



The Community School

P.O. Box 555 ■ Camden, Maine ■ 04843 ■ 207 236-3000

NEWSLETTER No. 70

DORA LIEVOW, EDITOR

JUNE 2000



Dora Lievow holds the door open for Jessica Dawson, Georgia Howland, Sadie Lavoie, Skip Lewis, Lynne Witham, Justin St. Germaine, Dina Francis and Jesse Talty.

The Great Addition Diary

IN JUNE, the walls of the foundation were poured, and a delicate tracery of plastic piping began to decorate the styrofoam "floor." Eventually, this piping will carry hot water and heat the concrete slab poured a few days later. From the road, our old cedar hedge screened much of the project from Washington Street but glimpses of our construction site suggested the enticing vision of a backyard swimming pool.



BY MID-JULY, as I write, a three-storey building has risen from the foundation. Our photo op's posing with students between the wall studs are over, now that the lower floors are sheathed with plywood. A walk through the ground floor and basement rooms already summons up the ambiance of our new space.



As I write now, IN AUGUST, windows are going in, clapboards are going up, and a walk through the building allows us to imagine each room and its furnishings.

Term #52 will end on September 18th and we hope to re-open on October 17th with the old building renovated and the new nearing completion.



1999 Auction

Saturday, 13th November

at

CRHS Cafeteria

Knowlton St., Camden

Bidding starts at 5:30 pm

Call Bernice Berger if you wish to
donate at 236-9414

A concrete contribution ...

Students have asked to immortalize Term #52 in the concrete before it dried. David Cadbury, Oliver Builders' Project Manager and a C-School tutor, amused us by recognizing this request as "the natural human response to wet concrete." Sarah Holland, architect, will be designing an art project using small rectangular forms and wet cement for this purpose. A section of floor in the utility room-to-be will display the student artwork. Since current students won't reap the reward of their endurance of this summer's construction, compensations like this seem only fair.



Building Committee

Meanwhile, the Building Committee has been meeting weekly addressing a range of tasks from selecting carpeting to planning volunteer projects to adjusting scheduling. Lynne Witham, our irreplaceable Residence Manager, who ran a construction company with her husband for many years before finding her way to us as a gifted teacher/counselor, stands in for the School. David Foley and/or Sarah Holland speak to architectural design, and David Cadbury oversees the project. Our efforts to incorporate the project into the Term's curriculum kicked off with an overview class presented by Sarah.



Development Committee

At 7:30 am every Tuesday through the summer Chris Shrum, Greg Dorr, Emanuel Pariser, Dora Lievow, Avery Larned, Chrissy Burstein and consultant, Karen Cadbury could be found at Fitzpatrick's Restaurant, coordinating fundraising and publicity for the Great Addition. Thanks to Fizie for providing his lovely upstairs dining room for this effort.

The School is a beneficiary of a remarkable donation of expertise from Karen Cadbury of Cadbury Consultants. Karen operates a fundraising and public relations consultancy business in Rockport, Maine. She served as Dean of College of the Atlantic for six years. Karen can be contacted by email: Cadbury@mint.net.

Fundraising activity

To date \$416,000 have been raised from both Maine and national foundations and from individuals and businesses.

Thus far we have received donations from the following foundations:

- O.P. & W.E. Edwards Foundation
- Lillian Berliawski Trust
- Libra Foundation
- MBNA
- Agnes Lindsay Trust
- DLF Foundation
- Davis Family Foundation
- New Visions Foundation
- an anonymous matching grant of \$100,000.



from the following individuals:

Frank & Hallie Leonard
Ron Miller
Bill Panton
Elizabeth Quantrell
Andy Rheault
Bob Rheault and Susan St. John
Tom and Dennis Wolfe



and from:

The Camden Rotary
Duck Trap River Fish Farm, Inc.

We have also received a matching grant of \$50,000 from Elizabeth Bay Paul & C. Michael Paul Foundation (for the Scholarship Fund to match funds for the Great Addition).

The Great Addition

We invite you to support the Community School's Capital Campaign to build the new addition and renovate the existing facility.

