher or lower award level than the true measurement. Current students, the next generation of leaders, are being denied innovative experiences by adherence to an anachronistic education called "schooling." Even charter schools, supposedly established to provide for differences, are in trouble because of the erroneous legislation in almost every state, the failure to prevent financial fraud, and the limitations on innovation.

Educators, parents, and students who want more alternatives to the current system of schooling believe that it is essential to face a different reality. Leaders must harness the creative energies of each community, and together through research and development centers, provide the field of education with dramatic new designs..

"In controversial moments,

My perception's rather fine;

I always see both points of view:

The one that's wrong—and mine."
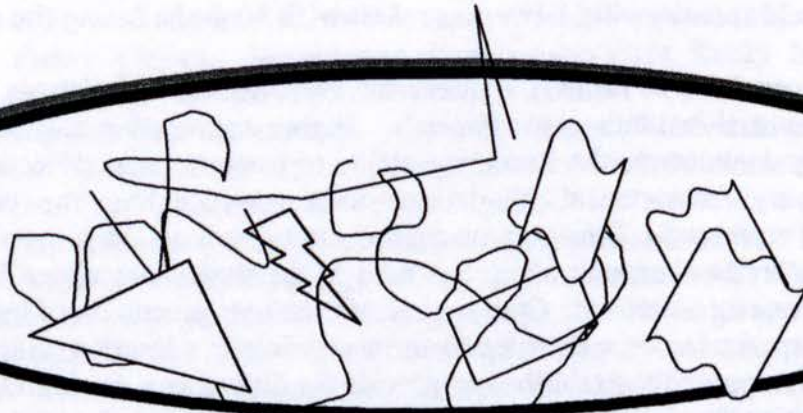
From *Letters to a Schoolmaster* (Rita Sherman)

Schoolmaster to Peter:
    "Don't you want to come to school, young man?"
Peter to Schoolmaster:
    "No sir, thank you........you see, I'm so busy."

The School in the Home (A. A. Berle)

"American education is one of the most *wasteful* things in the whole organization of life. Ask most well-informed parents about the progress of their child in school and you receive a cry of discontent and helpless protest. The letters of evidence I have come from college professors to street laborers. The education on which we spend so much money and boast so loudly in our communities is so indifferent to the individual—and thus a fearfully wasteful and costly process. We could possibly endure if it did no good. But it does not stop there—it is demoralizing the mental habits of the nation.... The teachers are doing their best, but the results are discouraging."

1912, Reprinted from 1892

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

IMAGINEERING DESIGNS

IMAGINEERING—imagining, inventing, implementing—is the key concept for the development of systems for future generations. Applied to education, *Imagineering* signals the need for significantly different and significantly better lifelong learning climates. Envisioning complete choice of multiple public school alternatives (and private programs too) requires creative change processes to overcome uniformity in learning styles through fostering greater diversity. There is a need for fresh, unprecedented, innovations—away from what has long existed—for the immediate, near, and far term futures. **The present forms of group-paced schooling outcomes designed for all _must_ be replaced by unleashing the potential of person-centered learning for those who could benefit.** Bold action is required to break the contemporary iron-cast mandatory patterns and instead offer choices of styles and curriculum. Ironically, being true advocates for choice, alternatives leaders in the current historical era, support the retention of the more conventional, traditional teacher-directed classrooms and curricula as offerings available through options. They recognize that *at this moment in time* there are some families, students, and teachers who do better in the existing structured environment.

There is no interest in mandating everyone into the same new pattern, or changing just for the sake of change. Advances are needed in education, including improving the existing system. Too many students score low on tests, are not motivated in school to do their best, and thus receive C, D, F grades. As they grow older, they drop out of school—either mentally and emotionally while still attending—or physically by not enrolling. Diversity is required to try to reach all interests, needs, and styles of students, thereby placing learning alternatives on the high road of success.

Choice can be offered in almost every school district in America—even by one-room creative teachers where the morning might be taught in one style and the afternoon in another, or where students might be "grouped" by learning styles for many activities. However, in most facilities of any size, two or three diverse programs are easy to implement, and in larger enrollments six to ten options can be offered. The perceived conflict between programs, philosophies, and styles can be overcome by accepting alternatives and diversities as the wave of the future. **If the staff of a school understands that this is _our_ school, these are _our_ students, these are _our_ programs, these are _our_ rooms, these are _our_ diverse communities—the problem of conflict disappears. Each program is equally supported and praised; each one is an equally valued choice for parents, students, and teachers.** The options cater to both college and career-oriented youth. **They are life _now_**—as well as preparation for the future.

In implementing such diversity, it is important to offer mergers of curriculum and learning styles. As illustration, in a community with several elementary schools, one site may offer two programs as schools-within-a-school. Program A is a dual-immersion option, where over the years, students become fluent in both Spanish and English. Program B is the conventional self-contained room taught in English.

At another elementary site, there are also two schools-within-a-school. Program A is a multiage open classroom approach, while Program B is the conventional grade level self-contained room. Both schools offer good programs as determined by traditional evaluations. However, the district has not involved a third school where the learning style and curriculum could be combined to offer a dual-immersion program in an open classroom setting. Without the third school, or a third option-within-a-school, parents and students are forced to select the dual-immersion program in a conventional setting, or forgo becoming bilingual to enroll in the open classroom. Alternatives leaders ask: *"Why not have three options?"*

Such choices are exciting, practical, cost-effective, and can be implemented within most state education codes. If educators can reflect the acceptance of diversity among the churches, they can understand that the community will support options in learning style and curriculum approaches. All the diverse programs are focused on similar goals: maximize individual potential, improve the achievement and satisfaction levels of every student, and illustrate choice as a premier education model. These can be accomplished through envisioning and implementing alternatives and options within individual schools and within school districts.

Many yet support a uniform system of schooling, believing that the provision of multiple choices for everyone in the public schools is virtually impossible. However, when faced with strong opposition and claims that options proposals appear to be "madness," diversity advocates can quote noted writer Miguel Cervantes, through his famous Don Quixote. **When criticized for lunacy, Quixote admonished:**

> To surrender dreams—this may be the madness—
> and the maddest of all—to see life as it is and not as
> it should be."

In further explaining that "alternatives for all" is a practical goal, advocates also can quote Jonathan Swift, **through his famous Gulliver:** *"I have seen what others can only dream; I know these descriptions are true...for I have been there."* Learning style and curriculum options embrace the concept of **Imagineering. Turning the century provided the catalyst to imagine new directions, invent better structures, and implement ingenious designs.** Community education leaders should be visionaries to create new options, expand existing alternatives, and enhance the potential for preferable futures for individuals, society, and learning in the current and future decades of world history.

There are a number of immediately available implementation designs to begin the process—without even imagineering the future: ten present-oriented options are outlined as illustration:

1. **Changing a School: Six Factors**
   Multiple changes must be significant and simultaneous in at least six major areas: philosophy, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, facilities, and organization.

2. **School-Within-a-School: Elementary Traditional School with Open School Housed Within It.** The new portion can be completely "experimental" or can be "non-traditional," but based on the best available research.

3. **Schools-Within-a-School: Middle School**
   Three schools in one building: Traditional, *Washington*; Modified, *Jefferson*; Open, *Lincoln*. Shared facilities: Library, Office, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Auditorium, Music Kiva, Gymnasium, Swim Pool, Play Fields.

4. **Programs-Within-a-Large-High-School: Varying Enrollments**
   Four large programs and many small programs—with shared facilities—offering a wide range from non-traditional to traditional choices.

5. **Two Programs in Five Varying Sizes of Schools: Very Small, Small, Medium, Large, and Very Large Facilities.** Alternatives can be provided at almost all sites.

6. **British Infant School: One Room**
   Multiple small-group curriculum oriented teaching stations offer choices within one classroom.

7. **Open Classroom: Secondary**
   Integrated team-taught American Studies—history, literature, art, music—in a 2-3 hour block. Most all current "courses" can be combined with common bonds.

8. **One School Building: Remodeled for Open Magnet**
   A completely individualized, non-graded non-traditional center for the district—based upon the "startling" research of the past century—and with a cooperating university student intern program and graduate research site.

9. **One School Building: Constructed for Interdependent Curriculum**
   An example of how to merge curriculum into no more than three centers: Environmental, Systems, Creative. Knowledge is not segmented; it is interrelated, thus eliminating separate departments, subjects, and courses.

10. **R and D Center: Experimental**
    The education equivalent of the NASA Space Program, this entire option is an experiment with volunteer "astronauts" who enroll to design and create a new learning system for those ready for the spaceship—beyond the airplane model of education.

1. CHANGING A SCHOOL: SIX FACTORS

Major changes must be made simultaneously in all six categories when attempting alternatives deviating significantly away from the conventional schooling format.

New Priorities PHILOSOPHY	*Better Strategies* INSTRUCTION	*Interdependent Learning* CURRICULUM
Daily Schedules ORGANIZATION	*Open Suites* FACILITY	*Affective/Motor/Cognitive* EVALUATION

2. SCHOOL-WITHIN-A-SCHOOL: ELEMENTARY

Flexible Wing (130 Students)   *Conventional Wing (300 Students)*

NON-GRADED

K-5 MIX
FOR MOST
LEARNING

OPEN SPACE WITH
FLEX ARRANGEMENTS

LOUD OR QUIET ROOM

MULTI-PURPOSE

MEDIA

OFFICE   NURSE   COUNSEL   LOBBY

SPECIAL EDUCATION

K   K
1   1
2   2
3   3
4   4
5
5
STORAGE

3. SCHOOLS-WITHIN-A-SCHOOL: MIDDLE SCHOOL

Open Wing (300)   *Modified Wing (400)*   *Conventional Wing (300)*

NONGRADED INDIVIDUALIZED FLEXIBLE. PERSONALIZED SUITES	TEAM A TEAM B TEAM C	6 7 8	6 7 8

H A L L W A Y

GYM   MUSIC   AUDITORIUM   SHOPS   HOME ECONOMICS   OFFICE   LIBRARY

4. PROGRAMS-WITHIN-A-LARGE-HIGH SCHOOL: MULTIPLE

ATHLETIC FIELDS

HOUSE A TRADITIONAL	SWIMMING POOL		GYMNASIUM		HOUSE C EXPERIMENTAL
LANGUAGE LAB	PERSON CENTER			TECH CENTER	VOCATIONAL SHOPS
MEDIA CENTER	STIMULUS CENTER	CAFETERIA		RESEARCH CENTER	HOME ECONOMICS
HALLWAY					
HOUSE B MODIFIED	AUDITORIUM MUSIC PATIO	OFFICES	HOUSE D SMALL ACADEMIES		ART COMPUTERS

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5. TWO SCHOOLS-WITHIN-A-SCHOOL: VARYING ENROLLMENTS
ALL are practical at elementary, middle, and high school ages.

School A *(2000 Students)*

PROGRAM I 1600 TRADITIONAL
PROGRAM II 400 NON-TRADITIONAL

School C *(1200 Students)*

PROGRAM I 300 TRADITIONAL
PROGRAM II 900 NON-TRADITIONAL

School B *(550 Students)*

PROGRAM I 400 TRADITIONAL
PROGRAM II 150 NON-TRADITIONAL

School D *(300 Students)*

PROGRAM I 100 NON-TRADITIONAL
PROGRAM II 200 TRADITIONAL

6. BRITISH INFANT SCHOOL: ONE ROOM

READING STATION   MATH STATION   SCIENCE STATION   SHOP STATION

OPEN SPACE   STORE | SNACK BAR   SEWING COOKING STATIONS

EXPRESSIVE STATION
---MUSIC
----------DRAMA
------------------P. E.   ART STATION | TEACHER STATION   TECHNOLOGY STATION

7. OPEN CLASSROOM: SECONDARY

CARREL	TABLE	M A T E R I A L S	DISCUSSION TABLE
CARREL	WORK AREA		DISCUSSION AREA
CARREL	TABLE		DISCUSSION TABLE

S H E L V E S

INDEPENDENT STUDY

STUDENT-TEACHER-ONE-TO-ONE SCREEN COMPUTERS

8. OPEN SCHOOL MAGNET: TOTAL BUILDING

INDIVIDUALIZED PERSONALIZED

LEARNING STATIONS DAILY NON-SCHEDULES

NON-GRADED SELF-EVALUATION

YEAR-ROUND SELF-DIRECTION

COOPERATING UNIVERSITY

126
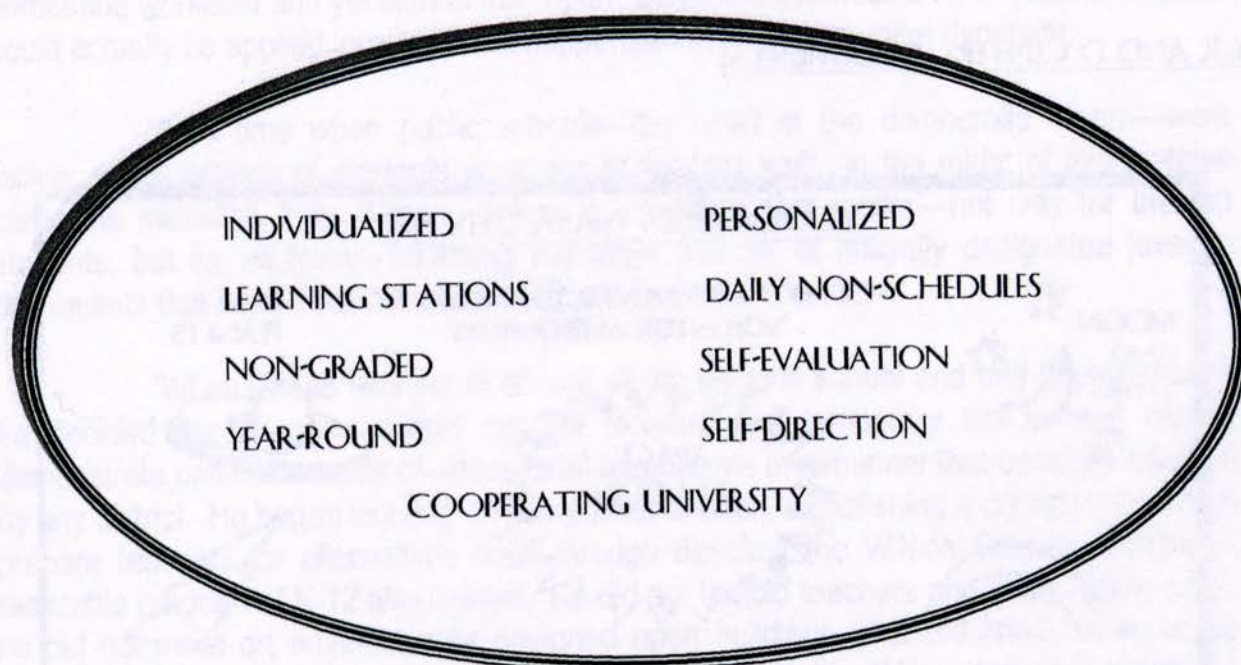
9. CONSTRUCTED BUILDING: INTERDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

POOL   GYM   FIELDS

ENVIRONMENTAL
CENTER

SYSTEMS
CENTER

EXPRESSIVE
CENTER

RESOURCE
CENTER

PERSON
CENTER

AUDITORIUM

STUDENT
CENTER   OFFICES   LOBBY

10. R AND D CENTER: EXPERIMENTAL

EDUCATION NASA CENTER

-DISTRICT EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING SYSTEM-
"VOLUNTEER ASTRONAUTS"

MOON
AND
STARS

PLANETS

SPACE
STATION

DESIGN CENTER

LAUNCHING PAD
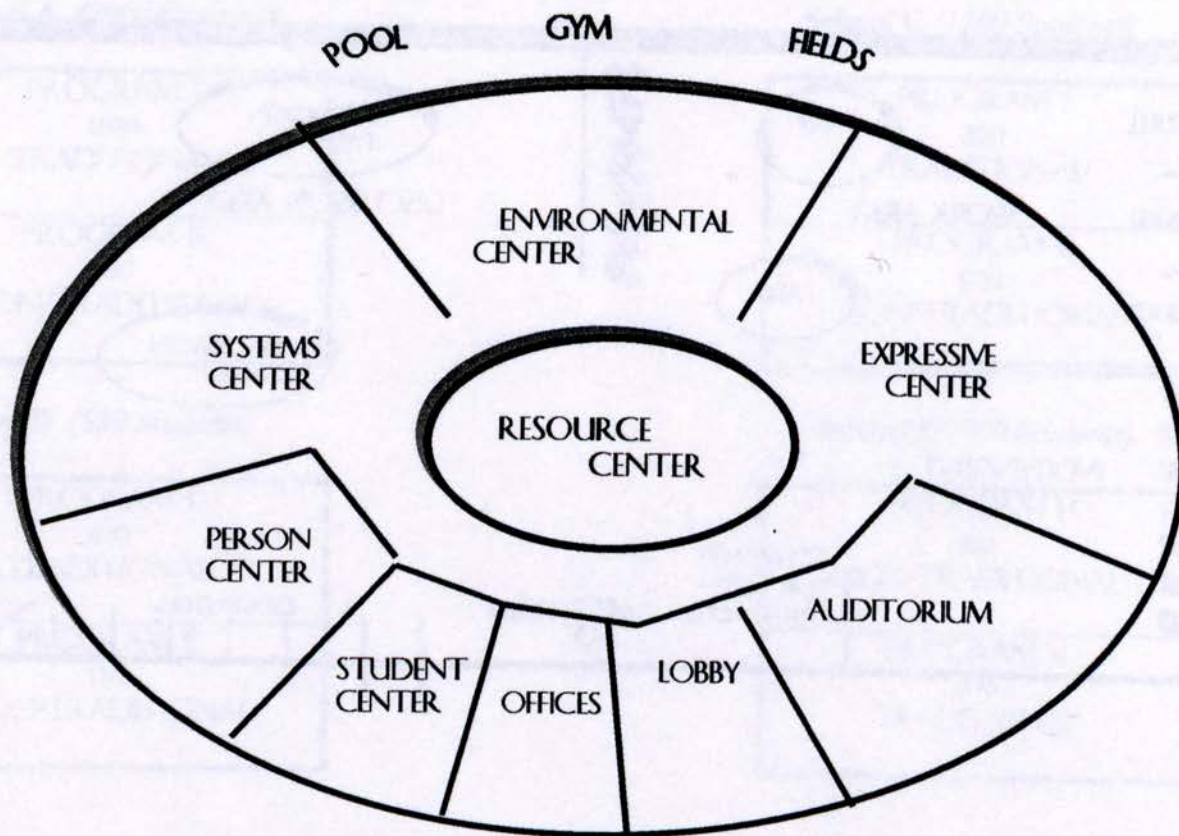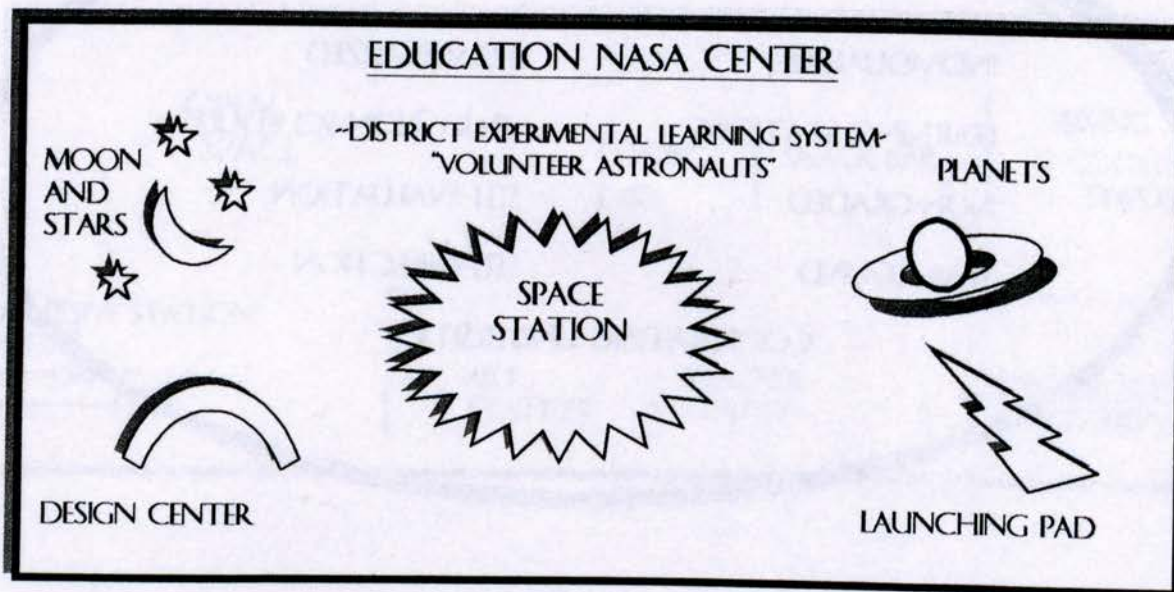
THE BEST OPEN SCHOOL IS CLOSED

by Charles Waterman and Jack Miller, *North Country Anvil*, June-July, 1977

Overview:

Excerpts from this article are presented here to demonstrate:

(1) the practical realities of the preceding ten design sketches
(2) the great success of strikingly different programs
(3) the implement all-at-once rather than piecemeal change process
(4) the humane climate of a nongraded K-12 mix, and
(5) the political intrigues that can close even the best of schools

Excerpts:

"Of all the places where the concepts of educational alternatives have been tried, few have produced a more impressive model than the Wilson Campus School at Minnesota State University. Founded in 1896 as a teacher training center, it was turned into an experimental program in 1968 by Don Glines, who had a well-deserved national reputation as an educational innovator.

"He began by abolishing grades and compulsory attendance. The number one priority for each teacher was to be an advisor for individual students. He made parents important. During the dramatic turn-around, Wilson began to exert a strong influence on education in Canada and the United States. It did this by making educators aware that something workable and yet akin to the "open" Summerhill School of A. S. Neill in England could actually be applied locally. What happened at Wilson was quiet dynamite.

"At a time when public schools—the heart of the democratic dream—were failing; when millions of students were not performing well...in the midst of this malaise came the message from Wilson: *'Here is a method that works'*—not only for the top students, but for all levels, including the large number of officially designated juvenile delinquents that have been enrolled in Wilson.

"When Glines was put in charge of the campus school and told to experiment, he decided the changes should not be isolated and temporary but instead should demonstrate practical results of educational alternatives in a manner that could be adopted by any district. He began working on two planes at once, establishing a college program to prepare teachers for alternatives and—through directing the Wilson School—creating a realizable program of K-12 alternatives. He did not fire old teachers and bring in new ones; he did not insist on architecturally designed open buildings. He did knock down some walls—both mental and structural. Most important for reality, Wilson made the changes with the existing budget, staff, students, and facilities.

"The key role of leadership for alternatives was demonstrated by the approach taken by Dr. Glines. He personally radiated energy, spoke not eloquently, but with words through which ideas shone. He might have been a stand-up comic, for his tape blasting all aspects of traditional education was hilarious. The building underwent his sudden, unblueprinted but immediate remodeling. He changed the school climate while looking for the 'gold' found in the student-teacher, student-student relationships. The lunchroom was turned into a student center with all-day food service. Once grades were abolished, the success-failure syndrome which ruins school for so many young people was eliminated. The priority became the interaction between people—teachers, students, parents—and the acceptance of responsibility for self-directed learning and behavior.

"The advisor could not control the program of the individual. Somehow out of all this complete freedom, the "Mavericks" learned to read, write, and score high on entrance exams. They did well in social adjustment and varsity sports. It is no coincidence that Wilson, with a small enrollment of 600 (200 elementary, 200 middle, and 200 high school age) sent a team to the finals of the Minnesota State basketball tournament. There were no labels burned into students; the concept worked for those who chose it. They were happy. Teachers were happy too, for while students had full control over their studies, staff had the same control over their professional and personal decisions. In the coffee room they spoke of the love for their advisees. They did not express fear of 'bosses' or the administrators.

"Unique experiences were there for students. 'Fourth grade' Lori, too young for the wrestling team, took lessons and learned to wrestle at Wilson. Others studied such topics as dream reality, taxidermy, Bach, death, history of Ireland, insurance, coping with divorce, health foods, log cabin construction, organic farming, Native American arts, harmonica, political systems, Russian, history of women—always as interdependently as feasible—along with the availability of everything previously taught under the traditional English, math, science, social studies, and physical education labels. There were no participation problems, even though school attendance was optional every day. Students liked coming to the building or traveling off campus with others. It was hard to get them to stay home even when they were truly sick. The program was year-round for continuous learning; students could attend their state minimum 170 days any of the 240 days the facility was open—or any of the 365 if part of the study was off-campus—whenever they desired.

"So what happened to this Camelot? Unfortunately, the innovative university president retired, and the director had already left Mankato to begin a new challenge. The replacement president was most traditional and set as his goal the final merging of the old lower campus with the new upper campus. He required more buildings. The Legislature said 'no' for budget reasons. He then declared he needed the facility—which was on the new upper campus—for the college. With underhanded politics, he convinced the legislature—which voted by a very narrow margin—to close Wilson, even though the original legislation had proposed to eliminate the five other ineffective campus schools, but keep Wilson open as a research and development center.

"The Wilson community did not give up without a fight. On a cold snowy day in March, 200 Wilsonites marched through town with a police escort to the office of the local superintendent—who was also new and 'in cahoots' with the college president—so he could be rid of this non-traditional distraction in the midst of his district. The students carried a coffin draped with 'Let Wilson Live' signs.

"The superintendent posted male faculty members on the doors of Mankato High (home of the district administration also) to prevent access by Wilson students. As would be expected, the protests were to no avail. The president would not keep Wilson open, and the superintendent would not transfer the program to one of the district buildings. A private Wilson Community School was formed and lasted nine more years before financial difficulties forced it to close. The Mankato concept did provide successful alternatives for a total of seventeen years in conservative rural Southern Minnesota.

"But the building that housed one of the finest experiments in American education history became a warehouse, campus security headquarters, and the administrative offices of the college maintenance department—and later also housed the college home economics and early childhood programs. Camelot had fallen to internal intrigue and external forces. Like the 'real' Camelot, a glorious era had come to an end."

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The story of Wilson relates how to create overnight a beautiful successful choice of alternatives, but it also serves as another reminder that when imagineering new designs, even the best supported programs can be eliminated quickly through back-door politics---and **TRADITION.** The priority now for early twenty-first century thinkers is to learn how to overcome the many barriers preventing the adoption of imaginative learning alternatives. Though few would want a complete return to the little old country schoolhouse, some of the basic tenets of that format can help create a climate for tomorrow. In contemplating reforms for the present and designs for the future, it would be prudent for the new leaders to *Remember Wilson!*

"The fact that 50 million people believe what has been believed for 200 years does not make it true. The idea persists that tradition supports conventional dogma, although the ideas and practices are manifestly untenable."

THE ANIMAL SCHOOL

Once upon a time, the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of "a new world." So they organized a school.

They adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming, and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all the animals took all the subjects.

The duck was excellent in swimming, in fact better than his instructor, but he made only passing grades in flying and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to stay after school and also drop swimming to practice running. This was kept up until his webbed feet were badly worn, so he was then only average in swimming. *But average was acceptable in school, so nobody worried about that except the duck.*

The rabbit started at the top of the class in running, but had a nervous breakdown because of so much make-up work in swimming.

The squirrel was excellent in climbing until he developed frustration in the flying class where his teacher *made him start from the ground up instead of from the treetop down.* He also developed "charlie horses" from overexertion and then got C in climbing and D in running.

The eagle was a problem child and was disciplined severely. In climbing class he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using *his own way to get there.*

At the end of the year, an abnormal eel who could swim exceedingly well and also run, climb, and fly a little had the highest average and was valedictorian.

The prairie dogs stayed out of school and fought the tax levy because the administration would not add digging and burrowing to the curriculum. They apprenticed their child to a badger and later joined the groundhogs and gophers to start a successful private school.

Does this fable have a moral?

The Administration of the School Curriculum—With reference to individual differences
O. H. Reavis

CHAPTER NINETEEN

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Many of these expressed thoughts have been used in the text or graphics of *Educational Alternatives for Everyone*. Those used, joined by other opinions, are summarized as inspiration for individuals and groups to find the energy and courage to challenge seriously the status quo of education, society, and the global perspective. *"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do not dare that they are difficult."*

The statements may be philosophical, comical, inspirational, sarcastic, ironic, critical, optimistic, pessimistic, or thought provoking. Related to educational alternatives, when combined they can create a powerful message to assist advocates in confronting defenders of the one-size-fits-all systems. Options are no longer a dream but a necessary reality, if "schooling" is ever to transition to "learning" and support the transformation to a significantly better tomorrow.

Quotations

"My ignorance has seldom gotten me into trouble, but I have known so many things that are not so, that I have always been in trouble."

Mark Twain

"We just got our test back...I hate to look....I hope I don't get a D-Minus. They say a D-minus can impair the function of your immune system and disrupt the chemical balance of your body. ...Oh, sorry, body!"

Peanuts (Charles Schulz)

"It is time to do the impossible...the possible is no longer working."

Robert Theobald

"We are at the dawning of a golden age...maybe...but only if we can change our values, lifestyles, priorities, and our INSTITUTIONS."