Please contact Emanuel Pariser or Dora Lievow at 207-236-3000

or

write to 79 Washington Street,
P O Box 555, Camden, Maine 04843

Excerpts from Changing Lives: A Conference on Relational Education, May 8th, 1999 at the Camden Opera House



Arnold Langberg, Debbie Meier, Emanuel Pariser, Dora Lievow and State Representative Judy Powell

“SMALL AND PERSONAL, nurturing environment, respect and caring. These are some of the values leading educators from across the country attributed to the Community School at an alternative education conference held on Saturday, May 8.”

[Jane Day, *The Free Press*, May 20, 1999]

Below we print excerpts from each of the panelists in the order of their presentations.

Fred Bay

President of the Paul Foundation

“I came to Camden yesterday and visited the Community School for the very first time. I felt I knew something about this school over a period of about a decade from conversations with Emanuel and reading materials and newsletters, but I really felt I came to know and to love the C-School from a book called *Changing Lives* by Jane Day. I keep requesting more books and have handed out about 50 copies of the book to people all around the country.

I get to visit a fair amount of schools and there are two kinds of experiences crossing the threshold of a school. It is either a situation where I have to very much resist the impulse to get out of there; I don't feel comfortable and I want to go home. Or alternatively, it is an experience like coming home and I am happy to be there. I had that experience yesterday.”

Tim Duffey

President of Common Ground in Prevention, feature editor, Resiliency in Action

“Let me read to you six characteristics that are identified by resiliency research as being essential to the environment of young people and see how much this sounds to you like the C-School:

- High levels of care and support.
- High expectations that are set and consistently communicated to the young people.
- Meaningful participation.
- Increased opportunity for presocial bonding, bonding to positive good things and activities in their life.
- Clear and consistent boundaries
- Life skills given and provided to young people.

School is like a pumpkin ... it rots after Halloween.

– student comment to Commission on Secondary Education

All six of these things the C-School has been about for 25 years and made a difference in young people's lives because of this.

There are three groups, that are integral to this process. The first is the students themselves who have recognized the importance of seeking a change in their lives. They have seen and wished for that and have taken action to do that and so all of them are to be congratulated. Secondly, to

the staff who has taken upon itself the role as an agent in the change of those lives, and thirdly, this doesn't happen in a vacuum. So thanks to the community which has helped and allowed this work to go forward in this way and be this meaningful to so many young people."

Richard Freeland

President, Northeastern University

"We need to think for a moment about the particular success of the C-School with the students whom it enrolls. So the question becomes why does this formula work in particular for students from this kind of background? And I would suggest that there are two possibilities, both very important. The first is alienation from an education system that places so much stress on cognitive work and tends to devalue other forms of talent, other forms of learning, other modes of expression. I think it is tremendously important that we find ways to validate the talent and skill and potential contribution of those young people whose

What we need to do is create places in which we can be the people we need to be so that they can be the people they need to be. – Arnie Langberg

primary abilities do not lie in the cognitive or perceptual arena and traditional schools tend not to do that.

Secondly, I think the alienation can often occur because students have found no place to stand in the world, because they seem to belong nowhere, because they seem to fit nowhere, because they have no clear role in the world, no sense of a contribution to make and work is a contribution. Work says I belong in this place because people need me, I have something valuable to contribute and so provides a platform on which to stand."

Jeanne Bamberger

Professor, MIT School for the Humanities

"I want to talk about the difference between information – something we hear a lot about these days – and knowledge. And if we assume that they are the same, that knowledge and information are equivalent, this notion can be destructive to learning. Information lies quietly in books, is gathered from others or accessed via the web. Knowledge is actively developed through experience, interpretation, construction,

questions, failures, successes, and values. Students can be active makers and builders of knowledge, but they are often asked to become passive consumers – the target of selected *others'* goods and information.

When a student feels less than and the teacher feels more than, there can be no really helpful educational exchange.

– Brenda Wentworth

People are also makers and builders of things. In that context grasping is not a metaphor as in grasping an idea or the truth. For people living in an unstable, unpredictable world in flux, literally grasping, holding, holding still, holding on, is a persistent need. For students whose worlds are spinning too fast already and who are vulnerable to a sense of loss of place in space, in a family, in a community, speedy access to vast spaces and quick, efficient, packaged-up, ready-to-go information may be more confounding than useful.