Buckminster Fuller

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"I have seen what others can only dream…I know these descriptions are
true…for I have been there."

Gulliver (Jonathan Swift)

*"When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies…to surrender dreams…this may
be the madness…and the maddest of all…to see life as it is and not as it should be."*

Don Quixote (Miguel Cervantes)

"There must be in the world many parents who, like the present author, have
young children whom they are anxious to educate as well as possible, but are
reluctant to expose to the evils of the existing educational institutions."

Bertrand Russell

"School is a wreck, but I can find bits of treasure in it."

James Meighan

"For all the children some of the time and for some other children all of the
time, the classroom resembles a cage from which there is no escape."

Phillip Jackson

*"On the cruise ship of life, Charlie Brown, which way is your deck chair facing?" "I don't
know…I've never been able to get one open."*

Lucy and Charlie Brown (Charles Schulz)

"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do
not dare that they are difficult."

Lucius Seneca

"We make realities out of dreams and dreams out of reality…we are the dreamers of the dreams."

Willie Wonka (Roald Dahl)

"Schools have not necessarily much to do with education...they are mainly institutions of control where certain basic habits must be instilled in the young. Education is quite different and has little place in school."

Winston Churchill

"We need radical re-think in education...tinkering with an obsolete and counter-productive system will not do it. Humans invented current schools over 150 years ago. People can now change a system that has outlived its usefulness."

Roland Meighan

Linus: "I guess it is wrong always to worry about tomorrow--maybe we should only worry about today."
Charlie: "Nope, that is giving up. I'm still hoping that yesterday will get better."

Linus and Charlie Brown (Charles Schulz)

"Ignorance is like a delicate, exotic fruit—touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately, in England at any rate, education provides no effect whatsoever."

Oscar Wilde

"'What is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?'"

Alice in Wonderland (Lewis Carroll)

"It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom. Without this, it goes to wrack and ruin without fail."

Albert Einstein

"To learn to know oneself and to find a life worth living and work worth doing is problem and challenge enough, without having to waste time on fake and unworthy challenges of school—pleasing the teacher, staying out of trouble, fitting in with the gang, being popular, doing what everyone else does."

John Holt

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"Uniformity is just plain bad education...the tendency of the examination system to arrest growth, to deaden life, to paralyze the higher faculties...to involve education in an atmosphere of unreality and self-deception...is a source of infinite mischief which obscures the true purpose of education."

Edmond Holmes

"I began to realize that bells, confinement, crazy sequences, age segregation, lack of privacy, constant surveillance, and a national curriculum of schooling were designed to prevent children from learning and thinking critically. These were designed to convert them into addiction and dependent behavior."

John Gatto

"Why do we tolerate a totalitarian-style, domination-riddled system of learning heavily rooted in fear—while a democratic system is characterized by an absence of domination."

Nelson Mandela

"Shakespeare did not write with a view of boring school children; he wrote with a view of delighting his audiences. If he does not give you delight, you had better ignore him."

Bertrand Russell

"Current education—compulsory schooling, compulsory learning—is a tyranny and a crime against the human mind and spirit...Let all those escape it who can—any way they can."

John Holt

"Mass schooling, including its imposed mathematics, is mass superstition."

Paul Goodman

"Never let schoolin' interfere with your education."

Mark Twain

"In universities mathematics is taught mainly to men who are going to teach mathematics to...in fact, it is a common error to confuse mathematics with arithmetic...and arithmetic is overvalued in the schools and takes up far more time than it should—for there are more useful things to learn."

Bertrand Russell

"Dear Teacher: I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no one should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by educated physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So I am suspicious of education—reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human."

A Survivor

"From the fuss we make about reading, one might think this is a country of readers—that reading was nearly everyone's favorite or near-favorite pastime. Education has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading."

George Trevelyan

"Dear Pencil-Pal, How do you go to school? I ride in a school bus. I go to a big school. We learn a lot in school. They teach us science, English, geography, arithmetic, history, and spelling. When I get big, I would like to drive a school bus."

Charlie Brown (Charles Schulz)

"We are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of our chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought."

Bertrand Russell

"It is plainly to be seen that democracy cannot be learned in schools when it is not lived."

Rita Sherman

"What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge—not knowledge in pursuit of the child."

George Bernard Shaw

"The city school is like the old woman who lived in the shoe and had so many children she did not know what to do. The schools are overrun with children merely because we have been trying to provide facilities for all the children to study at the same time for a few hours each day. The rest of the time the facilities sit empty."

William Wirt

"Revolution will occur in education too. We will move away from a system that assumes every child of a particular age moves at the same pace in every subject, and instead develop a system directed to the particular talents, interests, and time needs of every student."

Anthony Blair

"I do not care to motivate my children by telling them that they will have to be strong to survive ruthless competition. I would rather tell them the world needs their wisdom, their talents, and their kindness—and of the many possibilities for a life of service."

Nat Needle

"If schools in 1900 had adopted a twelve-month nationwide learning calendar, and some group in 2000 wanted to reduce the school attendance pattern to nine months, would the American public even consider such a change?"

Charles Ballinger

In 1863, he projected cars and traffic jams, the electric chair, electric monorails, telephones, fax machines—and even the Eiffel Tower. He then stated: "I am dejected over a society in which much of the population is addicted to technology, heavily indebted to huge corporations, and no longer interested in the classical achievements of the past."

Jules Verne

Linus: "I wish I had a pencil-pal like you, Charlie Brown."
Charlie: "Well it doesn't do much good if you can't read or write."
Linus: "That's very true---only five years old and already I'm an illiterate."

Linus and Charlie Brown (Charles Schulz)

"The vision of holism is a vision of healing. It is a vision of atonement between humanity and nature. It is a vision of peace. And it is a vision of love.

Ron Miller

"A general state education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another, and the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the dominant power in the government, whether this be a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a majority of the existing generation. It establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by a natural tendency to one over the body."

John Stuart Mill

"I have not done a full survey or review of education systems around the world so that the views I express are based upon personal experience. I would say that all education systems I've had contact with are a disgrace and a disaster."

Edward de Bono

"What is meant by non-interference of the school in learning? It means granting students the full freedom to avail themselves of teaching that answers what they need and want—not forcing them to learn what they do not need or want… It is not likely that schools based on students' freedom of choice will be established even a hundred years from now."

Leo Tolstoy

"It is the great triumph of compulsory government monopoly mass schooling that among even the best of my fellow teachers and among even the best of my students parents, only a small number can imagine a different way to do things."

John Gatto

"There cannot be any way to defend waiting lists and lotteries. How can you have a waiting list or a lottery for LEARNING? If the program is perceived as that good, it is mandatory to rearrange the district structures to accommodate all who want to enroll."

Don Glines

"I realized that I am among those who believe that Tomorrow's School will be a replacement for, not merely an adjustment of, today's system of education."

Christopher Ball

"Trying to get more out of the current education system is like trying to get the pony express to compete with the telegraph by breeding faster ponies."

Edward Fiske

"The founding fathers in their wisdom decided that children were an unnatural strain on parents, so they provided jails called schools, equipped with tortures called education. School is where you go when your parents can't take you and industry can't take you."

John Updike

"I wrote that schooling can seriously damage your education, but I was too cautious. I should have said, schooling **will** damage your education."

Roland Meighan

"Some true educational experiences are bound to occur in schools. They occur, however, despite school and not because of it."

Everett Reimer

"I learned most, not from those who taught me, but from those who talked with me."

St. Augustine

"There is much fine talk in schools about 'Teaching Democratic Values.' What children really learn is 'Practical Slavery.'"

John Holt

"Infidelity does not consist in believing or not believing. It consists in professing to believe what one does not believe."

Thomas Paine

"Yes, Ernest, there are things man is better off not knowing---but they seldom come up in the first grade."

Frank and Ernest (Thaves)

"The best thing about baseball is that there is no homework."

Dan Quisenberry

"Students do not participate in choosing the goals, curriculum, or manner of instruction. This is in striking contrast to all the teaching about the virtues of democracy—the political practices of the school stand in striking contrast to what is taught. While being taught that freedom and responsibility are the glorious features of our democracy, students are experiencing powerlessness, and almost no opportunity to exercise choice or carry responsibility.

Carl Rogers

"The language of reform carries with it the traditional connotations of things
gone wrong that need to be corrected, as with delinquent boys or girls
incarcerated in reform schools.... School renewal is a much different game—
the ethos of renewal has to do with people...and improving their learning
environments."

John Goodlad

"Innovative educators are like the orchestra leaders. They turn their backs on the crowd."

Everett Rodgers

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it."
(good advice for the growth of educational alternatives)

Yogi Berra

*"If the heart is not nurtured by a nurturing heart in infancy and in childhood, that heart response
is compromised."*

Joseph Pearce

"Democratic educators continue to struggle on behalf of populations chronically
denied their rights and traditionally excluded from meaningful participation in the
governing of society."

Ron Miller

"If schools and colleges are to be significantly better, they must be significantly different."

Don Glines

"Failure is characterized by the frustrated will to know, whereas not-learning
involves the will to refuse knowledge."

Herbert Kohl

*"Self-concept, values, enthusiasm, responsibility, initiative, and acceptance of others are part of
the formula for creating powerful principles of learning."*

Wayne Jennings

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"A different and better system of appraising and reporting student progress is essential in A SCHOOL FOR EVERYONE."

J. Lloyd Trump

"People learn best when they have a need to know. Learning is a deeply personal, affective experience involving self-concept. The genius of good teaching lies not in providing information, but in helping students to discover needs to know they never had before."

Art Combs

"Graduates were not handicapped in their college work; major departures from traditionally required subjects did not lessen the readiness of the student; youth from the schools which deviated most from the traditional achieved distinctly higher results; the strict requirement of certain subjects was no longer tenable; the assumptions of conventional college entrance criteria should be abandoned; students could be trusted with greater degrees of freedom; and the courses taken in high school had no relationship to success in college and later life."

The Eight-Year Study

Summary

To summarize the impact of the views expressed by all these quoted individuals, and to relate them to what educational alternatives leaders must overcome in the decades ahead, a thought by Robert Theobald closes the chapter. The potential of options for everyone all the time, if harnessed, can lead to many choices for learners and to significantly better learning environments:

"The future is ours for us to create. But creation requires knowledge, imagination, and perseverance. Will we generate these qualities in sufficient measures to change the world? If we fail to do so, the destruction of the human race is certain; if we should succeed, none of us has sufficient imagination to perceive the potentials of our future."

Robert Theobald

RENEWAL, NOT REFORM

John Goodlad clearly stated the difference in philosophy of the two opposing concepts:

> "The language of reform carries with it the traditional connotations of things gone wrong that need to be corrected, as with delinquent boys or girls incarcerated in reform schools.... School renewal is much different.... The ethos of renewal has to do with people...and improving their learning environments."

Thousands and thousands of children and youth are imprisoned from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM in public institutions that are wrong for the majority of them—and for society as a whole. Education does need alternatives in the public as well as the private sector. In spite of overwhelming odds, visionaries must continue the essential task of renewal away from the ill-conceived, negative political mandates while moving student climates toward diverse directions of child-centered choices within a democracy. More startling, most global, societal, and educational futurists—including many of the most respected academic intellectuals in their fields—are convinced there is little hope for the reform or renewal of education. They are calling for completely new learning systems, devoid of the current structures of schooling. **Envisioned is an exemplary democracy—without the institution now called school.**

Meanwhile, the challenge is to change existing public schools by offering available-to-all options in most communities—or by enrolling more youth in private alternatives. Choice advocates cannot abandon all those "7th graders" still "locked" in their local traditional classrooms.

New Directions[1]

It is sad but true that in this **new century local public schools, partially created to ensure democracy, are ironically among the most undemocratic institutions in America.** Their major rivals, the prisons and the Marines, can be avoided by behaving or not enlisting.

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[1] Partial Reprint, with permission, of views published under the title "Reversing Public School Reform" in the Spring, 2001 journal, *Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities*. Repetition may be encountered in summarizing the potential for creating the future of *Educational Alternatives for Everyone*.

There is no escape from "schooling," as everyone receives the same twelve-year sentence. The existing uniform factory assembly line model called education, in vogue in most districts, is not now, nor has it been for most of the previous century, appropriate for the *majority* of students. New paths of learning and better options for families and communities are essential while moving toward 2010.

Present systems, with their mandated same programs and requirements for *everyone*, based upon group-paced instruction, are wrong. Voucher plans, charter schools, magnet schools, alternative centers for dropouts, gifted classes, some special education programs, independent study, and home schooling would be unnecessary if mandatory rigidities were replaced by voluntary individual learning plans. The affluent and those who can make great financial sacrifices sometimes find relief in the private sector, but the vast majority of families and students have no hope for parole.

Backward Renewal

School renewal is desperately needed, but not as in the current politically generated "reforms." Those are headed in the wrong direction. *Education has become politics*, and in spite of the rhetoric, learning is not student-centered. Many state legislatures have recently required that students pass an exit examination before they can receive a diploma; they have also eliminated "social promotion." These and similar measures have a negative effect on students, and therefore will not help overall, regardless of the politically motivated slogans of the advocates.

A longer school year structured the same as the currently popular 180-day requirement will only give disenchanted students more time to hate school, and the cognitively advanced more hours to be bored. If legislatures are serious regarding remediation, why do they cap "summer school" funding? Why let students fail for nine months and then try to remediate the failure in four to six weeks? Why not remediate after nine weeks year-round, or provide opportunities often for enrichment?

The dictatorial edicts of local school districts—prime examples of undemocratic bureaucracies—pay lip service to improving with slogans, target outcomes, and mandated book adoptions, but input from dissenting voices is not allowed or is ignored. Teachers are overwhelmed with requirements, pressures, and restrictions on their creative interests. In most communities, permissive "democratic" two-minute public input comments at Board meetings are disregarded. Committee decisions involving parents are merely rubber-stamp approval of planned administrator procedures. Local school site councils seldom have experience in envisioning; they focus on what exists. There is a rejection mentality for any adverse opinion, especially a recommendation to deviate away from the accepted "normal" school structures. Boards and administrators do not want to consider creative optional designs and all the research that is available, for this would interrupt uniformity.

Voluntary Astronauts

Nationally, most local districts have refused to create research and development centers where parents, teachers, and students could volunteer to be "education astronauts." Such NASA style centers are desperately needed. If the United States has the intelligence and technology to reach Mars, then certainly in the next two decades "school people" should finally be able to figure out how to eliminate the 7th grade—**by far the worst school year for most youth.**

R&D Centers could:

1. Provide immediate optional choices of learning environments and lifestyles for volunteers,
2. Implement known research results not currently used in most schools, and
3. Offer a climate for exploring, experimenting, and developing new approaches and materials that could benefit individuals and society.

Scotch tape did not "suddenly appear." The Kitty Hawk is no longer flying; typewriters are almost extinct. Medicine, after fifteen years of rejection, adopted penicillin, and now there are transplants; instant communication is changing access to information. However, the education enterprise continues to rely on an old model, *somehow still hoping that yesterday will get better.*

Family Options

The need for choices for public school parents and students is beyond question. Many not now in charter or home schooling patterns are craving new opportunities, but they are powerless as individuals. Groups have to form to "fight," even if they are citizens and taxpayers and want only to improve the learning environments offered as options for students. State legislatures (politicians) try the quick fix with erroneous new laws aimed at ALL regardless of validity. Local districts insist that schools are improving when there is no significant difference in learning. **The test scores may show modest gains, but at least 30% of the students still receive D and F grades and remain potential "push-outs."**

In numerous districts, long overdue school repairs temporarily help, placating constituents at the moment by asserting that improvement is in process. Ironically, votes for bond issues are usually not one of confidence in the system or trustees, but finally the realization by even conservative taxpayers that students were desperately in need of better facilities if they were to be sentenced there for seven hours a day for twelve years. Many communities have been in disgrace, allowing school buildings to deteriorate to where, perhaps over the past fifteen years, conditions were atrocious. What happened to the essential door-to-door support and combined power of such groups as the Chamber of Commerce, churches, the League of Women Voters, newspapers, and the business sector in these localities?

Regardless of politics and questionable school administrations, there has never been a valid excuse for deterioration of learning facilities. Money has never been the real issue, but rather the failure to place caring for people above partisan politics. To overcome the excuse of being "overcrowded," year-round education schedules would solve immediate problems in many districts. Though a new high school may be needed, year-round could save approximately 35 million dollars for a 2000 student facility, if the issue were construction cost. If bonds for facilities are finally approved, then does it take another 15-30 years to change outmoded learning programs?

The existing "teaching" methods of the schools, even with greatly improved facilities, and with the continued political expedience proposals, rules, and policies of governors, legislatures, and district administrators, will not in the long run create significantly better learning, nor will mandated single series textbooks for reading and math focused primarily on raising test scores. Research and Development centers, and choices for families are essential priorities which could address many of the problems, but most existing school districts refuse even to consider deviations from Marine-style uniformity.

Age Levels

It is well known that student differences at each grade level are extreme. If legislatures wanted to focus on learning and not politics, the members could address the kindergarten dilemma. Now most states determine the readiness of a child for school based upon one minute on the clock. If Sally is born at 11:59 PM on November 30, she may be eligible for kindergarten when she turns five. But poor Billy is born at 12:01 AM December 1, and therefore is not eligible for school at age five. Something happens in that magic minute or two; perhaps the inherited genes automatically change with the date on the calendar. This one-minute dilemma can even happen with identical twins.

How absurd· a law can legislators create? It is not based on growth and development or learning, but only political whim—a need, they think, for a standardized cut-off date. A kindergarten teacher has students entering with a sixteen-month chronological span (counting transfer students from states with diverse magic dates). Added to this are the motivation, maturity, cultural, and home environment factors. The developmental range is then beyond twenty-four months. Kindergarten teachers have an impossible task, especially in states where early childhood programs are offered but not mandated. Entering "grade one" after nine months of half-day "schooling" creates among students a plus or minus four year readiness component at each elementary "grade level"—another of the erroneous concepts of "school people" and politicians. Primary teachers cannot function appropriately in the conventional self-contained classroom; they are not able to meet the needs of a four-year span effectively.

By the time the students reach "7th grade," the academic growth spread—as measured by inappropriate state-mandated tests—ranges from grades 2-3 to grades 12-13, depending upon the communities. Physiologically, the students are spread a minimum of six years. Some boys are "9th graders"; they are men—and ready for the National Football League. Others are still physically "5th graders"; they have not even heard of puberty, let alone progressed through it. Yet they are all in "7th grade" physical education and play flag football (or equivalent) as required. The "5th grader" gets physically hurt and chastised on the field for not blocking, and then laughed at in the showers for not reaching puberty, but the school proclaims to the community that it has a good physical education curriculum.

It is absolutely impossible to have 7th grade courses of study, requirements, lunch (they are not all hungry at 11:25 AM), football, and standards. Separating youth into fast, medium, and slow classes is especially wrong. No one should be sentenced to the 7th grade—yet most schools have such a grouping and then pretend they have fine programs. **National and local education leaders have forgotten that there is nothing so unequal as to treat unequals as equals, when it comes to creating appropriate learning environments.**

School Structures

The traditional 155-year-old elementary schooling structure is impossible to improve. Thousands of fine teachers and principals have tried over the many decades, but it simply cannot be accomplished with the conventional self-contained classroom. The only "good ones" are where students are lucky enough to inherit a pied piper facilitator who loves "kids," puts the affective domain first, and tries to individualize expectations.

The current grade-level system began in 1847 in Quincy MA. The organizational ideas were imported from Prussia by Horace Mann, where the "graded concept" had been used since the 1500s—initially to prepare youth for the military—at each age level, specific "army skills" were to be mastered. State departments of education and state legislatures have made this archaic format worse wherever they have mandated incompatible standards, authentic assessment, accountability, promotion denial, and required subjects based upon the "grade level" in school.

Most districts label grades 6-7-8, or 7-8, or even 7-9, *Middle Schools,* but there are few true middle schools, as envisioned originally in 1965. The overwhelming majority are still organized based upon a seventy-year-old junior high model. They have not understood the philosophy behind the four-year age level designs ("grades" 5-8) as originally planned. The "junior" format, promoted in the 1930s, remains instead: period 1-2-3 or two-period block schedules, ABC report cards, and inappropriate but required group-paced curriculum for ALL— English, history, science, math, physical education, and six or nine week "exploratory units". **The Middle School focus instead should be on trust, as in "with freedom goes responsibility," the affective over the cognitive domain** (the person, not math as priority), and four years to develop through puberty in a warm, caring environment with modernized, clean, pod-oriented facilities (not a hand-me-down old high school.)

The desired elimination of the junior high and intermediate school never occurred. It could have, for it was truly a time to dream: "What is a middle school?" Unfortunately, the majority saw it only as a fad, or used it to justify placing the 9th grade back in the high schools to fill those buildings in an era of declining enrollments. *They changed the name over the door— altering the grade levels assigned (from 7-8-9 to 6-7-8)—but they left the obsolete junior high format in place.* Over forty years later, communities still do not understand what the 1964 national study determined was wrong with the "junior" design.

<u>**High Schools**</u>

High schools have done no better. In most locations, the traditional pattern has remained the same for almost one hundred years. To review, most high schools during the 1930 era of the *Eight-Year Study* had the following: period 1-2-3 schedules (a terrible way to organize for instruction—the current fad erroneously labeled "block scheduling" is no better), hall passes, required English, history, math, science, social studies (by grade level—again wrong), ABC report cards (a non-defensible manner of measuring achievement), 30 desks facing the chalkboard, cheerleaders, football, Spanish Club, homework, single course text books, lockers—or now awful overloaded "back packs"—and schedule conflicts among classes offered only once or twice a semester. The only real differences seven decades later are the Computer Club—though most schools yet lack enough updated technology to change learning methods and outcomes—drugs rather than gum, and tougher (they claim) curriculum requirements. Further, even if the old buildings are painted, the roofs repaired, classrooms air-conditioned, and bathrooms cleaned and modernized, the conventional facility design of "boxes holding thirty" is still a detriment, for this continues the practice of one instructor in isolation teaching a separate subject. The slight deviations in program offerings—such as the high school gifted format—are almost worse, for many districts have only added "zero" period classes (or equivalent) and a Marine Corps mentality of "rigorous" absolutes. Sadly, most new high schools are being designed, though more "modern" in arrangements and amenities, to replicate a 100-year-old dysfunctional pattern. Few districts have been willing to "imagineer" for the future.

<u>**Rethinking Curriculum**</u>

The famous previously cited Eight-Year Study of the 1930s (Five Volumes, Harper/Row, 1942) involving 300 of the most recognized universities and 30 of the highly acclaimed high schools **proved conclusively that success in college and later life were completely unrelated to what courses were taken in high school. In fact, the graduates of the "gooniest" programs had the best results when evaluated by traditional outcomes** (income, marriage, employment). In spite of this, the high schools continued their conventions, which were then adopted by the newly formed—and named—"junior" high. When the middle school was designed, many advocates promoted a combined nongraded K-12 structure, as in the landmark Wilson Campus School at Minnesota State University, Mankato, but the grade level 5-8 format won, based on more easily selling the concept to the public. More importantly, the four-year span was to allow students to grow into adolescence without pressure. The available studies indicated that the "5th" students were closer to the "6th" and "7th" developmentally than to the "4th," and the "9th" were closer to the "10th" than "7th" or "8th." Further, 5th and 6th were found to benefit from specialized curriculum areas as in art, music, physical education, and home and industrial projects. **The research indicated that there is no reason to separate ages, except as sometimes appropriate, as in a family at home with multiple age ranges of children.** As a result, rather than restrict the middle school to grades 5-8, a better arrangement is to **overlap grade levels** with the elementary and high schools, as in K-5, 5-9, 9-12 (or similar one or two-year configurations) to allow for better placement of students related to maturity and comfort, without any stigma. The less mature can remain longer with the younger group, while the more mature can join with the older students.

Individual accommodations are essential, for unfortunately, the curriculum in both the junior and senior highs in most districts is particularly out of sync with reality. Algebra is a good example, regardless of the "grade level" involved. No one needs such an obsolete course, not even

engineers. **What engineers and transportation planners (all college graduates) need is a course in common sense.** This obvious observation is reinforced every day for anyone trying to enter or leave a freeway by crossing three lanes on most central city on /off ramps—a complete disaster related to safety—and a prime example of failure to plan for the future. Attempting to park in most multi-storied garage buildings is equally taxing, yet these facilities **were designed by college graduates who passed algebra but "failed" the class in common sense. They were also approved by local planning commissions and city councils—again composed primarily of college graduates.** Algebraic concepts should be interwoven with a continuous interdependent "systems" curriculum. Knowledge is not segmented, but is interrelated. It cannot be placed in separate courses and departments. **Algebra should never be required, any more than Latin, which used to be mandated for college until Latin teachers were phased out.** If the legislatures want "basics," they should return to their favorite important class—Latin. **College graduates** also created the Love Canal, the Pinto, Pacific Gas and Electric, Enron, and hundreds of other environmental and fiscal "disasters."

If algebra is offered, it cannot be taught for 36 weeks a year for all students (September to June). **The Cal Tech/MIT university caliber students can learn it in 6-8 weeks.** Give them a book and get out of their way. The "slower" in math, but still college prep student—perhaps a future sociology major and Peace Corps worker—may need to know about radicals in politics but not in algebra. **This latter learner may need 50 weeks to complete the experience satisfactorily.**

Good veteran, honest teachers know that only three in a class of thirty need algebra for 36 weeks (the current school year); the other twenty-seven need less (6-12-18-24 weeks) or more time (40-44-50 weeks). But all thirty youth are sentenced to the same pattern because school administrators are afraid to be creative and change the schedule and curriculum format to allow students to proceed at their own pace. **The standard 36 weeks for everyone results in the bell-shaped grading curve which ensures A, B, C, D, and F student report cards in each class—or** separate classes for low and high achievers.

Is it any wonder that the majority of students are not <u>excited</u> attending school each year? How many "C" students are truly excited regarding learning? "Oh, I love school; it is wonderful; I get Cs." Think of the attitudes of D and F youth, and even more of those who are "pushed-out." Of the thirty percent who receive A and B grades, half are bored. They may "like school" because of friends, gifted classes, Halloween parties, football, and college preparation. But when asked regarding their courses, they are not enthusiastic. Think of the algebra student who could finish in six weeks but must wait thirty-six weeks; he or she could also finish four years of traditional math in two years or six years in four, but is not allowed to move forward, for doing so would destroy the system. **Such youth are sentenced to years of boredom.**

Evaluating Students

The standardized tests used in almost all states, regardless of publisher, are inappropriate; if given, they should only be used as in the medical model for individual diagnosis and prescription purposes. They are of no value for comparing students or schools. Such "smart/dumb," "good/bad" distinctions are contrary to the real mission of learning—developing the human and societal potential by maximizing the strengths of each student. Passing the exam does not mean the student has learned, but only temporarily retained enough to qualify

for the next round. The Scholastic Aptitude Tests and other equivalents for college entrance are not appropriate either; many youth who do not do well on them can graduate from college with honors. The same is true for the Graduate Record Exam. Students who "fail" it, but are finally accepted often complete their Ph.D. degrees with 3.5-4.0 averages. State-mandated tests can be passed if teachers spend hours teaching the "correct" answers. The percentile score basis for comparison is even worse. Fifty percent of the students nationally must be below average— *always*. If everyone improves, the tests are re-normed to keep half below fifty. If all in one city score above, then all in an equal population city must score below. If all in one large state are above fifty, then all in a similar state must be below. **This makes no sense—to evaluate learning by always keeping half the nation "below average."**

It is not hard to raise percentiles on tests through immersion concentration on test-related items. Raising scores several percentage points is not especially significant. If they soar to 60, why not 90? The intent should be for students to *learn*. **There is still a classroom mentality of grading on the curve where 70 is passing and 69 is failing.** Neither is true; of 100 items, the student knows 69. If he or she needs to know the other 31, then the necessary time and methods must be made available for him or her to achieve this result. If the 31 "errors" are not that important, they probably should not have been on the test. Should not the one who scored 70 also know most of the other 30 "correct responses" on the test?

Medical doctors know that to be a good physician, one must individually diagnose and prescribe. Schools assume everyone in the "7th grade" has the flu, so they all receive flu shots (mandated same curriculum), in spite of the fact that one has a broken arm, one has an earache, one has a cut foot, one has diabetes, one has an emotional condition, and one has a cold, while other patients are healthy. Even more of a malpractice is the fact that if a student transfers from out-of-state a week after school opens, **the schooling people have already decided the previous spring, before ever meeting the individual, what site will be assigned, what courses will be required, what teachers will be mandated, when lunch will be served, what books will be used, and what evaluation system will be in place.** Even the medical profession is forgetful; it sometimes creates a group approach for school admission by combining measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines, though there is growing support that for many these shots should be given separately, one year apart. National curricula and standards are not the answer to the problem posed here. Rather, curriculum and teaching methodologies that meet the needs of individual learners, along with physically and spiritually healthy learner-centered environments, are the paths for improving education for all persons.