The C School approaches learning as a whole context in which students can be helped to thrive. Not only, but perhaps especially, children who see themselves as failing in school, whose lives are rife with instability and disorganization, who often feel that school is irrelevant and reciprocally are made to feel themselves irrelevant and peripheral in school settings. These are students whose personal effective knowledge is failing them in school largely because it has no way of coming in off the street into the classroom.

Within the C-School environment, students, instead of being poor consumers of other people's fleeting ideas and inaccessible products, can potentially become makers of new knowledge of which they can feel proud, with which they can give pleasure to others and through which they can also learn how to learn what is expected of them both in the school world and beyond."

Gordon Donaldson Jr.

Professor of Education, University of Maine at Orono

"Let me just read to you the core principles that the Commission on Secondary Education came up with for the direction secondary education in the state ought to be taking. We are kind of overwhelmed with how well received this has been in many secondary schools in the state. It is probably no surprise because we started out this work by talking to kids across the state and asking them to tell us about their experi-

ences in schools. At one point we asked them to construct metaphors that describe their experience in schools, the most pithy of which was that school is like a pumpkin because it rots after Halloween.

The core principles go like this: the Secondary Education Commission believes that successful secondary education experiences require a safe, respectful and caring environment that assures that every student can attend fully to her or his central mission – learning. Two, that adults hold high universal expectations of all students and provide a variety of pathways for students as they strive to meet those expectations. Three, frequent assessment of student learning and reviews of these assessments amongst students, teachers and parents so that all can share responsibility for planning and carrying out learning activities. Four, teaching and procedures that honor and build upon the unique contributions and needs of each learner. Five, that staff, parents and especially students be engaged democratically in decisions about learning and the conduct of the school. And six, that internal coherence among the school’s mission, goals, actions and outcomes be in place so that that mission and those goals are fulfilled.

There is I think an uncanny resemblance here to what C-School has demonstrated as its successful components.”

*You don't improve the quality of a
lamb by constantly weighing it,
sometimes you need to feed it.
– Bill Davis relating story told by Kozol*

Ron Miller

*author, President of the Foundation for Educational
Renewal, Williston, Vermont*

“What has always struck me about the Community School is that it is doing education the way human beings should be learning. It brings us back to what education really should be. We are told in the national media that the tragedy of Columbine High School is a wake-up call but there is not much agreement about what it is we are supposed to wake up to. Is it that we need more metal detectors or should we be censoring videos or that there is evil in the world that we forgot about. I believe that what we are being asked to wake up to is that we have forgotten what it means to be a human being.

For many thousands of years we have evolved into creatures who learn through community, through participation in things that matter to the people around us. In the last 100 or 200 years we have developed a culture that is technocratic and mechanical and reductionistic and we have lost the human connection between the learner and the community, between the learner and the natural world.

When schools began to become established as a state function about 150 years ago it was not really to help young people develop their potential. It was not a caring gesture toward young people. It was a mechanical solution to problems of an emerging industrial age. And ever since that time the primary thrust of schooling as an institution has been functional, has been to fit people into their roles in an expanding economy.

There was a lot of experimentation and innovation in the late 60s and early 70s. The Community School was part of that wave of rebellion and innovation. But in the later 70s and 80s we seemed to go back to the mechanical culture, to the technocracy. We seem to have completely forgotten what Dewey and Goodman and Holt and Dennison and Freidenberg insisted that we remember. Maybe it is time to go back and learn that lesson again.”

Debbie Meier

*Principal, Mission Hill Public School, Roxbury, Mass,
member of the School of Education, Harvard University*

“Since 1950 we have created, I think, the first human culture that has ever existed on the face of the earth in which the closer young people come to being adults the less contact they have with adults. Every year they get closer to being an adult they have less and less relationship with adults. We have organized it that way. It didn’t happen that way, so to speak, because of adolescent hormones. It happened that way because of something we systematically did as a society. And among the things that happened was the creation of very large schools, very complex schedules and an inability even in those schools for adults to know young people.