Algebra and the flu syndrome are not the only improper approaches. English is the same. Again, caring teachers recognize that in a class of 30, only three or four (not counting non-English speaking youth) need semi-colon instruction at the same time. Even in elective classes, as in French, the four-in-thirty ratio holds. French usually involves college prep students, yet the ABCDF syndrome prevails there too. The gifted language students are ready for the chapter one test on Tuesday, but they must wait until Friday to receive their A. The "average" students are almost ready on Friday, but the struggling ones are not. Yet they all take the same exam. **On Monday the papers are returned marked with red, with scores of A through F,** but then the D and F students are told to study harder and "catch up" for there is a test on chapter two (even though they do not know chapter one) on the coming Friday.

Given such a system, it is no wonder that schools succeed in reaching only the gifted or "above average," and **giftedness is not total.** Some are brilliant in communication but only fair in

math; others may be outstanding in art, but poor in physical education. In many districts, **all gifted classes are group-paced and isolated from mixing with the "average" students,** again both wrong practices.

Even more, if foreign language is to be taught, there should be immersion programs in K-4, not in high school. Elementary youth can fairly easily become bilingual. High school ages struggle, for the 5x55x9x2 formula is one for illiteracy, but students must *be* illiterate to enter many universities. Few students can learn French, Japanese, or Spanish fluently by studying 5 days a week, 55 minutes a day, 9 months a year, for 2 years. They may receive an A, but they cannot speak, read, or write the language even semi-fluently. It is an exercise in futility, **yet now that they are illiterate, they can enroll in "higher education."**

Elementary Schools

The elementary level is just as outdated. The self-contained classroom is impossible. One person in a small box with very limited facilities must teach fourteen subjects in comprehensive schools, though even the best teachers cannot do it. In districts stressing basics, the subjects leading to success for some students—art, science, physical education—have been abandoned. **Learning "basics" can often best be achieved through home economics.** It is not "wrong" to help low achieving students improve in reading and math abilities. But it is not defensible to have everyone use the same textbook and be on the same page based on "grade level." Mandating one reading and one math program, though both may be good for some, is not the appropriate approach for *all* students. Not everyone learns the same way or at the same pace. Placing all gifted 4th graders in an "advanced reader" and requiring the group to proceed together is again indefensible. Mary could be in one chapter, Juanita and Billy in another chapter, Vanessa and Carlos in different places in other readers, and Mei, Charlie, Jayson in entirely different programs. Visual learners do not do as well with auditory presentations, yet most classes are still taught with the teacher standing in front of the room talking AT the group. Further, modern brain-based research is usually ignored, though it exposes this approach as wrong for the majority. **The brain is a pattern-making organ, not a pattern-receiving entity.**

Four hours a day on language and math may be appropriate for selected youth, but not for *all*. Districts ignore child growth and development research. **Some students at a given moment in time need instructional physical education more than reading; others need more art than math. Some learn reading and math best through their interests in science, home economics, or industrial technology.** Stir, blend, mix, tablespoonful, ½ cup make great reading and math approaches. Most districts have virtually eliminated meaningful time for elementary art, music, physical education, shop, technology, home economics, nature study, gardening, Spanish, and other often "fun" subjects that are considered non-essential. This is a great detriment to large numbers of students, for they are often motivated through these fields. Districts have unethically hired preparation period teachers to cover, as illustration, perhaps 30 minutes of music and 30 minutes of physical activity, even though the instructors have no training or credentialing in either subject. This practice enables the classroom teacher to have an hour free in isolation (prep period), while ignoring state mandated minutes per subject per week codes. **Research and educator knowledge regarding the value of these subjects for many youth offer further evidence of the errors in the current school reform movement.**

Teacher Focus

Teachers (facilitators in non-traditional alternatives) **need to join as team members to maximize their strengths, minimize their weaknesses, provide multiple personalities for students, and exchange perceptions of student potential.** This approach is especially valid with the increasing numbers of new staff members. Working together in nongraded teams housed in suites, if properly conceived and implemented, normally results in better learning environments for youth. **The one person in "my room with my class" grade level mentality contributes to the lack of improvement**—especially when the *weak* or *inexperienced teacher* is expected to carry the same load as the "good veteran." This dilemma becomes even more important with teachers needing to address the many diversified cultures represented in so many schools.

Class Size Reduction to 1-20 in the primary age levels has not helped, except to make life easier for the teachers, but it has created facility shortages and forced the hiring of more untrained staff. A 1999 study at the University of California, Riverside, Center for Educational Research found no significant improvement in the core curriculum requirements of traditional schools, for teachers were still using the same methods as in previous larger classes. The summary concluded that spending money on other factors such as improving staff development and better curriculum materials would probably be more beneficial. **The irony is that more money should be spent on the K-2 years than on any other three-year combination in the district, yet the high schools still receive greater amounts than K-2.**

If there is to be truly significant improvement in very low achieving schools, the ratio should be 1-10 with aides to assist. **It is easier to instruct 1-30 gifted students than it is 1-10 difficult or non-English speaking youth.** An across the board 1-20 ratio may be the political decision, but it is not the best solution. Full day kindergarten should be an option; students should be able to enter the day they turn four or five into a nongraded **Beginning Life Center**—a special area environment with well-prepared staff designed for children in the traditional grades K-2 or 3 range. **These youngsters may be four to eight in chronological years, but in developmental years, they are on a continuum from at least three to ten.**

Student Focus

For most youth, but especially the ones with difficult personal lives, the **affective domain** (good self-image, caring, happy) and the **psychomotor domain** (run, kick, measure, jump, hammer) are more important than the **cognitive** (read, write, compute). Students who "hate the world," who have not had good nourishment, and who believe no one likes them will not learn the mandated math. They can be scolded, coached, put in remedial classes, or held back from promotion, **but they will not succeed in the school required cognitive areas.**

Further, if students have environmental illness (severe allergies or intolerances to milk, wheat, molds, trees, forced air heat duct residue, paints, perfumes, carpets, formaldehyde, cheese, petrochemicals, sugar, dyes, solvents, and, and), they cannot succeed to their potential. **Borderline special education or disruptive youth may be suffering from environmental illness; they cannot perform well, but schoolteachers and administrators who do not understand blame the child and parent when it is the school that should provide accommodation.** "School people" have insisted on children being on Ritalin for Attention Deficit Disorder, when that drug

probably should either not be used, or used only for temporary control while the causes are being addressed. Administrators have a tendency to want the parent to call a psychiatrist, when the staff does not know or does not take time to learn, how to accommodate a "different" child; it is easier to blame the home for the problem.

Healthy food, caring, clean clothes, personal attention, 1-10 class size, love, and understanding are the essentials for many "problem students"—far more important than reading scores. *Not all "first graders" should be reading, and especially not out of the same book.* Language immersion may be a priority for many. Individualized programs—temporary placement staffed by sympathetic teachers augmented by part-time or on-call sociologists, psychologists, police officers, recreation specialists, and physicians—are needed for youth with perceived personal adjustment factors, and/or for difficult "discipline problem" students. **Most "troubled youth" cannot be adequately assisted by the "regular" classroom teacher in a traditional structure.** However, all of them do not belong in a conventional "alternative school" either, though most of these specialized offerings are better than the comprehensive sites. Unfortunately, students often must be labeled "bad" before they can be admitted to an "at-risk" alternative setting. The focus in each of the possible varieties of special centers—health, self-concept, delinquency—must be on the *affective*, not the *cognitive* domain.

Public districts declare that they already have choices meeting the needs of ALL youth. If one follows the military model, perhaps they are correct. Shape up to standards, attend special training, go to the brig, or be discharged. **But schools do not exist to prepare for the military, nor are they there to help the country compete economically with Japan**, which, incidentally, had in the post-war recovery period, the highest student suicide rate in the world and is now in economic difficulty. The internationally recognized schools in pre-war Germany produced graduates who tried to exterminate a nation of people. **The designers of the gas chambers had Ph.D. degrees in chemistry, biology, and engineering.**

The greatest problems in the world arguably are being caused by college graduates, not by the five percent "criminal element." The Love Canal in New York was created by chemists from the MIT caliber universities, and the board of directors were from the Harvard caliber institutions. The unsafe Pinto car was designed by the graduates from the Cal Tech equivalent colleges, and defended in court by lawyers who graduated from Stanford level universities. Pollution, poverty, and underemployment problems are often caused by corporate giants and the Wall Street mentality. Most of the executives have been to college. More math is not the answer to environmental decay. **Worldwide, all hungry people could be fed by a ten percent reduction in the global arms race, but leaders who have been to college are not considering reducing the munitions profits.** The Firestone/Ford Explorer tire fiasco was known for several years, but not corrected by higher education graduates until the problem was exposed. Overlooked are the hundreds of events in history. For just one, at the Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942, high-ranking Nazis met to plan The Final Solution to the Jewish Question (the destruction of European Jewry). **Over half of the Nazis who participated had PhD degrees.**

False Flexibility

Many communities now pride themselves on having "open enrollment," but it only works if there is space available, if parents have transportation, and if there is true diversity among the selections for families. Often, "magnet schools" are not well advertised, or have waiting lists and lotteries. **How can anyone defend waiting lists for learning? If the program is that popular, it should be replicated.** All options offered should be available to every student who could benefit from the specific opportunity, regardless of residence boundaries.

In numerous districts, there are several year-round elementary schools, but they are not located geographically to be available to *all* who would *volunteer*. **The districts do not understand the philosophy of continuous learning.** Transportation often makes enrollment impossible, even for die-hard YRE supporters. Most all low-achieving schools should be year-round. Summer learning loss for students is a reality. There are limited numbers of junior and senior highs on year-round in most communities, a real travesty of philosophy and choice. This lack of secondary programs—even if there are some at the elementary level—indicates the arbitrary dictatorship of school administrations. In a middle school of 1500, 500 volunteers could easily be in YRE, while 1000 could continue on the agrarian calendar. High school overcrowding could be alleviated by multiple tracking of the enrollment. Air conditioning, until installed, could be accommodated by altering the school starting and closing times. In the summer, the hours might be from 7:00-12:30. In the winter the hours could be 9:00-3:00. **People forget that prior to World War II, schools were not air conditioned, yet students "learned."** Aliquippa Pennsylvania was mandated K-12 year-round from 1928 to 1938, with no air conditioning; Bluffton Indiana began year-round in 1904—with no climate control system—as did Gary in 1907, Newark in 1912, Omaha in 1924, and Nashville in 1925.

There are many standard negatives in school jurisdictions worldwide. Conversely, on a positive note, **much could be achieved through offering alternatives at no extra expense by enrolling only volunteers**. Adherence to mandated laws and policies is possible while requesting waivers. Groups often need to avoid the potentially permissive—but extremely discouraging—Charter School legislation passed in over thirty of the United States. Accepting that politicians and ineffective state departments of schooling (not education) have established "reforms" headed in the wrong direction, and that most districts are administered by political expedience supported by city council lay persons (not educationally selected), communities can still change course and challenge assumptions and requirements. The many school administrator organizations have been silent when politicians speak in accountability "educationese," and the teacher associations have supported negatives rather than challenge the establishment. Both have been motivated by the desire for power, increased budgets, salaries, and control over their conditions—not a true concern for students. **Teachers seldom strike for the youth; they strike to have better lives for themselves.** School board associations sometimes try to question legislation, but they are too split politically to achieve meaningful legislative change. Few leadership groups raise the priority issues related to what is desirable for each individual; instead they consider—and usually adopt—the mandates for groups, such as all 8th graders must take algebra. Alternatives supporters must challenge uniformity edicts, unless they are acceptable related to health and safety.

R & D Centers

Acknowledging these current realities, public education districts can still, if democratic, easily and rapidly—as has been previously demonstrated—create a series of Research and Development Centers (R & D) at no expense through a number of schools-within-schools. **They can begin with already validated research currently not being implemented in the district. Following that, they can designate experimental programs to develop and study untested inventions.** Initially a small elementary site might begin with two choices: non-traditional and traditional. Middle schools might have three: non-traditional, modified traditional, and traditional. High schools could start with at least five, ranging from very conventional to schools-without-walls programs. One or more sites could offer a choice of a K-12 nongraded mix of students at a former junior high facility. Another site could contain a K-8 individualized school, or perhaps a secondary learning style magnet program. **Using a modified hospital model of differentiated staffing,** these could be staffed and filled with volunteer pioneers—teachers, paid parents, students, community leaders, unpaid consultants, university student teachers and interns, doctoral and master thesis researchers and evaluators, and aides.

All that is required is for a district to change from a "one-size-fits-all mentality." In most communities, what few choices may exist are not available to the great majority, the result of location and transportation realities and the lack of real differences among the various programs. What is needed is the adoption of a win/win philosophy. It is almost impossible to receive a majority vote when a community is attempting to alter 100 years of public school tradition. Changes begin by allowing the minority options through R & D Centers. The majority of current school administrations are dictatorial and believe in win/lose, when a win/win environment would be easy to foster and maintain. The present mandated conventional schools and math and reading programs can be acceptable for those who want them—which may be a high percentage of the families. **However, all good citizens and taxpayers should not be forced to accept programs that are obsolete and negative for many students.**

Research and Development Centers would be open year-round for continuous learning and maximum use of facilities; like hospitals, schools ideally should never close, for learning should always be an option. The landmark 1994 report by the National Commission on Time and Learning, *Prisoners of Time*, stated: *"Our schools and the people involved...are prisoners of time, captives of the school clock and calendar...our usage of time virtually assures the failure of many students...The key to liberating learning lies in unlocking time...for...the six-hour,* **180 day school year should be relegated to museums, an exhibit from our education past."** District officials have not read this report—or certainly have not enacted the recommendations.

The Centers could start with nongraded age environments, and without A-F report cards. Learning would be personalized and individualized. **Curriculum might be integrated around themes of urgent studies, human potential, interdependent competencies, and interrelated interests.** Food service would be continuously available. Daily flexible and non-scheduled schedules, teams of teachers in suites—rather than in isolated rooms or departments—and school-in-the-communities and communities-in-the-school would be characteristics. Flexible attendance, neighborhood facilities, evening programs, no single textbook adoptions, more art-music-physical education-shop-technology-home economics-gardening—all interrelated—reading when ready, no busywork sent home, and many other important similar configurations would **begin the transition away from schooling toward learning.**

Further, experimental designs could be created and implemented by education innovators. They might use as a catalyst for their ideas such proposals as the plans for the Minnesota Experimental City (MXC), **a community proposed for 250,000 people—with no schools.** Enrollment in experimental centers would include a cross-section of students of all cultures, abilities, and backgrounds. Most of all, these options would give current citizens a choice of learning environments looking toward the future. The factory model of schooling would be replaced by individually tailored optional learning systems.

Getting Started

Most states and the local public districts have nothing to lose and much to gain by involving volunteers in multiple efforts to find solutions for improving and broadening opportunities for students. In spite of minor test score gains, the traditional system cannot meet the needs of the diverse populations in 2004 by relying on band-aids to a system begun in 1847, expanded in the 1920s, and politically mandated during the 1980s "back to basics" platforms. It is the 21st Century. **In spite of recent congressional education legislation to the contrary, there is not one shred of research**—not tradition, opinion, or preference, but valid research—**to support the existing conventional structures** as in grade level single teacher classrooms, report cards, group-paced requirements, period 1-2-3 schedules, September to June calendars, and single series textbooks. In fact, what research is available supports the non-traditional alternatives. Unfortunately, as **John Holt** wrote—with piercing honesty—regarding his views of required conventional schools:

> "Education—compulsory schooling, compulsory learning—is a tyranny
> and a crime against the human mind and spirit. Let all those escape it
> who can, any way they can."

As sad as that sounds, there is hope. Caring, humane, innovative all-year continuous learning educators and philosophers can be the catalysts to erase the perception and truth described by Holt—perception and truth that remain tragically accurate. *Enter Educational Alternatives!*

Years ago, Mark Twain made it clear that educators needed to change their stance when he noted that one should

> "Never let school interfere with your education."

Decades after Twain, similar observations were expressed by current commentators reflecting the need to "reform school reform." At the recent turn of the century, Seymour Sarason, noted professor of sociology, stated:

> "Public school educators have themselves to blame for the rise of the charter
> school movement. The education community is fantastically insensitive to the negative
> judgment of educators by the public."

Pauline Gough, editor of the *Kappan*, said:

> "To mandate academic achievement is simple. It is also simple-minded."

Ronald Brandt, former editor of Educational Leadership, opined:

> "State testing pushes mediocrity, rather than excellence in schools...If some parents want traditional schooling for their children, they should have it, but experimentation, variety, and choice in schools is the future, not mandated uniformity."

Paul Houston, executive director of the National School Administrators Association, reminded all that

> "The way to the brain is through the heart...and diversity is not a mandate, but having it is the only way to ensure lasting strength."

Sir Christopher Ball, chancellor of the University of Derby, wrote,

> "The nation seems intent on reinforcing a failing system...It is no use tinkering with our 19th century model of education; it needs to be completely rethought and restructured...Gradual reform is unlikely to succeed. **RADICAL CHANGE** is what is required."

Visionary Leadership

Roland Meighan, Director of *Educational Heretics Press* in Nottingham is providing this leadership in the United Kingdom. The *Education Now Journal* and the Education Heretics Press publications offer clear visions of better, "common sense" learning systems. The effort is being duplicated in the United States through the journal *Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities,* published by Ron Miller of the Foundation for Educational Renewal, in Charlotte Vermont. Jerry Mintz, editor of *Education Revolution,* has compiled many resource contacts for alternatives in education throughout the world. Wayne Jennings and the leadership group of *IALA,* the International Association for Learning Alternatives, have now created a new effort to prioritize learning alternatives for everyone in democratic societies worldwide.

Year-round education (continuous learning) is one illustration of the multiple possible "changes" for optional public schools, but people still think of the idea as a recent discovery. Radical reform is desired, for year-round is actually an outgrowth of early 20th Century traditions: the first program was implemented in 1904 in Bluffton Indiana. The concept has served a purpose for almost 100 years—to force an examination of and pilot efforts toward better use of time to enhance learning. However, another 100 years of what exists cannot be justified. All such

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innovations must be continually re-examined. **Education visionaries need to break the iron-cast system of tradition now!**

Again, Don Quixote and his impossible dream can reflect the gravity of the mission, if attacking a 150-year-old schooling establishment seems madness. He strove to eliminate social injustice by destroying the windmills, but unfortunately he failed. In spite of many disciples of the Quixote passion promoting sensible alternatives, the "windmills of education" continue to perpetuate a burdened past and an outmoded present. Thus there is now an urgent and continuing challenge to generate the energy which can lead the effort to create a future of freedom, responsibility, and happiness—wherever possible—through educational options, for both the youth and adult populations.

Summary

It is time for educators and politicians to envision what could be, rather than to dwell on improving the past. Once more, paraphrasing Willie Wonka,

"We can make realities out of dreams and dreams out of realities; we can be the dreamers of the dreams for the youth of the world."

Learning programs can be significantly better, but only if they are significantly different. The improvement should begin now with voluntary, immediate changes for those who are ready as individuals and as communities. Envisioned are new and better continuous learning systems for the present and future generations.
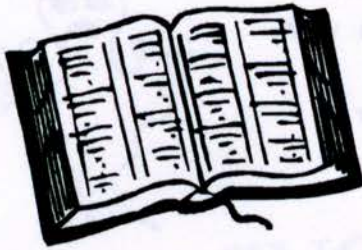
LEARNING
ALTERNATIVES
FOR
EVERYONE

ALL THE TIME

OUTCOMES

"Ignorance is like a delicate, exotic fruit...touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately, in England at any rate, education provides no effect whatsoever."

Oscar Wilde
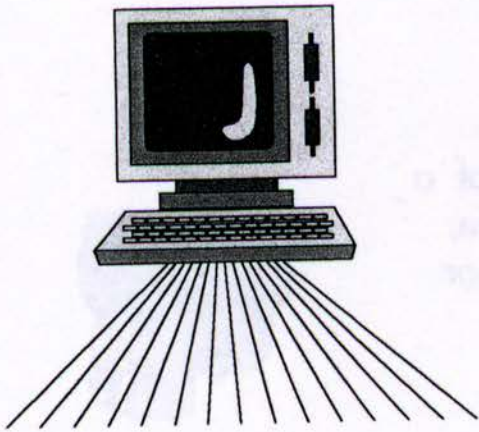
"I am dejected over a society in which much of the population is addicted to technology, heavily indebted to huge corporations, and no longer interested in the classical achievements of the past."

Jules Verne (1863)

IMAGINE!!

"Shakespeare did not write with a view
of boring school children; he wrote with
a view of delighting his audiences. If
he does not delight, you had better
ignore him."

Bertrand Russell

"I have seen what others
can only dream...I know
these descriptions are
true...for I have been
there."

Gulliver (Jonathan Swift)

"What is the use of a
book," thought Alice,
"without pictures or
conversations?"

Lewis Carroll

PART D

LEARNING ALTERNATIVES

RESOURCES FOR IMAGINEERING

PRIORITIES

" *When I asked my father anythin' about lessons, he always says he's forgotten, 'cause it's so long since he was in school and then he says I gotta work hard at school so's I'll know a lot when I'm grown up. Doesn't seem sense to me. Learnin' a lot of stuff---jus' to forget it.* "

RICHMAL CROMPTON

" *Most people do not understand why it is critically important to look ahead...we still tackle twenty-year problems with five-year plans, staffed with two-year personnel, working on one-year appropriations... it explains why we lurch from crisis to crisis...It would not be easy to change the present mindset...but change it we must.* "

HARLAND CLEVELAND

" *We must change our values, lifestyles, priorities, and institutions, if there is to be a golden age in coming decades.* "

BUCKMINSTER FULLER

EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES: BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

A collection of resources, including topics, books, journals, research studies, organizations, internet sites and programs to assist schools, homes, and communities in considering the provision of educational alternatives for everyone all the time.

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BOOKS AND ARTICLES

"Significant new ideas usually come from the non-conformists...therefore...Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted as obvious was once eccentric."

Bertrand Russell

OVERVIEW

These seventeen sections are arbitrary, as many of the cited publications could fit two or three listings. The separations are to assist the reader in finding special topics. Most of the alternatives-related overview books—past and present—are in Section 1, but not exclusively. If merged, the categories document nearly a century of efforts to change schools, improve programs, provide differentiated teaching and learning styles, and personalize curriculum through alternatives and educational renewal. Following the seventeen sections is an Index of Authors which locates specific writers.

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Section 14. TECHNOLOGY ASSISTED ALTERNATIVES

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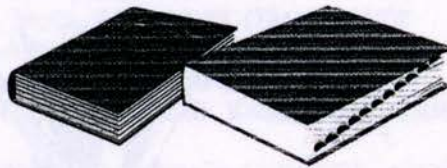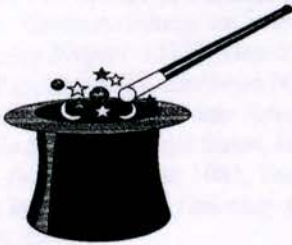
INFORMATION SOURCES

Section 15.   JOURNALS FOR ALTERNATIVES

Alternative Network Journal P.O. Box 461, Ithaca NY 14851
Brain Compatible Learning Networker The Brain, Inc. 31 W 7th Street, Kansas City MO 64113
Changing Schools IALA, 6 West Fifth Street, Suite 700, St. Paul MN 55102
Education Now 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham England, UK NG93FQ
Education Revolution AERO, 417 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Heights NY 11577
Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice P.O. Box 328, Brandon VT 05733
Foresight: The Journal of Futures Studies Emerald, 60/62 Toller Lane, Bradford England BD89B4
Future Survey World Future Society, 7910 Woodmont Ave., Suite 450, Bethesda MD 20814
Futures Research Industry Report 3112 S.E. Silver Springs Drive, Vancouver WA 98683
Great Ideas in Education Foundation for Educational Renewal, P.O. Box 328, Brandon VT 05733
Home Education Magazine P.O. Box 1083, Tonasket WA 98855
Journal for Experiential Education   Association for Experiential Education, 2305 Canyon Blvd., Suite 100, Boulder CO 80302
Liberated Learners Pathfinder Center, 256 N. Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002
Life Learning: The International Magazine of Self-Directed Learning P.O. Box 112, Niagara Falls NY 14304
Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities P.O. Box 328, Brandon VT 05733
Patterns: Education Systems Thinking 5300 Glen Haven Road, Soquel CA 95073
Public School Montessorian Jola Publications, 2933 N. 2nd St., Minneapolis MN 55411
Quest: The Home Educators Journal 1144 Byran Ave., Ottawa Ontario Canada K2B6T4
Reaching Today's Youth National Educational Service, 1252 Loesch Road, Bloomington IN 47402
Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education 3911 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks CA 95628
Sudbury Valley Journal 2 Winch St., Framingham MA 01701
Systems Prospects Center for Systems Studies, University of Hull, Hull England HU67RX
Systems Research and Behavior Science (Journal for International Federation of Systems Research) Wiley Interscience, Buffins Lane, Chichester, West Sussex, P.O. 19, IUD, UK
Teaching for Change P.O. Box 73038, Washington DC 20056
The Core Teacher National Association of Core Curriculum, 1640 Franklin Ave., Suite 104, Kent OH 44240
The Education Forum Center for Education Reform, 1001 Connecticut Ave., Suite 204, Washington DC 20036
Wingspan Pedamorphics, Inc., P.O. Box 271699, Tampa FL 33688
YES: A Journal of Positive Futures P.O. Box 10818, Bainbridge Island WA 98110

Section 16.   ORGANIZATIONS FOR ALTERNATIVES

Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education (ALLPIE) P.O. Box 59, East Chatham NY 12060 (518)392-6900

Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) 417 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights NY 11577   (800)769-4171

American Friends Service Committee 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia PA 19102 (888)588-2372

American Home Academy Educators' Association 2770 S. 1000 W. Street, Perry VT 84302 (801)723-5355

Anthroposophic Press (Lindis Farme Books) P.O. Box 960, Herndon VA 20172 (800)856-8664

Association for Experiential Education 2305 Canyon Boulevard, Suite 100, Boulder CO 80302 (303)440-8844.

Bellweather Family Resource Center 120 S. Brownell Road, Williston VT *05495 (802)865-9752*

Center for Advanced Reform in Education   Rockhurst College, 1100 Rockhurst Road, Kansas City MO 64110   (818)426-4140

Center for Education Reform 1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 204, Washington DC 20036 (800)521-2118

Center for Partnership Studies, The   P.O. Box 30538, Tucson AZ 85781   (520)546-0176

Center for School Change   Hubert H. Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis MN 55455 (612)626-1834.

Center for Systems Studies University of Hull, Hull England HU67RX 01(482)466-6390

Charter School Network 49 Hillside Avenue 2F, Providence RI 02906 (401)831-6404

Children Believe P.O. Box 253, Kilauea HI 96754 (888)615-8889

Clonlara School Home Based Education Program 1289 Jewett, Ann Arbor MI 48104 (313)719-4515

Coalition for Self Learning P.O. Box 567, Rangeley ME 04970-0567 (206) 864-3784

Designs for Learning   1745 University Avenue, St. Paul MN 55104   (651)649-5400

Earth Policy Institute 1350 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington DC 20036 (202)496-9290

Education for Social Responsibility   23 Garden Street, Cambridge MA 02138   (617)492-1764

Education Now and *Education Heretics Press*   113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham England, U.K. NG93FQ 01(115)925-7261

Education Otherwise P.O. Box 7420, London England N9 95 G 01(870)730-0074

Encompass 11011 Tyler Foote Road., Nevada City CA 95960 (530)292-1000

Endicott College Institute for Educational Studies   376 Hale Street, Beverly MA 01915   (877)276-5200

Envisioning Your Future   3024 Sunnyside Road NE, Bemidji MN 56601 (218)751-0179

European Commission Joint Research Center Institute for Prospective Technological Studies 9-41092, Seville Spain 34-95-4488489

Family Unschooling Network (and FUNBOOKS) 1688 Bellhaven, Woods Court, Pasadena MD 21122 (410)360-6265, orders (888)386-7027

Foundation Educational Renewal   P.O. Box 328, Brandon VT 05667 (802)454-8311

Genius Tribe P.O. Box 1014, Eugene OR 97440 (541)686-2315

Goddard College Graduate Education Studies, 123 Pitkin Road, Plainfield VT 05667 (802)454-8311

Green Child Catalog Project 12137 Viewcrest Road, Studio City CA 91604 (818)760-8296

Green Teacher P.O. Box 1431, Lewiston NY 14092 (416)960-1244

Growing Without Schooling 13 Home Avenue, Medford MA 02155 (781) 395-8508

Holistic Education Press 39 Pearl Street, Brandon VT 05733 (802)454-8311

Home Education Press P.O. Box 1083, Tonasket WA 98858 (509)486-1351

Home Education Resources and Learning Development (Herald) Kelda Cottage, Lydbrook England GL17 95X 01(594)730-0074

Home Educator's Seaside Festival P.O. Box 20284, London England NW13WY 01(207)-813-5907

Home School Legal Defense Association P.O. Box 159, Paeonian Springs VA 22129 (703)338-5600

Institute for Educational Studies Endicott College, Beverly MA 01915 (800)386-7725

International Association for Learning Alternatives   449 Des Noyer, Saint Paul MN 55104 (651)644-2805