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unpredictable world in flux, literally
grasping, holding, holding still,
holding on, is a persistent need.
– Jeanne Bamberger*

So we created schools in which not only young people were powerless but adults were powerless. More and more not only were young people not known by these adults, but these adults were not adults who could help them learn to be grownups. You can't learn to be a tennis player without having tennis players around you. You can't learn to play basketball without having basketball players. Yet we have asked our young people to grow into grownups in the absence of people who are powerful models of what it could be like. The thing that young people experience in school, aside from the teaching experience, is grownups who say, "Well that is just the way it has to be. I had to do that too." They experience powerless grownups and not powerful grownups. And if there is anything young people don't want to be surrounded by it is powerless adults.

We need to create schools the way the C-School has in which young people not only gain more power themselves but experience what it is like to be with powerful adults."

Bill Davis

Professor of Education and Director, Institute for the Study of Students at Risk, University of Maine at Orono

"I will paraphrase Jonathan Kozol, one of my heroes. One of his statements I have always carried around with me – because we are such a test crazed society and we were talking about how much we need to assess kids to find out how well they are doing. Kozol talked about an old farmer who said 'You don't improve the quality of a lamb by constantly weighing it, sometimes you need to feed it.'"

We need to create schools ... in which young people not only gain more power themselves but experience what it is like to be with powerful adults.

– Debbie Meier

Arnie Langberg

Educational Consultant and founder of the Mountain Open High School

"One of the nicest things people ever said about one of the schools I ran is it is like a teenage nursery school. Wonderful! People enjoyed being there; there was excitement about it. Since when did anybody feel that way in a high school? It is a prison. Look at

the architecture of it. If you really look at it with any kind of dispassionate look, it *looks* like a prison and therefore it acts like a prison. But the small schools are imitating the big schools just like the little kids are imitating the big kids instead of the other way around.

The problem lies in the culture of school. It isn't the teachers, it isn't the curriculum, it isn't the expectations. Those are results of a culture of schooling which is so intractable that it treats teachers like dirt and then blames them and undermines their self-esteem. The self-esteem of the kids is a result of the self-esteem of the teachers. And if the teachers are treated as the cause of the problem, is that going to help the kids? We need to create a culture like the culture of C-School that supports the best that the teachers bring.

Schools are for teachers. Kids are transient, they come and go. We go to the blackboard at night and come out in the morning and start all over again. What we need to do is create places in which we can be the people we need to be so that they can be the people they need to be."

Brenda Wentworth

Social Worker and Community School graduate

"There is a time in all of our lives when we discover that truth and reality are very relative concepts. It is at this time that we need the most guidance. When a student realizes that a teacher's beliefs are just that, beliefs, the student often begins to challenge the teacher and here is where the traditional educational process often takes a major nose dive. Instead of perceiving this as a perfect educational juncture, the teacher, fearing exposure, often perceives it as a personal attack and attempts to hide behind his or her armor of adult status.

I say this: the need to exert power over a person is the nemesis of the traditional education process. When a student feels less than and the teacher feels more than, there can be no really helpful educational exchange.

To be compassionate, I learned at the Community School, does not mean that one buckles under. In fact, one must stand firm in one's convictions and radiate one's own truths. Years of experience as student and teacher all boil down to this for me – opening to another's truth while holding my own center without judgment. It is the only way I can hope to be of any service to anyone."

Letter from a Former Student

For me the C School began as an intimidating place. Because it was so different from anything I'd experienced or ever seen on television, I at first despaired of ever fitting in. The first day I made up my mind to simply endure. My suspicions were fully aroused in the beginning week: the place was too laid back. I was waiting for the hammer to fall.

It was a lonely time, the beginning of the term. Being away from who and what I knew I could see right off that I would never be at home there. I mean, I was just too normal. Truth be told, I was the only normal person at the School at that time. That includes both staff and students. In fact each staff member at the C School was, in comparison to public teachers, far and wide from normal. And rightly so. Blue is a wonderful hue, but blue alone cannot make a rainbow. And the C-School is nothing if not colorful. It captured my wondering attention and drew me in. But while my attention was drawn in, my focus was expanded; I saw my new teachers as human beings. They taught me that I could be my own teacher, that being a student shouldn't end with graduation. That's one of my favorite lessons.