Internet 2 1150 Eighteenth St. N. W. Suite 20, Washington DC 20036 (202)872-9119

John Dewey Project on Progressive Education. 535 Waterman Building, University of Vermont, Burlington VT 05405 (802)656-1355

John Holt Associates 13 Home Avenue, Medford MA 02155 (781)395-8508

Jola Publications on Public School Montessori 2933 N. 2nd Street, Minneapolis MN 55411 (612)529-5001

Magnet Schools of America 2111 Holly Hall, S-4203, Houston TX 77054 (800)462-5526

Living Routes 85 Baker Road, Shutesbury MA 01072 (888) 515-7333

Museum of Education   Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of South Carolina, Columbia   (803) 777-5741

National Alliance of Multiage Educators   Ten Sharon Road, Peterborough, NH 03458   (800)924-9621

National Association for Year-Round Education   P.O. Box 711386, San Diego CA 92171   (619)276-5296

National Association of Charter Schools   2722 E. Michigan Avenue, Suite 201, Lansing MI 48912   (517)772-9115

National Association of Laboratory Schools   c/o School of Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana PA 15701   (724)357-2485 (Dr. John Johnson)

National Center for Fair and Open Testing   342 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139   (617)864-1410

National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools   1266 Rosewood, #1, Ann Arbor MI 48104   (734)668-9171

National Coalition of Education Activists   P.O. Box 679, Rhinebeck NY 12572   (914)876-4580

National Community Education Association   3929 Old Lee Highway, #91A, Fairfax VA 22042   (703)359-8973

National Home Education Research Institute   5000 Deer Park Drive SE, Salem OR 97301   (503)375-7018

National Immigration Forum   220 I Street NE, Washington DC 20002   (202)544-0004

National Society for the Study of Education   College of Education, University of Illinois, Chicago.   1040 W. Harrison Street, Chicago IL 68607-7133 (773)702-1582

Network of Educators on the Americas   P.O. Box 73038, Washington DC 20056   (202)238-0109

New Horizons for Learning   P.O. Box 15329, Seattle WA 98115   (206)547-7936

New Mexico Tech   801 Leroy Place, Socorro NM 87801   (505)835-5616

Pathfinder Center   256 North Pleasant Street, Amherst MA 01002   (413)253-9412

Pedamorphosis: Education Through Leadership   P.O. Box 271669, Tampa FL 33688   (813)963-3899

Performance Learning Systems   224 Church Street, Nevada City CA 95959   (800)506-9996

Pinewood School   112 Road D, Pine CO 80470   (303)670-8180

Play Mountain Place   6063 Harris Street, Los Angeles CA 90034   (310)226-6180

Population Reference Bureau   1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington DC 20009   (202)483-1100

Practical Homeschooling   P.O. Box 1250, Fenton MO 63026   (314)225-9790

Quebec Homeschool Association   1002 Rose Marie Road, Quebec Canada J0T   (819)322-6495

Resource Center of the Americas   317 Seventeenth Avenue SE, Minneapolis MN 55414   (800)452-8382

Rethinking Schools   1001 E. Keefe Avenue, Milwaukee WI 53212   (800)669-4192

Self-Education Foundation, The   P.O. Box 30790, Philadelphia PA 19104   (215)235-4379

Syntony Quest   1761 Vallejo Street, Suite 302, San Francisco CA 94123-5029 (415)346-1547

Teachers for Tomorrow   Social Science Dept., California State University, Monterey Bay, 980 Fremont Street, Monterey 95940   (831)646-4160

The Teaching Company   4151 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly VA 20151 (800) 832-2412

Upattinas School and Resource Center   429 Greenridge Road, Glenmore PA 19343   (610)458-5138

Wondertree Foundation for Natural Learning   Box 38083, Vancouver BC VO32CO   (604)224-3663

World Future Society   7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 450, Bethesda MD 20814   (301)656-8274

Youth on Board   58 Day Street, Somerville MA 02144   (617)623-9900

Section 17: WEBSITES FOR ALTERNATIVES

Advancement Computing in Education(www.aace.org)
Albany Free School (www.empireone.net/freeschool)
About International Education(www://internationaled.about.com/)
Alfie Kohn Resources (www.alfiekohn.org)
Alternative Education Resource Organization (www.edrev.org)
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry(www.aacap.org)
American Friends Service Committee (www.afsc.org/resource/htm)
American Psychological Association(www.apa.org)
Anthroposophic Press(www.anthropress.org)
Antioch College(www.antioch-college.edu)
Association for Experiential Education (www.aee.org)
Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (www.waldorfeducation.org)
Bayside Children's College (www.baysidechildrenscollege.com)
Bold Ideas(www.bold-ideas.com)
Brain Connection(www.brainconnection.com)
California Charter School Development Center(www.cacharterschools.org)
Center for Education Reform(www.edreform.com)
Center for New Dream(www.newdream.org)
Center for School Change(www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/)
Center for Systems Studies(www.hull.ac.uk/hubs/css/)
Choice in Education(www.choiceineducation.co.uk)
Coalition for Community Schools(www.communityschools.org)
College of the Atlantic(www.coa.edu)
Community Service Partnerships(www.communityservice.com)
Creating Learning Communities(www.creatinglearningcommunities.org)
Dalton Plan(www.dalton..org/history)
Danish Free School Association (www.friskoler.dk)
Down to Earth Books(www.spinninglobe.net)
Earthnet Institute (www.eni.edu)
Earth Policy Institute(www.earth-policy.org)
Education Heretics Press(www.gn.apc.org/edheretics)
Education Now(www.gn.apc/educationnow)
Education Otherwise(www.education-otherwise.org)
Enabling Education Network(www.eenet.org.uk)
Endicott College: The Institute for Educational Studies (TIES)(www.tmn.com/ties)
Encompass School(www.encompass-nlr.org)
Evergreen State College(www.evergreen.edu)
Family Unschooling Network(www.unschooling.org)
Findhorn Foundation(www.;findhorn.org)
Foundation for the Future(www.futurefoundation.org)
Funbooks(www.fun-books.org)
Future Focus2020(www.futurefocus2000.org)
Global Ecovillage Network(www.gaia.org)
Goddard College Education Programs(www.goddard.edu)
Great Ideas in Education(www.greatideas.com)
Great Potential Press(www.giftedbooks.com)
Green Teacher(www.treenteacher.com)
Hampshire College(www.hampshire.edu)
Heinemann Books(www.heinemann.com)
Home Education(www.home-ed.org)
Home Education(www.home-education.org.uk)
Home Education Advisory Service(www.heas.org.uk)
Home Education Seaside(www.hesfes.co.uk)
Home Education Resources and Learning Development(www.homeeducation.co.uk)

Homeschool for Free(www.HSFRE.com)
Institute, Technological Studies(http:llfutures.jrc.es)
International Democratic Education Conference(www.edrev.org/list-serves.htm)
International Association for Learning Alternatives(www.alt-ed.com)
Internet 2(www.internet2.edu)
John Dewey Project on Progressive Education(www.uvm.edu/~dewey!)
Liberty School Learning Center(www.ellsworth.org/liberty)
Living Classrooms Foundation(www.livingclassrooms.org)
Living Routes (www.gaia.org/livingroutes.org)
Multimedia Resource Online Teaching(www.merlot.org)
National 4-H Center for Innovation(www.fourhcouncil.edu)
National Association for Laboratory Schools(www.coe.iup.edu/nals/.)
National Association for Year-Round Education(www.nayre.org)
National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools(www.ncacs.org)
National Community Education Association(www.ncea.com)
National Home Education Network(www.homeschool.com)
National Immigration Forum(www.immigrationforum.org)
National Institute of Mental Health(www.nimh.nih.com)
Natural Learners(www.naturallearners.org)
New Horizons for Learning(www.newhorizons.org)
Online Action Guides(www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm)
Pathfinder Center(www.pathfindercenter.org)
Paths of Learning Resource Center(www.pathsoflearning.net)
Performance Learning Systems(www.plsbookstore.com)
Play Mountain Place(www.playmountain,org)
Population Bulletin(www.prb.org)
Positive Futures Network(www.futurenet.org)
Prescott College (www.prescott.edu)
Project for School Innovation(www.psinnovation.org)
Responsive Classroom(www.responsiveclassroom.org)
Rudolf Steiner Foundation(www.rsfoundation.org)
Quaker Education(www.quaker.org/schools.html.)
Rethinking Schools(www.rethinkingschools.org)
Second Nature(www.secondnature.org)
Self-Education Foundation(www.selfeducation.org)
Spirit Matters Network(www.spiritmatters.net)
State of the Future(www.stateofthefuture.org)
Sudbury Valley School(www.sudval.org)
Syntony Quest(www.syntonyquest.org)
Teaching for Change(www.teachingforchange.org)
The Center for Partnership Studies(www.partnershipway.org)
The Community School(www.thecommunityschool.org)
The Farm School(www.thefarm.org/lifestyle/fs.html.)
The Meeting School(www.mv.com/ipusers/tms)
The Open University, UK(www.open.ac.uk/frames.html)
The Teaching Company(www.teach12.com)
University of Houston-Clear Lake(www.cl.uh.edu/futureweb/)
U.S.Charter Schools(www.uscharterschools.org/)
University of Redlands (Johnston Center and Whitehead College(wwwhttp://newton.vor.edu.)
Upattinas School and Resource Center(www.chesco.com/upattinas)
Wiley Interscience(www.interscience.wiley.com)
Winnetka Plan(www.eb.com)
Wondertree Foundation(www.wondertree.org)
World Future Society(www.wfs.org)
Youth on Board(www.youthonboard.org)
Zephyr Press(www.zephyrpress.co)

INDEX OF AUTHORS

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CHANGE

Linus: I wish I had a pencil-pal like you, Charlie Brown.

Charlie: Well, it doesn't do much good if you can't read or write.

Linus: That's very true—only five years old and already I'm an illiterate.

Linus and Charlie Brown (*Charles Schulz*)

Innovative educators are like orchestra leaders. They

turn their backs on the crowd.

Everett Rodgers

There is no middle path. Do we join together to build an economy that is

sustainable? Or do we stay with our environmentally unsustainable

economy until it declines? It is not a goal that can be compromised. One

way or another, the choice will be made by our generation. But it will affect

life on earth for all generations to come.

Lester Brown
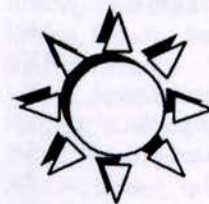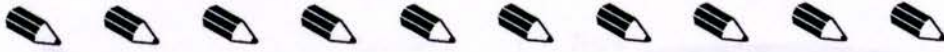
TOPIC AND PERSON INDICES

Code: The topics and persons are cited in the following locations:

PF = *Found in Preface*   **PA** = *Found in Preamble*

A, B, C, D = *Found before or after the Part A, B, C, or D Section Dividers*

1 – 20 = *Found in the numbered chapters*

End = *Found in the closing pages*

"It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry: for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom. Without this, it goes to wrack and ruin without fail."

Albert Einstein

"In universities mathematics is taught mainly to men who are going to teach mathematics. In fact, it is a common error to confuse mathematics with arithmetic...and arithmetic is overvalued in the schools and takes up far more time than it should—for there are more useful things to learn."

Bertrand Russell

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APPENDIX

PROMOTING ALTERNATIVES

Overview

The suggestions presented here to promote the growth of alternatives were offered by participants at the **Duluth Minnesota 2002 IALA Conference**. The ideas discussed fell into five categories:

A. The Alternatives Dilemma
B. Concerns for Students
C. Visionary Leadership
D. Actions for Individuals
E. Tasks for Groups and Organizations

They are not considered the final or best or exclusive responses, but are intended to act as a catalyst for thinking and doing in the effort to create more significant Options for Everyone!

A. Dilemma-Related Suggestions

Strong believers in alternatives question the ability to change the system of schooling. They are reinforced by publications as *Creative Destruction* (Foster), for the research from the McKenzie Group defines the formidable task of overhauling the corporate company—analogous to changing the bureaucracy of the state-controlled school systems.

The majority of innovative educators are being convinced that they must go outside the system to succeed. They cite the committed periodic efforts throughout the 20th century to "reform" education. They study the stories of exciting, **successful** programs (non-traditional approaches) which were later eliminated strictly on the basis of political decisions. The current growth in the numbers of home-based learners, charters, "alternative schools," diploma equivalency examinations, dropouts, vouchers, and private academies illustrates the realities of disenfranchisement.

While the debate continues between advocates of changing from within or from without the system, there are practical suggestions for increasing/enhancing alternatives offerings now. Until there is universally accepted public school choice (without the need for vouchers), there are forms of options developed over the past forty years which better meet the preferences of everyone, not just the few who are fortunate enough to escape the one-size-fits-all mentality—surprisingly also found at a notable percentage of "at-risk" settings.

The conventional "renewal alternatives" most often have not made a difference. The 2002 U.S. Department of Education Title I report documented that 8652 low-income Title I schools failed to meet state academic standards for two years, including 1513 in Michigan, 1009 in California, 760 in Ohio, 625 in Georgia, 529 in New York, and 435 in Illinois. The problem with "standards" is illustrated by Arkansas and Wyoming listing **0**, and Oregon only 9. How could such figures be accurate? If they are, how could the "system" fail 8652 schools and the thousands of enrolled youth?

In spite of the many negative dilemmas, there are reasonable approaches for ensuring positive leadership for alternatives, the continuity of programs, the survival of innovative sites, and processes for individual, local group, and larger organization actions. In considering steps to take, it must be remembered that there is no single "community" but instead a series of communities within the larger "community."

One often overlooked basic principle is the **implementation of significant change overnight**—all at once—in massive format. Conventional thinkers advocate bringing the communities along slowly, gaining support, planning ahead, and not doing too much too soon—sound advice in given situations. Conversely, in most environments, rapid implementation of total commitment has been illustrated as the best method. People tire of waiting/working on a perceived hopeless situation. **Piecemeal implementation of major ideas usually does not result in significantly better programs.** Incremental change becomes meshed in the bureaucracy or is lost during another "back-to-basics" movement.

For instance, there may be a great new transmission at Site A, a fine new engine at Site B, new safety protections at Site C, a better suspension system at Site D, better tires at Site E, and an improved chassis at Site F—but until all the pieces are brought together—there is no new, superior functioning car. The advanced engine may make Site B slightly better, but the total educational program of a school is not improved. Until there is confluence of the components from the various sites, the structure remains a conventional "regular school."

B. Student-Related Suggestions

A few communities have managed to create multiple options for students, but **there are yet youth who are not performing or who refuse to "be reached."** Those involved in criminal activities need to be addressed differently. However, there are several considerations which help most "reluctant learners."

Health factors must be considered to determine if environmental allergies are part of the picture. A prime example is the result seen at Appleton (WI) Central Alternative High School. An experimental nutrition program—away from sodas, fries, sugars to wholesome natural foods has accomplished dramatic improvement in student behavior, grades, lifestyles, while reducing truancy, anger, violence, and low achievement. Further, a study reported in *Crime Times* (Vol. 6, No. 1, 2000, Schoenthaler) has documented the overwhelming relationships between nutrition, IQ scores, and delinquency.

Staff must relax, and let the students relax too. Teachers should not worry if they are not studying. Let them go to the Student Center, play cards, and snack all day—as long as they display acceptable (not perfect) behavior. The affective domain is most certainly the key for these youth, followed by the psychomotor. The cognitive is only important if it helps the affective at

"this moment in time." When students tire of playing cards or "goofing around,"—and they do— they should begin their learning projects in areas of strength and success, never with their weakness and failure. The priority is enjoyment of learning through further success in their proficiencies. Each of their involvements can be accomplished alone or pursued as part of a small group, but either way, personalized and individualized, as illustrated by the math horse farm.

Two boys who "hate" school, hate the teacher, and fail math are "removed" from the traditional program. After discussion the two are found to be interested in horses. They eventually agree to create a horse farm. What are the circumference and diameter of the workout track, the board feet of lumber needed, size, price—a bunkhouse, angle of the roof—square feet in the corral, price—oats for how many horses, price. They learn meaningful (to them) math as evaluated, paint the farm as a mural (art), draft it to scale (vocational) and **therefore create a beautiful interrelated curriculum project.**

Occasionally some youth need to be "told"—do this now." Many of these students may need to enroll in a Person Center where they receive specialized assistance. The majority of students are best left to find their own learning niche—as a start—with conversations regarding the possibilities shared with their friends, the self-selected teachers, and especially the self-selected advisor.

C. Leadership-Related Suggestions

A major concern in alternatives has been the limited life-spans of the best programs in the United States. Looking back, the Camelot environments of the Amphitheater District in Tucson AZ (1963), University City MO (1965), Lake Region SD (1967), the Wilson Campus School in Mankato MN (1968), Berkeley CA, (1969), Tacoma WA (1969), and Minneapolis MN (1969) all served as national models. There were many other sites such as Bishop Ryan in Omaha NE, Harmony Hill and Lincoln in Watertown SD, Norridge High in Norridge IL, Barrington Middle School in Barrington IL, Brookhurst Junior High in Anaheim CA, School of the Future in Glen Cove NY, and Nova in Ft. Lauderdale FL.

All these, and most others the last three decades of the past century, were closed or returned to traditional, but not one because the program failed. Students and educators learned, were happy, and believed they were headed in the right direction. Yet in the long and short run existences of pioneering efforts, every time POLITICS won. The "new leaders" (Superintendent, Board, Principal, and/or Legislature) eliminated beautiful programs—these thorns in the side of TRADITION—for the sake of uniformity, or their own version of alternative (in the singular, not plural concept). **The charismatic creator had left, along with the leader supporting the waves of innovation—both replaced by mainstream educator/politicians.**

To overcome the singular leadership problem, the alternatives must become "OUR" programs—not "MINE." When the creative implementer and the initial umbrella of support leave, those remaining must ensure the continuing development of "their" programs of options. A committed replacement leader is required—or one who is a very quick learner and open to non-traditional environments.

Staff, parents, students accept the philosophy of OUR rooms, OUR youth—not MY rooms, MY programs. Alternatives communities must continually disorient and orient—unlearn before learning. As turnover populations are large percentages in some areas, those parents and students

new to the community need to know the non-traditional aspects and why they would want to attend. Staff members need reinforcement when they move into or out of one of the alternatives. Philosophy, history, research, and methods need constant renewal. **Too many districts with alternatives assume that once the program is established, it will just continue, and therefore do not "re-teach" the communities.**

Programs that are "different" eventually will be swallowed by convention unless there is a plan to keep on the front burner every year the rationale for educational alternatives for everyone all the time.

D. Individual-Related Suggestions

Alternatives supporters continually seek ideas contributing to the concept of options for all and changing the schooling system to one of learning choices. What might individuals accomplish toward this goal?

Individual Efforts

1. Have lunch with a legislator if known well enough to arrange such a meeting. Explain the concept of alternatives and why one-size uniformity is wrong for all children.
2. Organize a group to meet with a legislator. Explain "why alternatives" and ask for a bill to be introduced.
3. Develop an outline proposal for a charter school and then enlist a group to support, expand, and present for approval.
4. Serve on the Board of a charter or other program of alternatives.
5. Serve as a volunteer in a program, and then disseminate the fine features of it with friends, community groups, clubs, and at socials when education becomes a topic of conversation.
6. Gather research literature and present it to the school administrators, district administrators, and/or the school board.
7. Join local and state associations and participate as a committee member or become an officer of the organization.
8. Run for the school board, campaigning as realistically as possible for districtwide diverse choices for all students, K-12.
9. Talk with the business community—one-to-one contacts or presentations at such as rotary clubs—seeking understanding and support for alternatives.
10. Create a proposal for a research and development learning site (a NASA program for the district), present it to others interested in alternatives, and enlist their support for presentation to the district.
11. Carry an "evangelistic" spirit in explaining to all who will converse on the subject the rationale for learning alternatives.
12. Visit home-schoolers, private alternatives, and websites to gather ideas for a community learning center as one proposed option. Enlist a sponsor (perhaps a business) for support.
13. If personally not convinced regarding a wide variety of options, do not hinder those committed to the concept.

14. Create "Kaffee Klatches" and not only invite friends and neighbors, but also work to arrange "Klatches" for school board members, state organization representatives, and alternatives oriented persons to promote/discuss choices, options, freedoms.

E. Organization-Related Suggestions

What steps might local groups and state organizations take to promote choice?

Local Group Efforts

1. Start a charter school.
2. Work to change the image of educational alternatives as for all youth, not just for "non-regular" students.
3. Establish a community relations arm to create newspaper articles, speak at a variety of club organizations, talk to PTA and other parent groups, and write letters to district constituents, governor, legislature.
4. Gather research on alternatives and present the findings to the school board, school administration, student groups.
5. Create "Saturday Forums" where students and parents can learn of alternatives possibilities for the community.
6. Create videotapes for dissemination to interested parties and decision-makers.
7. Create workshops for parents to illustrate how more alternatives can be provided.
8. Develop actual "plans" to present to community groups, the school board, newspaper, and school administration detailing where and how such as schools-within-schools, magnet schools, one building R and D site, and comprehensive choices can be provided at the same cost.
9. Visit local universities, community colleges, and teacher preparation programs to speak to undergraduate classes, administrative credential classes, undergraduate and graduate interns, students deserving more options, and master and doctoral research candidates—offering topics for their theses and dissertations.
10. Seek every avenue to clarify the concept of educational alternatives to a much broader audience than reached in the past. Speak out with more force and more compassion in citing the need to move beyond uniform schooling for all.
11. Sponsor candidates for school boards, be represented on superintendent and principal search committees.
12. Enlist cooperative support from home school networks, charters, local private alternatives—to further heighten the need for more choices for all.

State/National Organization Efforts

1. Create a statewide speakers' bureau for alternatives, and seek platforms for them to deliver the message.
2. Develop several student panels to speak at legislature hearings, state PTA meetings, state/regional curriculum, administration, and teacher conferences, high school student councils, and other similar forums.
3. Seek corporate sponsors (many small donations are often easier to find than one large one) to provide support funds for state association meetings and attendance at national gatherings.

4. Network with other organizations and even business leaders (not funding requests) to support the growth of choice in the community.
5. Hire grant writers to prepare requests for funds, write proposed bills for the legislature, and work with the state fiscal analyst to demonstrate no increase in cost to the state for multiple options.
6. Meet with newspaper editors to ask for their support in running special features on the concept of alternatives.
7. Make strong use of electronics via internet, videos, email, and tapes to disseminate information and networking for alternatives.
8. Develop a series of small publications (pamphlets, monographs, short books) on various topics related to why, how, and what outcomes of alternatives, including supporting research.
9. Prepare several proposed accountability systems that could be used by alternatives programs to replace the rigidity of the state examination dilemmas.
10. Arrange conferences with leaders of all state alternatives associations to discuss promotion and growth of alternatives nationwide and internationally, and follow up with email, phone conference calls, and other electronic devices.
11. Create a national week for alternatives; ask for articles in newspapers, meetings with legislators, interview with the governor, appearances on TV and radio talk shows and other such communications.
12. Speak out as a state organization more forcefully to be heard by more people to gather attention for alternatives and overcome many of the erroneous myths "regular" school communities have regarding the concept of options for all.

Summary

Publicly recognized and accepted publicity promoting the concept of alternatives must be made available in a more forceful tone to a greater segment of the population. Dissatisfied parents must be "reached" to join the campaign. "Everyone" should be encouraged to be creative and find significantly different and better ways of increasing the adoption of options. What can individuals, local groups, and state and national organizations realistically do to "**DO THE IMPOSSIBLE**"— to move communities away from one-size uniform schooling toward a wide variety of choices of alternatives for learning for everyone all the time.

ꝒARE TO....

"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do not dare that they are difficult."
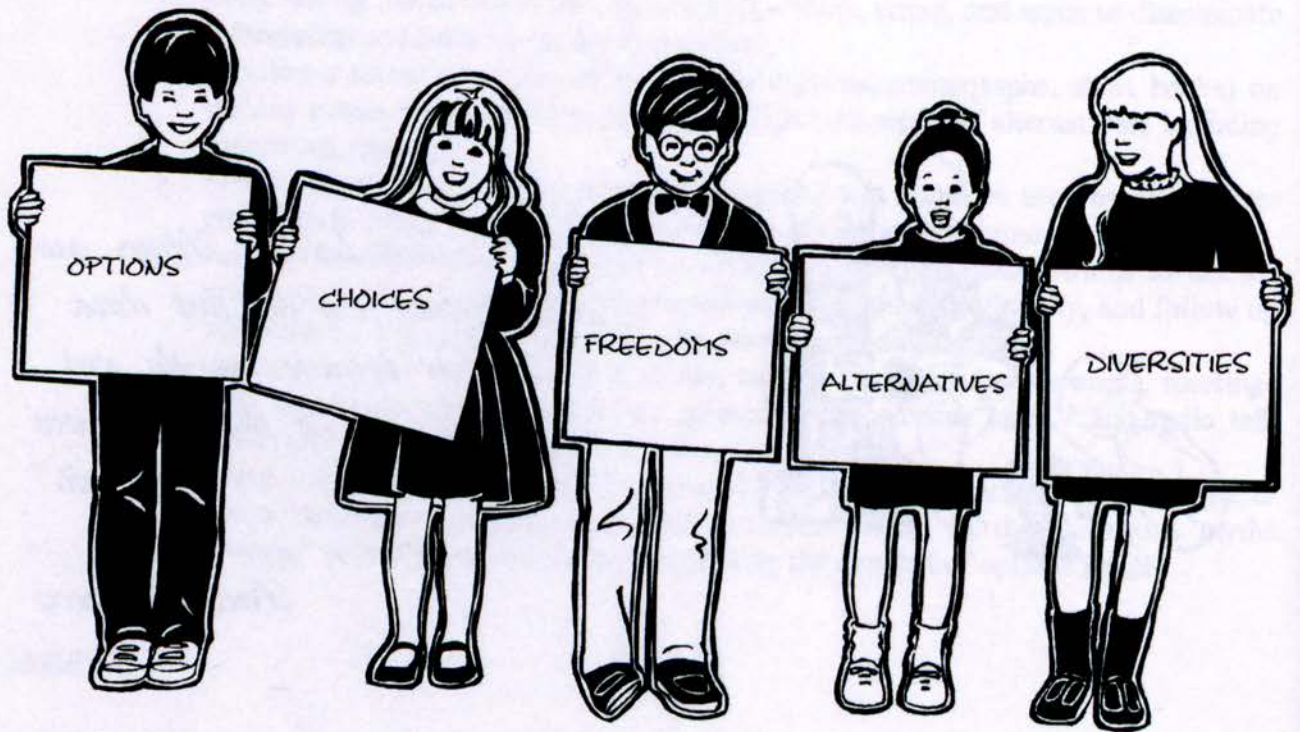
Lucius Seneca

"Charter schools appear to offer
viable educational alternatives. They
provide schools of choice that are within the
means of parents who cannot afford private
or parochial schools. For many students
and families, charter schools offer the
promise of a high-quality education while
remaining within the public school system."

Pauline Gough

About the Author

A graduate of Springfield College, Massachusetts (B.S.) and the University of Oregon (M.S., Ph.D.), Don Glines now serves as Director, Educational Futures Projects, Sacramento California. A career highlight was his creation of the program at the Wilson Campus School, Minnesota State University, Mankato, which gained acknowledgement as probably the most innovative, experimental, futures-oriented design for public school alternatives in the United States.

He invented the Personalized Continuous Year Calendar, allowing the Wilson program to function 365 days a year. Both learning and evaluation were personalized, individualized, nongraded, and self-directed. There were no required classes, no homework assignments, and no master schedules; attendance was optional. Wilson housed traditional "grades" K-12, added prebirth, infant, and preschool options, and then offered complete undergraduate teacher education credentials, a master degree in experiential education, and a senior citizen component—a true birth to death learning system under one roof. The *National Observer* labeled Don Glines as the *"foremost apostle of educational innovation."*

His forty years of advocating choices of alternatives also included the development of the Lincoln Learning Laboratory, called by the students The Disneyland of South Dakota. For his change agent efforts in University City, Missouri, the *Kappan* cited him as a *"vice-president for heresy."* In Arizona he led the implementation of the first daily scheduled secondary school. Don was involved administering school renewal projects in Taiwan, Spain, and Haiti. Earlier personal experiences included play as a four-year college letterman in lacrosse, army duty during the Korean War, employment as a carnival barker, instructing canoeing in New Hampshire, teaching English in a Hispanic school, and coaching at Occidental College. He co-founded the National Association for Year-Round Education, served as its national president, and was one of the first four selected for its Four Seasons Hall of Fame. He also contributed as an ex-officio board member and historical "resident sage" for the formation of the International Association for Learning Alternatives.

He has given over 900 addresses on the need for educational options and futures-oriented schools. His publications include over 130 articles and fifteen manuscripts on educational futures, renewal, alternatives, change processes, and continuous learning. These have included the books *Creating Educational Futures: Continuous Mankato Wilson Alternatives*, *The Great Lockout in America's Citizenship Plants* (with William Wirt) and *Year-Round Education: History, Philosophy, Future*.

Don has long stated: *"If schools are to be significantly better, they must be significantly different."* This theme is the focus of *Educational Alternatives for Everyone*.

ALL THE TIME

EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

FOR

EVERYONE

BY

DON GLINES

SUMMER

2002