Now, I didn't go to the School willingly. I went with reluctance, to dodge my probation officer's threats. But I'm telling you, I left after graduation with much much more reluctance. This because the people I'd met and grown to care about had become family. The diploma? Earning the diploma barely even hurt. I actually enjoyed (most of) my classes. Like Flintstones Vitamins, they give you what you need, but hell, they taste pretty good too.

But I took a rough road when I left the

School. I compare my term to the Greco-Roman period. A time of learning, of art, of organization. After graduation the empire went into decline. Serious decline. I entered the Dark Ages. The wisdom I absorbed at the C-School was lost, buried, or drowned. The Dark Ages lasted for years and I tried to adapt. Living on the fringes of civilized society and finally completely beyond it, I encountered the types of barbarians you'd expect to find on the medieval landscape. To adapt to this Dark Age or to thrive, even, as was my goal once, meant looking at faces, at people, differently. A Machiavellian approach. To adopt this outlook completely I needed to rationalize a little bit. Not too difficult when you see greed, cruelty, selfishness, indifference to suffering, or worse, enjoyment of suffering, all around. You just say to yourself, "Hey, everyone is like that in one form or another" and you're well on your way to a happy rationalization. That's what I tried, but I kept hitting a stumbling block. I had an inconsistency keep appearing.

The folks that I had been closest to earlier in my life, Emanuel, Dora, Tree, Bob, Buck, Jeff, and my one-to-one Patty, wouldn't fit into this same theory. And this group was not some local anomaly; they were all types of people, from different parts of the country. What they did have in common though was kindness, thoughtfulness, an ability to find enjoyment and enrichment in helping others, and an individual and combined form of gentle wisdom. They planted seeds which sprouted years later, helping to crack up the asphalt of barbarism and set me on a shaded path to my next age, my own Renaissance.

Letter to a Student

Georgia thank you so much for letting me read your writing. It is a wonderful quick tour of your brain and heart and it all makes sense. You write of love, loss, separation, change, unconditional love, people taking care of one another, death, disappearance, the uncertainty of who we are on this planet and why we are, feeling unknown, unknowable, unliked, and the struggle to bear these feelings and walk through them, and the desire to leave, split, vamoose.

You are experiencing the paradox of being young and old at the same time –

having adult opportunities and childlike emotions – this happens to us all our lives, and we learn to live with this and try to love ourselves despite our obvious failings (we can see our own failings the best) and we become kinder to ourselves and more understanding of others.

Writing is a key to your soul! It will keep you alive and give you infinite space to pour your emotions into. I am moved by your insight and what you have to say

– Emanuel

News from Passages ...

Boston trip in September

Last spring, students asked to include travel in the Passage's curriculum. In order to participate in this first trip, students had to help out with at least two fundraising events as well as prepare a research project connected with the Boston visit.

Meeting throughout the spring to learn how to write a grant proposal, the students successfully wrote and presented their proposal to MBNA who have awarded the project a \$1,990 education grant.

The group will include 15 teen mothers and fathers along with their children. For many this is their first time traveling outside the state.

New staff

We are happy to announce an increase in the number of Passages students from 18 to 24 through the hiring of Deidre Sousa as a part-time teacher. Deidre comes to our program after 20 years teaching in the Massachusetts public school system.

Collaborative effort

Passages has recently joined with the in a collaborative teaching effort. The two agencies have agreed to work together to pro-

vide educational materials in five core skill areas: early childhood development, health and nutrition, homemaking, infant care and parenting.

.....

Letter to the Zoning Board

I have been connected with the school for about eight years as a teacher, acting parent and user of its many resources for young people. I have been pleased to note that its reputation has become national. It is fine to have yet another reason for people to think well of Camden, Maine.

It is no secret that the place is not adequate to its purpose. I taught sitting on the stairs or sometimes in the kitchen. If I needed to talk to the boy I enrolled in the school, we had to take a walk to find space to converse alone. The staff and faculty are miracle makers in doing more with less; I know that if given more to work with, they would only exceed your hopes and expectations for them as a part of Camden's vibrant community. It is a tribute both to them and to the town that they have been made welcome for all these years. We need more C-Schools and more towns like Camden willing to support them.

- Ramsay Fifield

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